

Remember that established narrative?

• How long did the strike last?

• Who were the two people in the photographs?

• What did the NUM stand for?

• Put these events in the right order:

- a. Plans are announced to close 20 coal mines (the NUM reveals it was 70).
- b. Fights break out between strikers and the police
- c. Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister.
- d. Thatcher calls the union leaders the 'enemy within'
- e. Arthur Scargill calls a national strike of miners, despite not calling for a national vote
- f. The strikes come to an end with the Conservative Party victorious



Whose history?

This pivotal point in British history is remembered for:

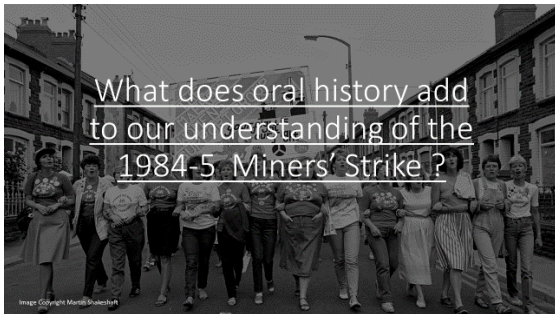
- The politicians
- The trade union leaders
- The strikers who were violent towards police and other miners.

This is what the national newspapers and tv stations reported.

But what about people who weren't miners but still connected to the strike? How can we learn about their history and see how it complicates that established narrative?



What does oral history add to our understanding of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike?



Oral history can challenge the established narrative

Recently, several historians have started interviewing women from the local area, and using other sorts of evidence, to discover their stories.

Here is one of them, Dr Natalie Thomlinson:



Image copyright Martin Shaleshult



Dr Natalie Thomlinson's interviews



Slide 1 and 2: the lesson begins with a simple recap of several key themes to have emerged last lesson. These focus on the headlines and the basic overview – the teacher might light to expand upon each answer to jog pupils' memories.

Slide 3: to begin the new lesson, this slide takes the finale of last lesson (why do we remember the miners' strike a certain way) and introduces a new idea (who is missing and how we might find out about other voices and other stories in history). The teacher might wish to get a range of responses to gauge whether this is completely new to them or whether they have some concept of the past as a construct with different methodological approaches. It will be important to steer them towards women at some point and discuss why women are often neglected (or you get one-off 'great women' like Thatcher).

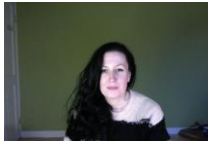
Slide 4: reminder of the overall enquiry. It would be a good opportunity to link this question to their homework to remind them that they will need to hold this question in mind as they learn about the miners' strike but also through their own oral history interviews and analysis.

Slide 5: now the focus on oral history and the pupils as investigators of the other voices in the story has been established, the time has come to bring the historian to life. Show them this short clip of Natalie Thomlinson, a professional historian, introducing her research into women in the miners' strike. At the end it would be worth asking comprehension questions to reinforce the idea of the historian having their own personality and interests, and approaching interviews with an expectation in mind.

Slide 5: watch the research project video with Natalie and the women. Emphasise that this is part of cutting edge research that is shaping our understanding of this important topic. It would be interesting to stop at the end and ask what they thought Natalie might have learnt about the miners' strike that she didn't know.

But an oral historian listens, pieces together and forms arguments about the past...

Here Dr Natalie Thomlinson has analysed her interviews for us:



You are going to become the oral historians!

Before next lesson you are going to interview (in pairs if you want) a woman who was an adult during the 1984-1985 Miners' Strike.

Discuss now:

What questions would you like to find out the answers to?

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Miners' Strike Oral History Interview

Before the start of the lesson

What questions would you like to ask the woman you are interviewing about the Barnsley Miners' Strike?

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Before you interview anyone

a. write down your opinion on the Barnsley Miners' Strike.

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b. briefly describe your interviewees and what you already know about their experiences during the Miners' Strike.

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c. write down what you expect to discuss from your interviewees.

You are going to become the oral historians!

Before next lesson you are going to interview (in pairs if you want) a woman who was an adult during the 1984-1985 Miners' Strike.

Instructions:

1. Complete the front side of the worksheet BEFORE you interview.
2. Ask friends and family if you can't think of anyone.
3. Arrange an interview for maybe 5-10 minutes. It can be on the phone.
4. Record the interview on your phone.
5. Have a lot of questions - but also don't be afraid to 'chit-chat' and ask questions based on what they tell you!
6. Write a transcript of the interview on the worksheet.

Miners' Strike Oral History Interview

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Before you interview anyone

a. write down your opinion on the Barnsley Miners' Strike.

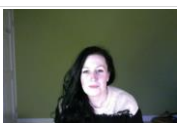
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b. briefly describe your interviewees and what you already know about their experiences during the Miners' Strike.

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c. write down what you expect to discuss from your interviewees.

Final words of advice from our oral historian:



And for next time: bring in your completed worksheet and any photos of images or materials the interviewee shares with you.

Slide 7: In light of the women's testimony, Natalie's questions, and their own thoughts, show the pupils the video of Natalie analysing her own data. It is really important they see what she has 'done' with the data collected.

Slide 8: Time to start preparing for their own interviews. Keep linking back to Natalie and keeping the focus on the way that a historian does not just ask random questions; they learn about a period, ask new questions, recognise when interviewees give interesting answers and pursue these with newer questions, and analyse the answers in light of the history they have learnt elsewhere. The task here is to write down a range of questions in their books. When they have fed back to the teacher and the teacher has helped them see what good oral history questions would look like, they can write several ones they want to ask on their work sheet.

If you do not think your pupils will be easily able to interview women about their experiences of the miners' strike, you might want to skip slides 8-10, and look instead at the alternative homework task on p.3.

Slide 9: dependent on time they can complete the first side of the worksheet either at home or in the lesson. This establishes key features of the oral history process: what their own views are on the strike (based on their household account, the established narrative and the video of the women), who they are interviewing (if they arranged it) and what they expect to discover. All three of these are vital to make explicit in advance in order to elevate the interviews from 'chats about the past' to 'engaging with oral history'.

Slide 10: finally the lesson ends with Natalie giving her top tips for conducting the interview. The teacher will need to decide how best to instruct and support the pupils for the interviews (it might be that members of staff can be interviewed) but it is key that they record it on their phone and transcribe at least part of it on the work sheet (both responses AND questions).

ALTERNATIVE HOMEWORK

If you do not think your pupils will be able to easily access a woman with first-hand memories of the miners' strike, you could instead ask them to listen to one (or more) of the extracts from the interviews from our project, available on the online exhibition from our project website:

<https://www.coalfield-women.org/>

Then ask students to write down why the extract listened to disrupts the established narrative of the miners' strike.

The transcripts for these extracts are one of the teaching resources provided.

