



## Literacy and History: Personal and Family Histories

The study of history holds numerous opportunities for communicating ideas and information as students develop general literacy skills, the literacy of the subject history, and their skills and understandings of English.

In the Australian curriculum, the progression of skills and their application is clearly articulated:



*Students progressively learn to use stories, ... to examine, interpret and communicate data, information, ideas, points of view, perspectives and conclusions.*

In the NSW History syllabus, the study of the students' own family is part of Early Stage 1 content *Personal and Family Histories*.

Investigating family history and developing a timeline for the family gives students the opportunity to build an understanding of the passage of time, and the significance of their role and position and in the family.

Everyone in the family can contribute to the collecting of materials: photographs, excerpts from family videos, pages copied from diaries and journals, links to family achievements, birthdates and significant events. Students can interview extended family members for events, dates and places. Major home movements and migration events, cultural events of significance to the family, and appropriate family heirlooms can be included. Early drawings of the family can be added.



The student should have input into the organisation of the material.

Children need to be able to move the documents around, add captions and comments as they work with the items, and build their personal document. *'We don't have a picture of Ella'; 'William and Jean are my grandparents too'; 'I think I look bored in this picture'*. Online templates for managing such information tend to be prescriptive and limiting, so try to avoid



them. While the 'tree' is a familiar metaphor for the family, it may not be a logical structure for Early Stage 1 students.

When the student (and you) are ready for 'publication', their presentation may be as written, photographic, video or multi-modal text.

It is the process that is important: talking about the family; asking questions; gathering stories; sequencing and recording information; collecting photographs; identifying family members; collecting realia, etc.

The study of history "*allows students to locate and understand themselves and others in the continuum of human experience up to the present*".

NSW History syllabus p.10

## References:

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NSW Department of Education (2012) *History K-10 Syllabus* Sydney  
<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/literacy/>

## Useful books to read and share with children

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*My Place* by Nadia Wheatley & Donna Rawlins, Collins Dove (1987) and the ABC/Australian Children's Television Council TV series

*Mirror* Jeannie Baker, Walker Books (2010)

*We all Sleep* by Ezekiel Kwaymullina, Fremantle Press, 2018

*Seven Little Australians* by Ethel Turner, originally published in 1894. Published by Ward Lock (Ltd) (1978) plus numerous other publishers. In 1994 it was the only book by an Australian author to have been continuously in print for 100 years.

*Dear Daddy* by Philippe Dupasquier, Longman (1998)

*Our Baby* by Margaret Wild (2016)



*I am Jack* by Susanne Gervay, Tricycle Press (2014)

*The Mouse and his Child* by Arnold Lobel, Faber Children's Classics (2005)

*Finn Family Moomintroll* by Tove Jansson, Puffin (1985 originally published 1948)

*Granpa* by John Burningham, Crown (Puffin) (1985)

Songs: akanarra Songbook: About Our Place in Walmajarri and English by Jessie Wamarla Moora, Mary Purnjurr Vanbee, Chris Aitken, Alison Lester, Indigenous Literacy Foundation (2017)