

# INTERVIEWING SKILLS

ENTRY DEADLINE: 02.27.09

## Unlocking History's Mysteries

*History is not just something that happened long ago. Every day, events occur that shape the way people think, how they act, and what they believe. Here's your chance to help record history. All you have to do is interview someone about an event he or she lived through and write about it for the Current Events Eyewitness to History contest. Here are some interviewing tips to help you get started. Good luck!*

### SET-UP

- Find someone to interview, such as a relative, neighbor, or friend. If the person agrees to be interviewed, set up a time for the interview that is convenient for him or her. Ask the person what event he or she witnessed so you can prepare for the interview.

### PREPARATION

- Hit the books or go online to research the event or time period your interviewee wants to talk about. Once you have a good understanding of the topic, write a list of at least 10 questions to ask. Make sure your questions require more than a yes or no answer. Some possible questions include: Where were you when this event happened? How did this event make you feel? How did the event shape your life?

### THE INTERVIEW

- Make sure you start the interview off right—be on time! Thank the person for agreeing to meet with you. Bring a pen and paper with you so you can take notes. You can also use a tape recorder. But be careful—you should always take notes, too, just in case the tape recorder stops working.
- To begin the interview, ask the person how to spell his or her name. Then start out with some basic questions, such as: Where were you born? Where have you lived? Ask your interviewee to spell the names of people and places he or she mentions.
- Be a good listener. Give your interviewee plenty of time to answer your questions, and don't interrupt the person when he or she is talking.
- Don't confine yourself to the written questions. If your interviewee brings up something else interesting or doesn't answer your question fully, ask follow-up questions—even if they aren't on your list. If you don't understand something, ask your interviewee to explain it to you.
- Go for details. The best stories are ones that include many details so a reader can really imagine what it was like to be part of that event or time period in history.
- After the interview, send a thank-you letter to the person you interviewed.

### Eyewitness to History Contest Rules

- Interview someone who personally witnessed a historic event. **(Witnessing an event on TV doesn't qualify.)**
- Type up the interview in a **question-and-answer format**. It should be no more than 1,000 words. You should also include a paragraph explaining what *you* learned from the interview.
- Have your teacher sign the written interview.
- Entries should be mailed by Feb. 27, 2009, to Current Events, Eyewitness to History contest, Weekly Reader, 1 Reader's Digest Road, Pleasantville, NY 10570-7000.