

# What's in a Name?

Names have meaning. Parents choose names for their children for all sorts of reasons. The name might be a family one or the name of someone famous. Perhaps it was very popular at the time of the child's birth. Or maybe they simply liked the sound of it.

## Introduction

The intentions of Abraham Lincoln Marovitz's parents are obvious. They chose to name their fourth son after the 16<sup>th</sup> President. The impact upon the young Marovitz was extraordinary. He became a life-long student of Lincoln, studied law and, in 1938, became the first Jewish person ever elected to the Illinois State Senate. He also collected every book ever written about Abraham Lincoln's legal career. His collection included over 450 books, more than 100 prints and photographs and many other Lincoln-related items. He donated his collection, some of which is on display in *Mr. Lincoln's Attic*, to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in 2002.

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will investigate the meanings behind their name and how their name may or may not influence their lives. They will use the techniques of Oral Historians to interview family members about their name origins.

## Procedure:

1. Using the Internet, have students research the meaning and origins of their names. Students should document their findings in a notebook or class journal.
2. Using the Oral History Interview Worksheet, have students interview parents, relatives or other family members to discover the origins of their name. Brainstorm in class possible questions students might ask to discover the origins of their name.
  - Why did you choose my name?
  - Did you consider other names?
  - What is the nationality or origin of my last name?
  - Do you know other people with my name?
3. Upon completion of the interview, have students record their thoughts in a notebook or classroom journal using the following writing prompts:
  - What I heard that surprised me was...
  - Something I learned from the interview was...
  - One thing I thought was important from the interview was...
  - I have a question or would like to know more about...
4. Based upon their research findings, have students create a collage to express the origins of their name. Using art paper, have students write their name in large print in the center of the paper. Using crayons, markers, pens, etc. have students fill in the paper with drawings, symbols and designs that reflect the origin and meaning of their name, as well as their own personality.
5. Have each student present their art work to the class, explaining how the symbols and designs express the origins and meaning of their name.

# Oral History Interview

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## What Is Oral History?

Oral history is a way to gather information from people who took part in past events. Historians gather this information by interviewing people and recording their answers. Oral histories are created when one person interviews another person about a specific time period in their life or their memories of a specific topic. The interviewer takes the person's responses and creates a text of their words and their story, told through their point of view.

## Steps to Completing the Oral History

- Select a person you wish to interview
- Obtain their permission
- Set up an interview time and location
- Plan your questions and write them out on the Oral History Interview Worksheet
- Conduct the interview and record the answers

## Interview Manners

- Be on time.
- Be prepared. Have your questions ready, your worksheet out, and your pen or pencil with you.
- Be polite.
- Provide time for the person to answer questions. Do not interrupt.
- Say thank you at the end of the interview.

## *Discussion Questions*

1. How was Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz's life affected by his name?
2. How might your name influence your life?
3. Can you think of other people whose names have influenced their lives?
4. Abraham Lincoln was known as Honest Abe. Why? Did he like that name?

# *Oral History Interview Worksheet*

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Interview with: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Question #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Question #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Question #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Question #4 \_\_\_\_\_

**Follow up question:** \_\_\_\_\_

Based upon the answers given in the interview, ask another question to learn more information. This question should not be prepared in advance.

**Additional Notes:**