

How can we make a memory live on forever?

Older generations have so much to teach us—if we take the time to listen. Every community has people who have lived long, full lives with valuable stories, knowledge, and skills to share. In this project, students will make friends with a resident of a retirement home. They will listen to the story of their new friend's life, and craft a biography capturing the moments that made their life meaningful.

Imagine if teachers across the nation helped students connect with and learn from previous generations. What a powerful new perspective they would gain on life!



Start
with why

Lesson 1: Introduce Aging, Compassion, and Empathy

Read aloud *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, by Mem Fox, to help students understand important themes related to aging: life and loneliness, meaning and memory. Then, have students further explore the concept of memory by making a human bar graph. **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ART SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

Lesson 2: Prepare for Your Senior Center Visit

Show videos, bring in experts, and conduct research to help students understand seniors and the world in which they grew up. Explain that students will make the world a better place by partnering with a senior friend and writing a biography of their new friend's life. **SCIENCE**

Lesson 3: Meet Your Senior Friend

Take a field trip to a local retirement home (or bring seniors to the classroom). Help students get to know their new friends by playing a whole-group game—Beach Ball Catch. Then, spark memories and ignite fun by playing a game of memory—with a twist. Students and seniors will work together to create memory game cards based on prompts. After the game, students interview their new friend to get to know them even better.



Think it
through

Lesson 4: Write Your Pen Pal

Use a pen-pal format to continue building a relationship between your students and their senior friends. There's something about sending and receiving handwritten letters that feels especially meaningful!

Lesson 5: Explore the Biography Genre

Prepare students to write their senior friends' biographies by exploring several exemplar texts, then analyzing them for common features. **SOCIAL STUDIES**



Work it out

Lesson 6: Use Theme to Structure a Biography

Help students organize their thoughts around a central theme. Use graphic organizers to scaffold them toward the creation of moving and memorable biographies.

Lesson 7: Write Biography of Senior Friend

Once students have collected and organized the ideas for their biographies, it's time for them to dive in and write, write, write! **MATH**



Fix it up

Lesson 8: Revise and Edit Biography

Revision is an art; good writers must be able to add to their work, remove things from it, and change what needs changing. Help students refine their work with strategies specific to a biography.



Share your
awesome

Lesson 9: Share Their Story

The hard work that students have put into crafting literary biographies pays off when they present their books to their senior friends, as well as to the people who love them. Watch students help their senior friends establish social media profiles and share their biographies with the world. What a great way to connect across generations!

Suggested project time: **9 hours**



Math

NUMBER SENSE AND EQUIVALENT FRACTIONS

Have students create a “life timeline” of their senior friend. Convert important time periods into fractions of that person’s life, and compare to benchmark fractions. [CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.5.NF.A.2](#)

English Language Arts

DETERMINE THE THEME OF A STORY

After reading *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, explore the idea of theme by connecting specific textual examples to a student-generated description of the book’s central idea.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#)

Science

PATTERNS OF THE NIGHT SKY

Drive home the idea of celestial patterns by finding a senior friend who was born under almost exactly the same night’s sky.

[NGSS 5-ESS1-2](#)

Social Studies

LIFE IN DIFFERENT ERAS

Have students consider similarities and differences between life today and life during the childhood of their senior friend.

[NCSS D2.His.2.3-5](#)

Social Emotional Learning

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS AND SOCIAL AWARENESS

Have students discuss relationship skills and social awareness by using empathy in their interactions with a senior friend.

[CASEL CORE COMPETENCIES](#)

Not teaching these standards?

Go to [BlueAppleTeacher.org](#) for more content-connection options.



Kit Supplies

- *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, by Mem Fox
- Beach Balls
- Thank-You Cards
- Decorative Paper
- Decorative Tape

Online Resources

- The Power of Handwritten Letters ([YouTube 2:53](#))
- “Make a Memory” Game
- Personal Letter Examples
- Literary Biography Graphic Organizer
- Cyber-Seniors Documentary Trailer ([YouTube 2:39](#))
- And so much more!



Bring the World to Your Students

- Discuss Aging with an Expert
- Meet a Historian

Bring Your Students to the World

- Present Your Published Heirloom
- Be Ellen-Worthy
- Meet the Press



Book Club

Conduct a book club with another class doing this project where students get together and discuss one or more of the biographies.



Cooperative Learning

How can I facilitate more cooperative learning in my classroom?

Differentiated Instruction

How can I differentiate instruction for my students?

This is just the beginning!

Go online to access the complete project.



- Clear **learning targets** and **step-by-step instructions**
- Dozens of links to **supporting resources**
- **Mini-lessons** aligned to content standards
- **Videos and contact information** from industry experts
- **Ideas to collaborate** with other classrooms
 - Practical, point-of-use **instructional strategies**
 - Access to a grade-specific **Project Coach**

