When History Becomes a Relationship

A classroom adaptation inspired by Rachel Morrison and the GHS Veterans Project. This is a suggested activity, not her verified procedure or an endorsed resource.

Purpose and practical setup

Goal: Create an accurate, participant-reviewed account connecting personal recollection with historical evidence. **Suggested:** Grades 9-12 history, civics, English, **leadership, journalism or ROTC**. Plan three 45-minute lessons plus a 20-30 minute interview and participant review. Adult preparation: about 30-60 minutes, plus partner coordination. Estimated added cost: $0 using existing supplies; printing varies.

Prepare a willing partner and a bounded task

Invite a willing veteran or community member. Agree on audience, recording, review and sharing before beginning. Gather background sources, question sheets and an approved recorder or paper. Arrange school-approved contact and supervision; an authorized oral history or written exchange can replace a live interview. **Start with Rachel's free Veterans Project Teacher Toolkit** on the GHS Veterans Project website.

Try it in four steps

1. Research and rehearse. Examine two credible background sources and practice listening. Rachel advises offering guides and sample questions while allowing students to move beyond the script into natural conversation. Avoid requests for traumatic details.
2. Listen and document. Let participants skip questions or stop. Record only with permission; otherwise take notes. Note what needs checking.
3. Verify and return. Draft a short account. Separate recollection from corroborated facts. Check names, dates and quotations; invite corrections and approval before sharing.
4. Share and sustain. Use the agreed audience and format. Return a finished copy and a thank-you. Students explain revisions and remaining uncertainties.

Access, care and learner choice

Offer questions in advance, written responses, accessible text, captions or transcripts, and flexible pacing. Students may research, interview, write or organize sharing. Paper notes and printed biographies work without technology. Do not assume all veterans are older adults or share the same experiences. Follow school consent and privacy procedures; keep contact details and sensitive accounts out of public work.

Look for learning, then extend

Assess question quality, source use, attribution, revisions and respect for boundaries. Ask: What did a source confirm or complicate? What changed after review? Start smaller with one approved excerpt and a source comparison. Extend to student-led planning when supervision, time and participant wishes allow.

Three Prompts for Thoughtful Adaptation

Optional AI support. Replace brackets in a school-approved tool. Do not enter names, contact details, recordings or personal histories. This does not imply Rachel uses AI.

1 Plan a manageable oral-history inquiry

Plan a [grade/subject: history, leadership, journalism, ROTC or another class] inquiry about [topic] across [available time]. Connect an authorized personal account with credible sources. Include flexible roles, a paper-based option, participant review and an alternative without a live interview. Flag consent and supervision decisions. Do not invent people or outcomes.

Educator check: Check workload, sources, accessibility and school procedures before use.

2 Build questions and a verification tool

Create six respectful, open sample questions about [topic], without presuming experiences or requesting traumatic details. Treat these as a guide, not a fixed script: allow natural follow-up questions. Add a checklist separating recollection, verified facts and unanswered questions, plus participant review before sharing. Use [reading level/format]. Do not invent testimony or quotations.

Educator check: Review wording and verify every suggested historical fact or source.

3 Reflect on revisions, not assumed impact

Using this anonymous process summary [no personal information], suggest two improvements to our inquiry. Ask students to explain a source comparison, a revision and an uncertainty. Separate observations from possible explanations. Suggest one manageable next step without claiming that the activity caused empathy or learning gains.

Educator check: Compare suggestions with student work and participant feedback; retain judgment.

Sources and limits

BRI educator profile and the GHS Veterans Project and Teacher Toolkit document the inspiration. Class suggestions and interview advice incorporate Rachel's advice. This guide remains an adaptation.

Savino et al., intergenerational-intervention review (online 2025; issue 2026) covers adults aged 18-30 and 65+. It does not establish outcomes for high-school students, the GHS project or this guide.