



Classroom activities:

A. Oral history is a way of passing down information by word-of-mouth from one generation to another. Experience within cultures of people who can read and write indicates that each time anyone reconstructs a story from memory, changes to the story are made. However, the core of the story is usually retained.

Oral history is often associated with folklore and storytelling, so somewhere, there is a kernel of truth to it. Many museums have an active oral history program for recording and collecting family and community stories.

Do you have a family story that your grandmother told your mother, and now your mother tells you? Do you have other family oral histories?

B. Another way to learn about the past is to see it preserved. For instance, the Florence Ranch Homestead has been returned in many ways to its early days. This is done through historical preservation methods. See how many blanks you can fill in after you tour the Homestead.

1. It is an original pioneer Texas home, on the _____ property.
2. It was built in 1871, _____ years before Mesquite became a township.
3. Under Emet Florence's direction, the ranch became famous for raising _____ and _____.
4. The livestock brand was the _____, which looks like a turtle.
5. There are two very unique features to the house: an indoor _____ and a _____.
6. The house was restored to look like it would have looked during _____.
7. The stove used _____ to cook and heat water for baths.
8. The wood used on the house came from _____.
9. The trees used for the foundation are called _____, and grow here naturally. They are very hardy and insect resistant. They have a French name, and American Indians used this wood to make bows for their arrows.

Choose from these words to fill in the blanks above:

1890-1900
original
wood
well

East Texas
sheep
closet
horses (Bonus: what kind of horses?)

terrapin
two
bois d'arc

C. If one object in the Florence house could speak, what would it tell you about living in the early 1900s? What would it say about the Florence family?