



Welcome to *Your Story, Our Story*

Your Story, Our Story is a national digital exhibit initiative of the Tenement Museum in New York City and its partners across the United States. We work with schools, universities, museums and cultural sites, organizations, and community groups to co-create a collection of stories that is expansive enough to hold the connections we share as Americans, along with our similarities and differences. Together, we explore the ways that people are profoundly impacted by the places they come from and move into, telling a fuller and more holistic story of American identity in ways that honor the complexity and multiplicity of individual experience.

The Tenement Museum was founded with the belief that history is personal and relational. Every individual makes history and their actions have the capacity to impact others in both small and transformational ways. Just as the museum's historic tenement buildings contain the stories and objects of extraordinary Americans, the places your students live are holding important truths. As their teacher, we hope you will partner with us and help your students to publish their personal story using the *Your Story, Our Story* platform.

Your Story, Our Story offers participants the opportunity to become historians of their experiences so that they can better understand who they are, how their identities came to be and connect to other Americans, and the roles people play in shaping community and society.

This resource includes everything you need to get started, beginning with the top three questions educators have asked to help them determine if *Your Story, Our Story* is right for their students:

- Who is *Your Story, Our Story* for?
- How does *Your Story, Our Story* benefit schools?
- What types of stories can students include in *Your Story, Our Story*?

After that, we provide an overview of the resources we compiled which include step-by-step how-tos and related worksheets so that you can find what you need with ease.

It is important to note that because *Your Story, Our Story* asks participants to answer the deeply personal question of *Who are you?* it can surface a range of emotions from joy through traumatic, and everything in between. Exploring the complexity and nuance of one's identity can be especially challenging when one's story intersects with ideas around power, race, and ethnicity that are shaped by global and local politics. Giving participants permission to decide which parts of their identity they want to share with you, their classmates, or the public is foundational to the project. Our step-by-step guide will help you to be inclusive and respectful of peoples' diverse histories, current realities, and individual preferences while being mindful of your curricular goals.

In partnership,

Kathryn Lloyd, Vice President of Programs, and The *Your Story, Our Story* Tenement Museum Staff Team

Who is *Your Story, Our Story* for?

Your Story, Our Story is for all Americans, ages 13 and older. The project is designed to be expansive enough to hold the diversity of participant's unique identities. Everyone can participate, regardless of whether they have a direct connection to migration or immigration, know a lot about their family history or very little, or hold specific racial, ethnic, religious or other social identities.

How does *Your Story, Our Story* benefit schools?

This interdisciplinary project connects to English Language Arts, Social Studies, American, Global, and Public History, Sociology and Technology and Media. At its core, YSOS helps participants to see themselves as historians and authors with stories that are valuable and exhibit worthy. It also helps them to get curious about other people's identities and experiences within their school and create opportunities to make connections, honor differences, and contribute to building a fuller understanding of the past and present.

Teachers can use Your Story, Our Story to:

- Create opportunities to learn about students' identities.
- Digitally publish student stories.
- Create an exhibit online and or in their school.
- Teach content and skills related to storytelling and writing, history through the lens of personal experience, primary source investigation, oral history and interviewing, digital publishing and photography, media consumption and privacy.
- Build community within the class and school community by exploring similarities and honoring the differences of experience.

Students can use Your Story, Our Story to:

- Choose what parts of their identities they want to share.
- Deepen relationships with teachers, classmates, and members of their school community.
- Publish their work in a digital museum exhibit.
- Develop an awareness of other identities and experiences, respectfully learn about them, and think critically about them.
- Connect their personal history to larger historical trends.

What types of stories can participants include in *Your Story, Our Story*?

Stories on *Your Story, Our Story* use an object to reveal the ways moving to a new place impacts identity and one's understanding and experience of the world. These include the movements of ancestors and one's personal lived experience, moves that were welcomed and those that were forced, and moves from another country or within the United States.

These movements holds countless possibilities for story topics, including:

- Traditions preserved or adapted from one place to another (e.g. food, music, attire, religion)
- New rituals invented to bring comfort or mark important moments or milestones
- Objects or stuff one cares about
- Successes and struggles encountered (e.g. dreams, opportunities, challenges, disappointments)
- Emotions and feelings that surfaced as a result of the movement (e.g. joy, hope, discomfort, confusion)
- Important people in their lives (e.g. family members, caregivers, friends, neighbors, or community members connected to a location)
- Parts of their identity and family history one is curious about
- Things we haven't yet considered. We are learning together and are grateful to be co-creating this with smart people like you who can help us identify and expand our ideas.

Resource Overview

This guide includes two sections to help you optimize your *Your Story, Our Story* experience:

1. Step-by-Step Guides
2. Worksheets

An outline of each section is below.

You can also access the [Your Story, Our Story Group FAQ here](#).

Have an idea for a resource not listed? We are constantly updating this guide in partnership with the group leaders using *Your Story, Our Story*. Please contact yourstory@tenement.org to share ideas, questions, and requests.

Section #1 Step-by-Step Guides

Use the ones that respond to your needs and skip the ones that aren't relevant.

- [How to create a group page](#)
- [How to introduce *Your Story, Our Story* to school administration](#)
- [How to introduce *Your Story, Our Story* to participants](#)
- [How to use *Your Story, Our Story* as a primary source for exploring topics or periods of history](#)
- [How to use *Your Story, Our Story* to explore power and identity](#)
- [How to help participants identify an object and explore its story](#)
- [How to help participants submit their story](#)
- [How to celebrate story publishing](#)

Section #2 Worksheets

PDFs and editable versions so you can easily adapt them.

- [Letter to School Administration](#)
- [Identity Reflection](#)
- [Object Brainstorm](#)
- [Your Story, Our Story Submission Checklist](#)
- [Project Reflection](#)

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to create a group page

A group page on *Your Story, Our Story* allows you to create a unique link and webpage for your participants' stories. This how-to includes step-by-step directions for getting started.

STEP 1: Prep

1a. Determine Page Association

Before you can create your group's page, you need to determine if your group page will stand alone or be part of a partner page, which features multiple group pages that are associated with an institution or organization.

Group Pages are created by group leaders who have the ability to edit and approve stories submitted to the page.

- If you are part of a school or organization with multiple participating classes, we recommend creating a group page for each group. This way you can easily access your group's stories as opposed to seeing them mixed together with the other groups.

Partner Pages are created by schools or organizations and have the capability of housing multiple group pages within them. These pages can only be made and edited by the Tenement Museum.

- You can check if your school or organization has one by searching for its name - if it exists, it will appear with the label "PARTNER" in the bottom right corner.
- If your school would like a partner page created because they have multiple participating classes and would like each class's group page to appear on a central page, we can create a partner page for you. To request this, send an email to yourstory@tenement.org.

1b. Select a Group Page Image

In order to create a group page you will need to select an image to upload. This might be a logo, group photo or other representative image of your choosing.

STEP 2: Create a Group Page

2a. Go to Your Story, Our Story

- If you are creating a new Group Page for your group: Go to <https://yourstory.tenement.org/groups/new>
- If you are adding your group's stories to an existing Partner Page: Use the search function to find the Partner Page and then select the "Add Your Group" button.

2b. Complete the form using the tips below.

Tips for completing the Create a Group Page form:

Section		Tips
1	Group Name	List your school or organization
2	Group Tag	Tags help improve search functionality. We recommend creating a tag with your SchoolName_TeacherYear
3	Group Image	Upload a school logo, classroom photo or other representative image of your choosing.
4	Group Description	Share a little about the school, its location, your class, and why you wanted to participate in <i>Your Story, Our Story</i> .
5	Group Type	Choose the most relevant for your group: Elementary School, Middle School, High School, College, Community, English Language Class
6	Group Zip	List the zip code of the school building, organization, or location of the group.
7	Group Settings	<p>These settings allow you to set the privacy level for the stories included in your Group Page. Privacy setting options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use only initials, not full name, as signature in story ● Do not use photos of author's face ● Stories in this group can appear in global public search results <p>In other words if you select <i>Use only initials</i>, even if your participants typed their full name, only initials will be included on the published story.</p>
8	Your Email	Use the email Museum staff can you to confirm your page, and contact you with any questions.

STEP 3: Get Your Group Page Approved

Your Group Page form will get processed by Tenement Museum Staff, usually within 2 business days.

Once it is approved you will get an email notification. The email will include 2 links:

- Your group page where participants can directly add their story from.
- Your “secret link” which will give you access to review and edit incoming stories and approve stories for publishing on your Group Page.
- Bookmark the link for easy access.

STEP 4: Upload Your Story

We highly recommend that group leaders submit their own story before asking participants to submit theirs.

Participation will help you get familiar with the process and site features and help you to identify potential questions or barriers for your participants. It will also give you an example to use when you introduce *Your Story, Our Story* to your participants and let you model the ways stories help us to share parts of ourselves with others.

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to introduce *Your Story, Our Story* to school administration

Before you start the project, we encourage you to share details with your administration. Letting people know in advance about the power and potential of the partnership can help them to get excited and to be prepared to support you throughout the initiative.

This guide includes a sample letter you can share.

STEP 1: Inform School Administration

- a. **Before you start the project, inform the administration.** Publishing participant stories online is exciting and can also be concerning. Telling the administration in advance and making sure they know how privacy is being managed can mitigate concerns, create space to address any questions, and make sure you have support.
- b. [Share Letter to School Administration.](#)

STEP 2: Address Questions

- a. **Be in touch with the Museum if there are any outstanding questions.** Email any questions to yourstory@tenement.org. We are excited to partner with you and are here to support you.

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to introduce *Your Story, Our Story* to participants

Publishing a story about your identity can be both exhilarating and intimidating for participants. And, because people have life experiences that we can't anticipate, it is important to create an environment that gives participants the power to choose the parts of themselves they want to explore and share. This is especially important because stories about how a family came to the United States and/or was treated may hold trauma.

This guide includes step-by-step directions for introducing *Your Story, Our Story* to participants by first sharing your own story with them.

STEP 1: Frame the Project

Introduce *Your Story, Our Story* and how it will be used in the classroom, using these key ideas:

- a. The group is partnering with the Tenement Museum in New York City.
- b. The Museum is trying to tell a story about how the United States has been shaped by the people who have called it home by exploring the places they came from and have moved to. As lots of different people have lived in the United States over time, there are many stories to be told and connections to be made.
- c. The Museum's collection is missing some important stories - theirs - and is inviting them to share a story in their digital exhibit called *Your Story, Our Story*.
- d. Each participant will research and publish their own story in our group's gallery.
- e. The project will offer opportunities to reflect on our identities, learn about each other, and explore the larger historical trends we are part of.

STEP 2: Share Your Story

Model how the *Your Story, Our Story* works using the story you submitted.

- a. Bring up your story on your group page.
- b. Invite participants to focus on the object and consider what they can tell about it. Do they know what it is, can they describe what it is made of, have they ever seen anything similar? Reinforce that objects hold many stories and these stories can exist outside of a person's direct experience with it.
- c. Read your story aloud.
- d. Ask participants what new information they were able to learn about the object and you from the story. Reinforce the ways stories can change the way we see things and help us to consider something new about someone else's experience.
- e. Ask participants to consider what connection they can make between your story and their own lives? What is similar and or different about your experiences? Reinforce how recognizing commonalities and differences helps us to learn about ourselves and each other's identities.

STEP 3: Review Story Components

Review the components of your story submission to help participants become familiar with the elements they will be asked to include in their stories. These include:

- a. Images of the object and or people and places related to the story
- b. Story text
- c. Tags that connect the story to other stories that share a big idea
- d. Relationship to immigrant or migrant of the storyteller which can uncover generational patterns or trends
- e. Categories that organize objects by type. *Your Story, Our Story* features the following categories:
 - Attire contains objects of clothing, jewelry, hats, accessories, and other items worn on bodies.
 - Foodways contains objects related to food, recipes, and items cooked with.
 - Religion contains objects used during holidays and celebrations.
 - Fun contains objects used for play, hobbies, or craft.
 - Work/Education contains objects used for learning like books and tools and trade items.
 - Miscellaneous contains objects like pets, transportation, names, signs, places, buildings, and other items that don't fit in the other categories.

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to use *Your Story, Our Story* as a primary source for exploring topics or periods of history

Your Story, Our Story entries can be used as primary sources, providing a personal lens into history. The stories operate both on an individual level and collective level, bridging personal experience to larger patterns and historical trends. This guide includes steps for selecting stories to support your curricular goals and a format for examining them.

STEP 1: Learn How Stories are Organized

- a. **Become familiar with the ways stories are organized** on *Your Story, Our Story*'s so you can find the stories you are seeking. There are 3 key forms of organization: categories, collections, and tags.

Categories organize objects by type and make it easy to make connections across similar objects.

Your Story, Our Story features the following categories:

- **Attire** contains objects of clothing, jewelry, hats, accessories, and other items worn on bodies.
- **Foodways** contains objects related to food, recipes, and items cooked with.
- **Religion** contains objects used during holidays and celebrations.
- **Fun** contains objects used for play, hobbies, or craft.
- **Work/Education** contains objects used for learning like books and tools and trade items.
- **Miscellaneous** contains objects like pets, transportation, names, signs, places, buildings, and other items that don't fit in the other categories.
- **Tenement Museum** contains objects from the museum's exhibits.

Collections are museum curated exhibits that include stories that reveal a theme that connect stories across generations, cultures, and places and help to define the questions, commonalities, and differences across them. Recommended collections to explore include:

- [Language](#) features stories about the ways people navigate speaking multiple languages and learning new ones.
- [American Dream](#) features stories that complicate the American Dream and how it has looked and been redefined by individuals.
- [Push and Pull Factors](#) feature stories exploring people's motivations for immigrating.
- [Identity](#) features stories about the cultural factors that shape who we are.

Tags are created by users and feature key elements of their story that they think will be of interest to others. Popular tags include time periods, holidays or cultures, family relationships and themes.

Some tags to explore to include:

- [Arrival](#)
- [Cultural Exchange](#)
- [Home](#)
- [Indigenous](#)
- [Ramadan](#)
- [Great Migration](#)

- [Holocaust](#)
- b. Use the **Find Stories** search field to explore what stories come up on the topic you are looking to explore.
- c. Explore these recommended stories if you are interested in exploring the diversity of experience hosted on the site. These stories were submitted by participants across the country exploring their family’s movements, traditions, and identities and highlight the variety of ways participants have used objects to tell their story.
1. [Hair Wrapping Cloth](#)
 2. [Tribal Necklace](#)
 3. [Vics Vapor Rub](#)
 4. [Comal \(griddle\)](#)
 5. [Chinese to English Dictionary](#)
 6. [Grandma's Book](#)
 7. [Brigid's Cross](#)
 8. [Challah bread](#)

STEP 2: Select Stories

- a. Choose 5-8 stories to explore with your participants or alternatively assign participants to select 5-8 stories from *Your Story, Our Story* that represent a selected theme, question, or time period they are interested in exploring.
- b. Save links for selected stories.

STEP 3: Investigate Selected Stories

- a. Investigate the selected collection using prompts. Participants might respond in writing or in during a discussion. Some ideas include:
- What can you learn from these stories about the selected theme/topic? What can’t you learn?
 - What personal connections did you make to the stories?
 - What commonalities did you discover across stories? What differences showed up?
 - What questions did these stories surface about the selected theme/topic based on your prior knowledge and experience.
 - If you were curating this collection, what title would you give the exhibit?
 - Write an introduction for their collection describing how their stories support the theme or question they selected.

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to use *Your Story, Our Story* to explore power and identity

This guide explores ways to use *Your Story, Our Story* to examine the power of story on both collective and individual levels. It offers context into the danger of missing stories and ways for participants to investigate how their story and identities intersect and connect with other stories currently being told through the project.

STEP 1: Explore the Power of Stories

a. Discuss the power of stories and the danger of missing stories.

- Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explains in her [Ted Talk *The Danger of a Single Story*](#) that it is impossible to talk about stories without also talking about power. Listen to her talk in class or assign it to participants in advance.
- Key ideas in her words include:
 - “Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”
 - “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”
 - “So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.”

b. Discuss the power of stories using some of these questions to guide your conversation:

- What do we lose when stories of and by diverse groups are missing from our collections?
- What is gained when people can explore stories from a multitude of people and identities?
- What sources for stories have shaped their understanding of what it means to be American? What gaps or missing stories do they hold?
- How can stories challenge some of the overt and implicit assumptions people hold about each other and their experience in the United States?

c. Frame *Your Story, Our Story* as an opportunity to access stories that in the past might not have been acknowledged, documented or valued. By partnering and inviting people from across the country to help tell a fuller and more holistic story of American identity, the project:

- Acknowledges missing stories from the museum’s collection and society’s collective understanding of the ways that people are profoundly impacted by the places they come from and move into.
- Seeks to empower people to share their own stories and create pathways for other people to access them and learn from.
- Honors the complexity and multiplicity of individual experience.

STEP 2: Reflect on your identities

- a. **Have participants reflect on the story of their identity using** the [Identity Reflection worksheet](#) or by free-writing or verbally responding to the prompt: What characteristics do I use to describe my identities and how have others described who I am?
 - If you plan to have participants share their identity reflections with each other, make sure you let them know in advance so they can determine what parts of their identities they choose to share.
- b. **Reinforce that participants should reflect on their personal lived experience** to answer the prompt and are not being asked to represent a group of people that look like them or hold one of their identities - just their own. They are also encouraged to use the terms that honor their family history and to identify which descriptors feel most essential or primary to their understanding of themselves.

Possible identity factors include:

- Age
 - Abilities
 - Citizenship
 - Ethnicity
 - Family (Relationship to biological and chosen members; structure)
 - Gender
 - Hopes and dreams
 - Language
 - Places you have lived
 - Media consumption (what you listen to, read etc.)
 - Nationality
 - Race
 - Religion or spirituality
 - Sexual orientation
 - Socioeconomic status
 - Values
- c. **Debrief the exercise and reinforce key ideas about identity:**
 - Many identities make us who we are.
 - One's identities hold multiple stories about their life and history.
 - Identity can change. Some things might stay the same, but other parts shift as we get older and learn new things about ourselves.
 - Some parts of our identity might feel more important to us at different times.
 - Some identities are labels that other people/society put on us that we might not agree with.

STEP 3: Explore Selected Identities on *Your Story, Our Story*

- a. Ask participants to select an aspect of their identity to further research on *Your Story, Our Story* so that they can better understand how their experience is similar and different from other people's who also hold similar identities.**

- b. Have participants explore 5-10 stories that relate to the part of their identity they selected and to reflect on their learnings using the following questions:**
 - To what extent is your family's story represented within the stories on *Your Story, Our Story*?
 - What points of connection, patterns, and trends can you identify between your experience and other people who hold one of your primary identities? These can be both similarities and differences.
 - What can you learn from these stories about this identity? What can't you learn or is missing from the stories?
 - How can stories help us to explore ideas about power and racism in America?
 - What individual stories could you contribute to the project that would help tell a fuller or more complete collective story about your identity or family history.

- c. Debrief their findings through a group discussion or a writing reflection assignment.**

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to help participants identify an object and explore its story

For some participants, an object idea will come quickly and with ease. Others may struggle identifying suitable options or making a decision. This guide includes steps for helping participants brainstorm ideas through prompts so that they can explore ideas without pressure or fear of criticism. We have also included a chart of common challenges and some tips for helping participants overcome them.

STEP 1: Brainstorm

- a. **Distribute the [Object Brainstorm worksheet](#).** This worksheet includes a variety of exercises to guide participants through the process including:
 - Ideation prompts to use to brainstorm potential objects.
 - Object checklist to help them determine if their object idea is a good fit for *Your Story, Our Story*.
 - Story drafting prompts to help them uncover the stories their selected object holds and draft their story.

STEP 2: Get Unstuck

Exploring identity is complicated and can surface different things for different people. We have compiled a chart of challenges participants have named, along with inspiration from other *Your Story, Our Story* submissions that can give them ideas for moving forward.

- a. **Help participants identify the challenge or source of their struggle.** Naming the specific issue that is holding them back is the first step in getting unstuck.
- b. **Reframe the challenge** in ways that help them see their experience as part of the American experience, not outside of it.
- c. **Share stories from other participants that have faced a similar challenge** and help participants consider how those stories might inspire new ideas. See chart below for ideas.

Chart of Challenges with Reframes and Recommended Stories:

Challenge	Reframe	Recommended Stories
Unable to think of an object feels special	Expand your definition of value beyond money to include emotional, spiritual, reliability, usability, effort value	Challah Bread Rice Cooker Blue 18-Wheeler Truck
Don't know family history	Exploring broken connections to the past and the questions one has about their identity is an important part of the story. Unknown history is part of American history.	Pasta in Ascolai Brigid's Cross The Metal Cup
Family Story is too complex for 250 words	Share <i>a</i> family story, rather than <i>the</i> family story. Consider selecting one facet of your identity to share in your entry.	Po Tat Photo Dining Room Buffet
Don't have the object	Objects can have a lot of looks. Consider drawing a picture or taking a picture of something that represents the object. You can also expand your ideas of objects to meals, holiday tradition, songs, or something else of meaning—be creative!	The Music of the Beatles Pita Porcelain Clock Bathtub
Family doesn't have a connection to immigration	Not all Americans are descendants of immigrants. Stories about the impact of moving, family history, and culture are core to the American experience.	Cup for Carrying Water Bear Claw Necklace Art Binder
Not in contact with biological family	Focus on people who feel like family and have been important to your identity. Stories about chosen families and about the many ways people find support and care are needed.	Mother Lion Baby Bib

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to help participants submit their story

Once participants have written their stories, it is time for them to upload them to Your Story, Our Story. This guide includes a Story Submission checklist to help participants make sure they are ready for upload.

STEP 1: Directions for Uploading Stories

- a. **Distribute the [Story Submission Checklist](#)** so that participants can make sure they are ready for upload by checking everything on the list.
- b. **Remind participants of the class tag and link to use to upload their stories.**
- c. **Have participants upload their stories using your group page link.**

STEP 2: Approve Stories

- a. **Review the stories using the secret link** emailed to you when you created your group page.
- b. **Check stories** for spelling, grammar, and content and determine if another round of editing is needed.
- c. **Approve stories.**

SECTION #1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES

How to celebrate story publishing

Celebrate your participants' stories! Being published on a nationally acclaimed museum site is a testament to your participants' ability to shape history and contribute to telling a fuller story of American identity in ways that honor the complexity and multiplicity of individual experience.

STEP 1: Plan an Opening Party

- a. **Print participant stories.** When you open each story there is a gray printer icon in the top right corner, which you can select for printing options.
- b. **Determine where your exhibit will be displayed.** Many teachers use their classroom or another public location with their school.
- c. **Invite participants to help curate the stories** and to consider which stories should be hung near each other because they connect or help tell a larger story together.
- d. **Invite participants, families, administration, and community members to celebrate** the participants' work during a culminating event. Some group leaders include a formal presentation where participants share their stories. Others have participants stand near their work and be available to answer questions from visitors who explore the collection.

STEP 2: Reflect on the Process

- a. **Distribute the [Project Reflection worksheet](#).** This worksheet includes questions to help participants reflect on their writing experience, as well on what they learned about their classmates from reading their stories. Some teachers use this worksheet as part of their project assessment as the answers can reveal key learnings from the project.

STEP 3: Share the Stories!

- a. **Share the link to your group page** on social media and help other people learn about the American identity through your participants' stories.
- b. **Encourage participants to share their story** link with friends and family and to spread the news about their authorship and partnership with the Tenement Museum.

SECTION #2

Worksheets

Letter to School Administration

Dear School Leader,

We are thrilled that your school is interested in partnering with the Tenement Museum on [Your Story, Our Story](#), a national digital exhibit initiative. We are inviting schools from across the country to help us tell the story of American identity in ways that honor the complexity and multiplicity of individual experience.

Your Story, Our Story offers students the opportunity to become historians and explore who they are and factors that shaped their lived experience. The project also helps students get curious about other people's identities and history, creating opportunities to explore commonalities, honor differences, and contribute to building a fuller understanding of what it means to be American.

Schools can use Your Story, Our Story to:

- Learn about students' identities.
- Digitally publish student stories.
- Create an exhibit online and or in their school.
- Build community within the class by exploring commonalities and honoring differences.
- Teach content and skills related to storytelling and writing, history and primary source investigation, oral history and interviewing, digital publishing and photography, media consumption and privacy.

By creating space for participants to share their experiences, *Your Story, Our Story* also has the potential to deepen understanding about unfamiliar groups and identities, to combat racism and prejudice, and to promote empathy and equity.

The Tenement Museum takes your student's privacy and safety seriously. Your student's story will be published on the *Your Story, Our Story* website, and your teacher can ensure that **no personally identifiable details (full name, photograph) are in the story when it is published**. Your student's story will be archived by the Tenement Museum in their digital collection, but we will never share the story without permission. At any time, if you or your participants want the story removed from the website, write to yourstory@tenement.org and the Tenement Museum will remove the story from the website.

The Tenement Museum was founded with the belief that every individual makes history and their actions have the capacity to impact society in both small and transformational ways. This includes your students - their stories are valuable - and we are thrilled that they will join the museum's digital collection and enable us to tell a fuller and more holistic story of American identity.

Do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions about *Your Story, Our Story* by phone at 646-518-3010 or via email at yourstory@tenement.org.

Kathryn Lloyd, Vice President of Programs and Interpretation
on behalf of the *The Your Story Our Story* Team at the Tenement Museum

Identity Reflection

Identity charts are a tool used to explore the many factors that shape who we are as individuals and as communities. They seek to answer the question: What characteristics do I use to describe my identities and how have others described who I am?

When making your identity chart, reflect on your personal lived experience. You are not being asked to represent a group of people that look like you or hold one of your identities - just your own. You are also encouraged to use the terms that honor their family history.

Possible identity factors include:

- Abilities
- Age
- Appearance
- Citizenship
- Ethnicity
- Family (Relationship to biological and chosen members; structure)
- Food
- Gender
- Hobbies and interests
- Hopes and dreams
- Language
- Places you have lived
- Media consumption (what you listen to, read etc.)
- Nationality
- Race
- Religion or spirituality
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Values

To make yours:

1. Make a list of the characteristics you use to describe your identities. Use the list of factors above to help you build your list.
2. Add any characteristics you have heard other people use to describe you.
3. Cross out any terms you do not like to use.
4. Highlight five descriptors that feel most essential or primary to your understanding of yourself.

Object Brainstorm

This handout includes a variety of exercises to help you identify an object to contribute to Your Story, Our Story and draft your story.

IDEATION PROMPTS

Use these prompts to help you brainstorm potential objects to use for your story submission.

- Make a list of all the places important to your family? This can include places you have moved to, visited, or feel a connection because your ancestors or elders came from there. For each place on your list, note objects in your home that connect to or remind you of that place.
- If you were going to move away and could only take 5 objects from your home with you that would help you remember where you came from, what objects would you choose? What makes each special?
- If you live with people, ask them to identify 3 objects that are special to them that they have in their living space and to tell you what makes them special.
- Make a list of people that feel like family to you. These might be people that you would turn to if you wanted to share good news or needed comfort. For each person on your list, note objects you have that connect to or remind you of them.
- What parts of your family's history in America are you curious to learn more about? Write four questions about where your family comes from that you are curious to find answers to.
- In what ways is your identity or your family's identity unique?
- Think about a special day in the last year. It might have been a holiday or celebration. As you think about what made it special, make a list of all the objects that were involved.
- Reflect on your dreams and wishes for the future. What objects are part of these dreams?

OBJECT CHECKLIST

For each object you are considering, see if it can check at least 5 boxes on this checklist. If you are able to check 5 boxes, your idea is an excellent one for Your Story, Our Story. If it doesn't see if another idea might work.

- It is important to me
- It is a part of my identity that I choose to share
- It brings up a feeling for me (e.g. joy, sadness, hope, struggle)
- I have questions about it (it is ok not to have answers)
- It is about my experience or the experience of someone I have a strong connection to
- It connects to a place that is important to my family
- It connects to tradition or activity that is important to my family
- It is part of a holiday or special occasion
- It connects to immigration or migration
- It was given by someone who is an important person in my family

STORY DRAFTING PROMPTS

Once you have your chosen object, brainstorm around the stories it holds. The best Your Story, Our Story entries include information about the object, one's relationship to it, and how it connects to something bigger.

Considering aspects of each category can help you draft your story and determine what elements you want to include. We recommend answering at least four questions for each section.

OBJECT

- How is the object called? Does it have more than one name?
- How would you describe the object's appearance? (e.g. color, size, shape, texture)
- What is the object made of? (e.g. materials)
- How is the object used?
- When is the object used?
- Where did your object come from? Has it traveled?

SELF

- When did you first learn about this object?
- Who in your family used/uses this object?
- What can your object teach us about your identity?
- How does this object make you feel?
- Why is the object important to you?
- If the object could talk, what questions would you want to ask it?
- What are some things you want to know about the object and or your family that you currently don't know?

WORLD

- What do people need to understand about this object?
- What lessons can the story teach us?
- What can this story teach us about the American experience?
- How is your family's story similar or different to other stories you're familiar with?
- Does your object's story connect to any historical or current events?
- In what ways is your family's story similar or different to things you've studied?

IMAGE BRAINSTORM

Consider ideas for images to accompany your story of the object. These can be photographs, drawings, or another idea for creatively representing your selected object.

Your Story, Our Story Submission Checklist

Review this checklist to make sure you have everything you need for your story. Once you have checked everything on the list, you are ready to submit your story using the link provided by your teacher.

Story

- My story shares a part of an American identity that I am choosing to share.
- My story is based on a physical object or creative representation of an object.
- My story has a title that relates to the object I selected.
- I know the year my story takes place—guessing is okay. This could be the year the story happened, the year of an important move or moment in the story, or other.
- I know what place(s) my story connects to.
- I know if my story has a relationship to immigration or migration.
- I have edited my story, making sure sentences are clear.
- My story is no more than 1500 characters or 240 words.

Images

- I have a photo of my object, or have drawn a picture of it.
- OPTIONAL: I have a photo of the family member(s) or place the object reminds me of, and/or a photo of myself to include.

Categories

Your Story, Our Story organizes stories in categories. While many objects can fit into more than one category, choose a main category your object connects to:

- Attire* contains objects of clothing, jewelry, hats, accessories, and items worn.
- Foodways* contains objects related to food, recipes, and items cooked with.
- Religion* contains objects used during holidays and celebrations.
- Fun* contains objects used for play, hobbies, or craft.
- Work/Education* contains objects used for learning like books, tools, and trade items.
- Miscellaneous* contains objects like pets, transportation, names, signs, places, buildings, and other items that don't fit into the other categories.

Tags

Help others make connections across stories by choosing tags for your story. Popular tags include time periods, the names of holidays, traditions, or activities and relationships to people.

- I know the class tag that my teacher wants me to include.
- I have ideas for three other tags to include with my story.

Website Details

- I have the link to my class's group page where I will submit my story.

Project Reflection

Use these questions to reflect on your *Your Story, Our Story* experience

Reflect on your Story Process

1. Describe what it was like for you to choose an object. Did you immediately know what you wanted to pick? Did it take you a long time to decide? How did the process feel for you?
2. What was the most difficult part about writing your story?
3. What sources helped you to write your story? Did you rely on your memories, talk with or interview someone, conduct any research online or do something else that helped you to uncover the story and write about it?
4. Having written your story, do you have any new questions or unanswered questions about your object and the connected history? What more would you like to know about it? Be specific.

Reflect on your Classmates Stories

5. Which story stands out to you and really grabbed your attention or surprised you? What elements in the story caused you to notice it?
6. What story made you think differently about something? Describe a specific thing you learned.
7. Choose 3 stories and share what they can teach us about American identity.