



Fishing For Stories

LuAnne G. Kozma¹

Objectives

Participating young people and adults will:

1. Be able to describe a folk tradition related to fishing.
2. Interview someone about their fishing experiences and traditions.
3. Have fun while learning.

Youth Development Objectives

Participating young people will:

1. Develop interpersonal communication skills such as being a good listener.
2. Develop better cultural awareness as they learn about people and groups who may be different than themselves.

Roles for Teen and Junior Leaders:

1. Helping younger 4-Hers develop good questions to ask during an interview.
2. Older teens can help write a newsletter for the club based on the group's interview.

Potential Parental Involvement

1. See "Roles for Teen and Junior Leaders" above.
2. Parents might suggest people to interview and help arrange for the interviews. If the person interviewed is unknown to the 4-Her, parents might accompany youth on interviews, especially if the interview takes place in the home or workplace of the interviewee.
3. Provide transportation to the interview location.

Best Time:

First meeting: At a club meeting.
 Second meeting: At a library.
 Third meeting: While on a fishing trip, while visiting relatives, while visiting bait and tackle shops.

Best Location: Inside, away from distracting noises.

Time Required: 6-8 hours

Equipment/Materials

- Worksheets (at the end of the activity lesson).
- cassette tape recorder
- cassette tapes
- microphone
- batteries for microphone and/or recorder, extension cord
- A/C adapter
- microphone stand
- camera and film
- pencil and paper (or journals)
- maps and telephone books of the local area

References:

Ives, Edward D. *The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1974.

¹ Michigan Traditional Arts Program, Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing, MI 48824, 517-353-3326

Evaluation Activities/Suggestions

1. Have 4-Hers listen to the tape-recorded interviews with other club members and note what kinds of questions could be asked in a follow-up interview and ways to improve on interviewing methods.

Safety Considerations

Youth should not interview along; encourage members to go in pairs or small groups, gain permission to enter homes and workplaces, and have adult supervision.

Johnson, Paula J., ed. *Working the Water: The Commercial Fisheries of Maryland's Patuxent River*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1988.

Kozma, LuAnne G. *FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide: A Cultural Heritage Project*. East Lansing, MI: 4-H Youth Program, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University Museum, 1991.

Lloyd, Timothy C. and Patrick B. Mullen. *Lake Erie Fishermen: Work, Tradition, and Identity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Moonsamy, Rita Zorn. *Passing It On: Folk Artists and Education in Cumberland County, New Jersey*. Trenton, NJ: The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, 1992.

Mullen, Patrick B. *I heard the Old Fishermen Say: Folklore of the Texas Gulf Coast*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978.

Posen, I. Sheldon. *You Hear the Ice Talking: The Ways of People and Ice on Lake Champlain*. Plattsburgh, NY: The Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System, 1986.

Taylor, David A. *Documenting Maritime Folklife*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1992.

Lesson Outline

Presentation

Application

I. At The First Meeting

What is folklore?

Explain what folklore is (see lesson narrative).

Play the "telephone game"
(an example)

Get your group ready for this activity by playing the game of "telephone." Members sit in a circle. Whisper the following short story to the first member in a circle, and ask him or her to whisper it to the next person, and so on until each person has told and heard the story. The last person to hear the story tells what they heard to the whole group out loud. Then the leader can say the original story out loud to compare what was first told and how the story eventually changed and transformed with each telling.

"Last Saturday, Billy and Susie caught two big bullheads and a gob of smelly worms on the Black River by seven in the

morning.” (You may want to adapt this sentence to fish your own local places, fish, and common names).

Type of fishing

Using the list below as a starting point, make a big list with your group of all the **kinds of fishing traditions** that they might be able to witness or ask about in your local area.

Finding someone to interview

As a group, **brainstorm** all the **people** you could ask **to be interview**. Identify a person for every two members of your group so that members can interview people in teams. Look through telephone books to find numbers of local bait shops, sportsmen’s clubs, and fish markets, etc. List what traditions or skills each person could be interview about.

Go over interviewing techniques

Help your members write good **interview questions** for each potential interviewee. Make a standard list of basic questions you could ask anyone (like “when and where were you born?”). You’ll make specialized lists of questions at the next meeting.

Using a cassette tape recorder and microphone, put a tape in the recorder and use it with the group to **practice interviewing**. Experiment with using all the buttons on the machine so that each member knows how to operate a basic tape recorder. You could go through a mock interview using yourself and another leader, teen leader, or one of the members to demonstrate the beginning of an interview.

II. Between Meetings
Arrange interviews

Make **calls to the interviewees** and/or have your members make the calls to interviewees to set up interview times after the date of your next meeting. make arrangements with a local librarian to meet your group at the library or your next meeting.

III. At Second Meeting

Doing Background Research

Ask the librarian to help your group look at all available sources that might help them learn more about the fishing tradition they are about to investigate. Look at local **history sources** to learn about the local area, from maps and nautical charts to photographs, newspapers, business records, advertisements, and telephone books. Books about luremaking and fishing might be helpful.

Preparing members

Help each member add to their list of interview questions and prepare them for their interview experience. What special questions might you ask this individual? Go over the details of when, where and with whom they will conduct this interview. Try to calm any anxieties they may have.

III. On their own

Conducting the interview

Each member or group **conducts an interview** with parental supervision. The best places to conduct interviews are the places the interviewee works, lives, or fishes. Go on location! If the person makes lures from a basement workshop, that’s the place to be. If the person tells jokes and stories while fishing, accompany him or her on a fishing trip. The interview itself is an exciting, fun-filled experience. make sure each interviewee is asked

permission to be tape-recorded at the beginning of the interview. Use a written permission form that describes how and why you are going to use the contents of the tape (i.e.: "...for a 4-H fair exhibit"). (See worksheets at the end of this activity lesson).

Writing about it

Each member should **write** something based on their interview experience: a biography of the person interviewed; a newsletter article about the person and his or her fishing tradition; the recipe for a fish food tradition; a glossary of terms used with definitions for each word; a journal entry by them member describing what the experience was like from a personal point of view.

Summary Activity

Meet to read and share each other's interview materials. Write a glossary of words the interviewee used, with his or her definition of each word. See worksheets at the end of this activity lesson.

Lesson Narrative

Everyone who fishes knows a wealth of information. To tap that knowledge, try interviewing someone who has fished for a long time and learn about fishing traditions and culture directly from an expert.

What is folklore?

Folklore, or folk life, are traditions we share with people who have something in common with us. We learn traditions informally by word of mouth or by example, from other people rather than from books or in classes. Folk traditions include foods, stories, songs, sayings, beliefs, games, art, dance, work skills, crafts, celebrations, and architecture. Because we share different kinds of interests with different people, we may share different kinds of folk traditions with each group. For example, you might celebrate a birthday in your family by playing a practical joke, use a saying you share only with your friends, eat a certain diner only at your grandparents' house, share a dialect with other people in your region, and tell a joke on a fishing trip that only other anglers would understand. Folklore is both old and new--it changes all the time. As you can see, it's not just something our ancestors did; it is the living traditions we do today.

Types of fishing traditions to investigate:

- the techniques involved in a particular kind of fishing, such as how one uses tools and materials and the steps in a process
- words, phrases, sayings, and gestures
- customs and rituals
- beliefs about bad or good luck, beliefs about the weather
- oral traditions such as stories about personal experiences and stories of all kinds, songs, legends, rhymes, jokes
- local place names, local names for species of fish, waterbirds or other animals
- food traditions involving seafood
- folk medicine for seasickness and injury
- celebrations (blessing of the fleet, community seafood festivals)
- material items made for fishing (boats, nets, traps, lures, anchors, bait containers, buildings on land like net lofts, shucking houses, and fish camps, clothing, etc.)

Finding someone to interview

Talk to relatives, neighbors and friends first. If you want to interview someone completely new, try asking at the local library, bait and tackle shop, marine supply store, commercial fishery, marina, seafood outlet, or fishing club. Select someone you feel comfortable with, who is friendly and willing to talk. Explain that you would like to tape-record the interview and get their permission to do so.

Doing the background research

Once you're selected who you will interview, learn a little more about the person and the places he or she fishes so that you are better prepared to ask good questions. Spend some time in the local library, historical society, or museum to learn more about the kind of fishing you are investigating, the natural environment of the area, the life cycles of the species of fish involved, and the community in which the person lives. Look at maps and nautical charts that might help you better understand the region and the water.

Conducting the interview

Get the interviewee's permission to be interviewed right on the tape, and have the person sign a consent for or brief letter (you can make your own for, with wording like: "I agree to be interviewed by (name of 4-Her) on x date, for the purpose of her 4-H project." Then have the person sign the form.

It's best to ask some basic questions first, such as: What is your full name? Where and when were you born? What were your parents' names? Where did you grow up? The rest of the questions can be about the person and the tradition you are investigating. Start questions with words like who, what, where, when, why, how, and which. This encourages the person to explain the answers, rather than just answering "yes" or "no."

Use a cassette tape recorder, a microphone that you plug in, and batteries or an electrical cord. Practice using your equipment before you arrive at the interview. If you can, record only on one side of the tape; tapes will last longer over the years if recorded on one side. Bring a few tapes with you. Keep your interview to one hour or so. Interviewing is a tiring experience for both of you. Send a thank you letter to the person soon after the interview.

Exhibit or Sharing Suggestions:

1. Club members share their interview experiences with each other at a club meeting.
2. Interviewees could be invited to the meeting as well. Other ways to share the results of an interview is to transcribe the tape--write down each word spoken on paper, so you can read what was said. You could share the transcript with the interviewee and others.
3. Create a "story board" using photographs taken during the interview. Write captions next to the photos to describe the activity or story being demonstrated.
4. Write an article using the interview notes. Submit it to your local newspaper for publication.

Community Service and "Giving Back" Activities:

Think about donating your interview to a local library or museum, for others to use, with permission of the interviewee. Make sure the interviewee knows how the museum or library would use the tapes and make them available to people. If the interviewee does not want to share the contents of the tape with others, respect that decision.

Extensions or Ways of Learning More:

Consider learning more from your interviewee over a longer period of time. Arrange for a second interview. Perhaps there is a handmade craft that the person knows that you would like to learn how to do, such as lure making. Ask if you could learn this technique or tradition as an apprentice. Some states have folk life apprenticeship programs in which a master artist and apprentice may apply for grant funds to help defray the costs of apprenticeships. Contact the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington DC 20540-8100 for the name and address of your state's folk life program. You might also contact the American Folklore Society, 4350

North Fairfax Dr., Suite 640, Arlington, VA 22203. Some maritime museums have similar apprenticeship programs as well as demonstrations and classes in traditional Maritime crafts. Contact your local maritime museum to find out.

Look at a state map and see what place names for towns, rivers, lakes, etc., are named after fish or fishing traditions. Find out how the place got its name at your local library or create your own story about how you think the place was named. (Some examples: Fish Creek, Wisconsin; King Salmon, Alaska; Menominee, Michigan; Fishkill New York).

Links to Other Programs:

See 4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide for more detailed information on how to conduct interviews with family and community members.

See 4-H photography project materials.

Learning to Interview

That's a Good Question

1. Write down a folklore topic that interests you.

2. What do you know about this topic right now?

3. If you were to ask a question of someone about that topic, what would you want to find out? Write down at least three things below.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. Now, write questions beginning with these words that ask for the information you want to know.

When _____

Who _____

What _____

Where _____

Why _____

Which _____

How _____

5. Good! You made a great start. Now write as many more questions as you can. Remember to begin your question with "who," "what," "where," "when," "why," "how," and "which." Now you are ready to try interviewing!

Create a Dictionary

1. When interviewing a person about his or her occupational lore, when the person says a word or phrase that is unfamiliar, write it down.
2. Continue asking questions about special words used on the job.
3. Ask the person the word's meaning and how the word or phrase is used.
4. After your interview, listen to your tape.
5. Writ a dictionary of the words and definitions you learned.

A few sample words and phrases follow:

- Computer worker -- Bits, GIGO, FIFO, crash, bomb, bug, glitch, kludge, scrub...
- Auto mechanic -- Boat, boneyard, howler, junk a car, run it into the ground...
- Business person -- CEO, R&D, adhocracy, bottom line, down time, fast track, headhunter, lead time, perks

Interview Checklist

Use this checklist every time you conduct an interview to remind you of all the things you need to do.

Before the Interview...

- Set the date, time, and place of the interview.
- Ask permission to use a tape recorder.
- Explain the use of the FISHING FOR STORIES Interview Form.
- Explain your project and what you will do with the information and tapes.
- Check your equipment (recorder, microphone, electrical cord, batteries).
- Bring extra tapes and batteries.
- Write out your questions.

At the Interview...

- Set up the tape recorder and place the microphone close to the interview.
- Make sure there are no noises in the room.
- Label the tape with the date, person's name, and your name.
- Thank the person and say "This is the end of the interview" when you finish.
- Have the person sign a FISHING FOR STORIES Interview Form.

After the Interview...

- Send a thank-you card.
- Jot down other questions you'd like to ask in a follow-up interview.
- Write a complete label for the tape.
- Transcribe the tape (optional).
- Store the tape in a safe place or donate it to a library or museum.

FISHING FOR STORIES

Interview Form

Permission

I give permission to 4-H to tape record this interview with me, and to use my name and the information I provide for nonprofit, educational purposes such as publications, exhibits, radio and television broadcasts, and publicity. The tapes will be donated to _____ . By giving permission, I do not give up any copyright or performance rights I may hold.

Date _____

Name (signed) _____

Name (printed) _____

Organization/Group Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Birth date _____ Birthplace _____

Interviewer _____ Age _____

Address _____

Index

Date recorded _____

Place _____

Person interviewed _____

Address _____

Interviewer(s) _____

Description _____

