

Proposal: We Honor Our Ancestors, Collages and Stories by the students of Fowler Middle School, Maynard, Massachusetts, October 2018

Workshop leader: Sharon Santillo, [www.familystoriesthroughart.com](http://www.familystoriesthroughart.com)

Four Sessions:

Session One Introduction by leader, read excerpts from a collection of stories and paintings that fourteen adult artists created about their ancestors. Discussion: what is an ancestor?, what does it mean to honor someone?

Students are given a bowtie family chart to fill out with parental help, then turn over to the interview form. Pick one ancestor to honor. Interview that person or someone who knew them and return the form to class. Get the correct spelling of ancestor's name.

First session ends using scraping techniques with biocolor paint to create a background for a collage.

Session Two Leader models for the students by creating a collage about her chosen ancestor, talking about the images used and why honoring this ancestor. Students use found papers, drawings, maps, a plethora of materials to create a collage about their chosen ancestor.

Session Three Putting the collage in a small desktop easel for inspiration, students write first draft. Again, leader models by writing about ancestor Students are assigned 'detective homework'. "Be curious and see if you can ask questions and find out more about your ancestors. Details will make your story even more interesting."

Session Four Pair-share reading of stories to each other. Does the opening sentence make you want to read more? By the last sentence, do you have an idea why the writer is honoring this ancestor? Do the art and writing complement each other? Revise art as well as writing as needed. Type story.

Urge all families to keep asking questions and collecting family stories. Research is showing the importance.

Links for further reading:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/jan/14/children-family-histories-tales>

<https://www.cnn.com/2015/06/03/living/telling-kids-family-history-benefits-feat/index.html>

<http://shared.web.emory.edu/emory/news/releases/2010/03/children-benefit-if-they-know-about-their-relatives-study-finds.html#>.