

Sample School Assignment: *Adirondack Community*

Note: This assignment can be adapted for a variety of levels of students and courses. It has been used for Adirondack Studies (100 level freshman course), Interpersonal Communications (200 level course), and Community Organization and Outreach (300 level course) at Paul Smith's College and Clarkson University. It can also be adapted to encourage students to tell their own stories or organize a story collecting campaign for their campus or school. As more story projects develop around the country through *OurStoryBridge* (www.ourstorybridge.org), additional stories can be found on that website for use in assignments. The *OurStoryBridge* website also hosts a *Teacher's Guide* for your use.

Background: A story is a direct line between two people. We all have a story. Every day we listen and tell stories. Storytelling is a way to express emotion and pass on knowledge. It is a vital skill to have as a communicator. For this assignment, we will listen to stories recorded by the *Adirondack Community* story project, the multi-year local history project that collects and organizes audio stories and related photographs from Town of Keene (NY) community members through an online platform to share their social and cultural history in New York State's Adirondack Mountains. Afterwards, you will record your own community story.

What To Do

Part One: Listen To Stories

1. Go to <https://www.myadirondackstory.org/> and play the video, *My Adirondack Community Trailer*.
2. Select five stories and listen to them. Require students to bring a laptop, tablet, or smartphone, plus earphones/buds to class.
3. Take notes on the stories you selected. Include title, storyteller's name, and bullet points on the material covered.
4. In small groups of three to four, talk about the stories and share a few things you learned. (You can facilitate the conversation and provide a few questions for the students to discuss. For example: What were your stories about? Were there common themes? What did you learn about life in the Adirondacks?)
5. To debrief, each group should share the main themes, record them so the class can see the themes, and discuss them.

Part Two: Tell Your Stories

1. From Part One, you have listened to at least five stories and are familiar with the format.
2. Conduct a brainstorming session. Ask students to think about: Who they are, what's important to them, and what makes an engaging story. Remind them that the stories are three to five minutes and vivid details and names, times, and places are great! You can refer them to the *OurStoryBridge User Guide* found at <https://www.ourstorybridge.org/tool-kit>, Chapter XII, for hints on how to prepare and coach storytellers.
3. Students should then individually write out note for their first, not the story, so that storytelling has spontaneity.
4. Practice.
5. Record, using your smartphone, computer, or other device.
6. Share. For example, after the assignment is submitted, listen to and discuss stories in another class session.

For more information email myadirondackstory@gmail.com.