

**Lesson:** Interview an Older Person

**Opening Statement:**

One example of a primary source is an oral history of a person who was present at an event and can give an accurate account of the event and surrounding circumstances. A person of any age can give such an account, however in most cases we think of an older person who remembers and can tell of something long ago. A typical way to accurately do this is would be to have a prepared list of questions and use a tape recorder.

**Standards Achieved:**

English Language Arts  
Social Studies Skills

**Grade:** 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up

**Knowledge Objectives:**

Students will learn:

- Older people were young once.
- Older people had some similar experiences growing up.
- Older people have some dissimilar experiences.

**Skill Objectives:**

Students will learn:

- To develop the oral language skill of interviewing.
- To write an article based on the information they gather.

**Procedure:**

1. Tell the students that Paul Laurence Dunbar lived during a very different time.
2. Discuss the turn of the century with students and compare it with how we live today.
3. Ask the students if they know any older people (make sure the students understand that by older you mean 60 and above).
4. Ask the students to interview an older relative or another older person.
5. Tell the students they should ask these people to retell experiences they remember from childhood or stories they heard from their grandparents.
6. Tell the students they should gather information on: entertainment, how people traveled, where people purchased food, how they dressed, what toys they played with, and what food people ate.
7. After the children have interviewed the person about this information, ask them to give both oral and written reports on the subject.
8. Develop a bulletin board comprised of the stories.
9. Put the stories into a class newspaper.

## GOIN' BACK

He stood beside the station rail, A negro aged and bent and frail.  
His palsied hands like the aspen shook, and a mute appeal was in his look;  
His every move was pained and slow, and his matted hair was white as snow.  
He noted our questioning looks, and said, with a solemn shake of his hoary head:  
"I reckon you're wonderin', as' well you may, whar an ol' man lak me's a goin' to-day.  
I've lived in this town fur thirty years, an' known alike my joys and tears,  
An' I've labored hard year out, year in; but now I'm a goin' back agin  
To the blue grass medders an' fiel's o' co'n in the dear ol' State whar I was bo'n.  
It's the same ol' tale that I have to tell, --an' thar's few o' my race but knows it well, --  
When fust the proclamation come I felt too free to stay at home.  
Freedom, it seemed, was a gift divine, an' I though the wold wide world was mine.  
Then I was spry, an' my hair was black, an' this troublesome crook wasn't in my back'  
My soul was allus full o' song, fur my heart was light, an' my limbs was strong.  
An' I wasn't afeared to show my face to the sturdiest worker on the place.  
Well, I caught the fever that rule the day, an', finally, northward made my way.  
They said that things were better North, An' a man was held at his honest worth.  
Well, it may be so, but I have some doubt, an thirty years ain't wiped it out.  
Thar was lots of things in the North to admire, though they hadn't the warmth an' passion an' fire  
That all my life I'd been ust to seein' an' thought belonged to a human bein'.  
An' a thing I couldn't help but miss was the real ol' Southern heartiness.  
But year after year I worried along, while deep in my heart the yearnin' strong  
Grew stronger an' fiercer to visit once more the well loved scenes o' my native shore.  
But money was skeerce, an' time went on, till now full thirty years have gone  
Ere I turn my aged steps to roam back to my ol' Kaintucky home,  
Back to the ol' Kaintucky sights, back to the scene o' my youth's delights,  
Back whar my heart was full o' glee, back whar I fust found liberty.  
E'en now as I think the ol' times should be o'er, an' o' the joy they held in store --  
Yes, even now, on life's dark side, my heart swells out with honest pride.  
Oh, praise the Lamb, that I shall see once more the land so dear to me.  
Don't mind an ol' man's tears, but say it's joy, he's goin' back to-day."

Paul Laurence Dunbar  
1872 – 1906

## THE OLD HOMESTEAD

'Tis an old deserted homestead on the outskirts of the town,  
Where the roof is all moss-covered, and the walls are tumbling down'  
But around that little cottage do my brightest mem'ries cling,  
For 'twas there I spent the moments of my youth, -- life's happy spring.

I remember how I used to swing upon the old front gate,  
While the robin in the tree tops sung a night song to his mate;  
And how later in the evening, as the beaux were wont to do,  
Mr. Perkins, in the parlor, sat and sparked my sister Sue.

There my mother – heaven bless her! –Kissed or spanked as was our need,  
Any by smile or stroke implanted in our hearts fair virtue's seed;  
While my father, man of wisdom, lawyer keen, and farmer stout,  
Argued long with neighbor Dobbins how the corn crops would turn out.

Then the quiltings and the dances – how my feet were wont to fly,  
While the moon peeped through the barn chinks from her stately place on high.  
On those days, so sweet, so happy, ever backward o'er me roll;  
Still the music of that farm life rings an echo in my soul.

Now the old place is deserted. And the walls are falling down;  
All who made the home life cheerful, now have died or moved to town.  
But about that dear old cottage shall my mem'ries ever cling,  
For 'twas there I spent the moments of my youth, -- life's happy spring.

Paul Laurence Dunbar  
1872 – 1906

### GROWIN' GRAY

Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin' gray,  
An' it beats ole Ned to see the way 'At the crow's feet's a-getherin' aroun' your eyes;  
Tho' it ought n't to cause me no su'prise, Fur there's many a sun 'at you've seen rise  
An' many a one you've seen go down Sence your step was light an' your hair was brown,  
An' storms an' snows have had their way – Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin' gray.

Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin' gray,  
An' the youthful pranks 'at you used to play Are dreams of a far past long ago  
That lie in a heart where the fires burn low – That has lost the flame though it kept the glow,  
An' spite of drivin' snow an' storm Beats bravely on forever warm.  
December holds the place of May – Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin' gray.

Hello, ole many, you're gittin gray –  
Who cares what the carpin' youngsters say? For, after all, when the tale is told,  
Love proves if a man is young or old! Aold age can't make the heart grow cold  
When it does the will of an honest mind' When it beats with love fur all manking;  
Then the night byt leads to a fairer day – Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin' fray.

Paul Laurence Dunbar  
1872 – 1906

### APPRECIATION

My muvver's ist the nicest one 'at ever lived wiz folks;  
She lets you have ze mostes's fun, an laffs at all your jokes.  
I got a ol' maid auntiee, too, the worst you ever saw'  
Her eyes ist bore you through and through, -- she ain't a bit like ma.  
She's ist as slim as slim can be, an' when you want to slide  
Down on ze balusters, w'y she says 'at she's harrified.  
She ain't as nice as Uncle Ben, what shays 'at little boys  
Won't never grow to be big men unless they're fond of noise.  
But muvver's nicer zan 'em all, she calls you, "precious lamb."  
An' let's you roll your ten-pin ball, an' spreads your bread wiz jam.  
An' when you're bad, she ist looks sad, you fink she's goin' to dry;  
An' when she don't you're awful glad, an' den you're good, Oh, my!

Paul Laurence Dunbar  
1872 – 1906