

Connecting: Mapping Windows into Personal Documentary

This lesson plan is part of the [Connecting through Time: Intergenerational & Family Storytelling](#) toolkit

Define who you want to connect to and why. This session is dedicated to making space to map out all the windows into potential ways in which we can connect to stories we want to tell. Through reflection we can connect to all the possibilities of stories we want to tell and that will bring us a sense of purpose through our photography.

Facilitation Notes:

Remembering and exploring our personal stories can be a very beautiful and yet vulnerable activity, bringing up all types of feelings for all of us. This activity can be used as the beginning of an individual and collective photo journey to create trust and identification within the group. Encourage participants to take time to reflect on what feels comfortable to share and what doesn't. It's a great way to begin reviewing all the nuances of ethics around documentary work and respect for people's personal stories and privacy. Make sure to hold the space by modeling how to honor everyone's experiences. Everyone is welcome to share as little or as much as they want.

Change any prompts and questions as needed to reflect your groups interest, age and overall goal of the program.

Guiding Principles/Framing Questions:

- Where will your photo journey begin?
- What can this opportunity open up? What I am looking to uncover or connect to?

1. Ask participants to grab a piece of paper/note pad and pen/pencil. In response to the prompts below, they will write, draw, doodle and express themselves in any way they need to start brainstorming.

AUTHOR

Natalia Guerrero

GRADE LEVEL

all ages

TIME REQUIRED

2 sessions

MATERIALS NEEDED

paper, notebook, pens, colors, pencils

KEY IMAGES

[Image Bank](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

photoville.com/edu

The Photoville Education program is in partnership with:



PhotoWings

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2. Create a focal point for your photography projects! Give students the task to think of each of the following categories as opportunities to identify windows into their own personal stories and innate way of telling them. Have students reflect on some prompts that most resonate with them.

- Objects: Name or draw objects at home that have a special meaning to you, a story behind it that you would love to tell or uncover. What stories does it tell?
- People: Who are the people in your life you would like to connect to more? Hear their stories? Who can help you to connect to your notion of legacy?
- Photos: What types of photographs do I have at home? How are they archived/stored? Who took those photographs? What moments were chosen to be photographed? Do I have any questions about any photo?
- Music/Sound: What is a song or sounds that remind me of growing up? What were the stories told in my family? Which ones were not? What was the format of storytelling (dinner table conversations, through song or books...) How do we connect listening and oral history to our photo projects?
- Nature / Land / Space: What land or space do you connect to? Which are the places growing up that hold the most significance to your personal story? How does this relate to the "locations" a photo project could take place in?

3. Closing Circle: Thank everyone in advance for sharing and listening. Invite students to share as little or as much as they want about the windows into their personal stories. Make sure to hold the space by modeling how to honor everyone's experiences.

- Which of these windows/prompts have stories you want to connect to and document through photography?
- What research or conversations need to happen in order to get started?
- Will my project be affected by the harm systems of power/oppression have had in our family relationships? If so, could this be an opportunity to bridge that gap? If not, how can I still pursue this project with a different angle?

If you have multiple sessions with your students look into [other lesson plans on this toolkit](#) to continue to explore family stories/legacies and photography.

4. Identify where your group will go next. Will they all create a photo project based on family photo archives, choose a person in their life to explore portrait/documentary photography, or maybe a combination of? How about utilizing objects that hold memory and tell a story?

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