

Teacher Resources:

Fake ID

Lothian

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These notes contain ideas for curriculum linked classroom activities which involve students in reviewing and moving into performance and multi-media but are based on the author's process of researching and adapting the novel 'Fake I.D.'

Curriculum links:

- Technology: Internet searching and evaluating. Cyber family research.
- Project planning- how to present the findings
- History- how your family lived in those times. Wartime.Documents. Fake I.D.
- Design: Digitally enhancing photos. Passports. Family trees.
- Geography-where they came from? Border crossings.
- Mapping; From original homeland, the journey out and the new land.
- Pioneers: Why? How? Motivation.
- Science Genetics: medical links. Inheritance. DNA
- Relationships: family size and roles.
- English: Writing and researching skills Translation
- Health: Olympic athletes & types of sports. Dancing. Hockey.
- Comparative religion and politics, often within the one family.
- Refugees and migration
- Maths with calculations of dates and distances and time zones
- LOTE Interpreting. Having different names. Hungarian culture.

Fake I.D.

Hazel Edwards thanks the sleuthing 'genis' of the State Trustees, especially Kath Ensor, who helped with the research.

1. Bio and blurb
2. Discussion Issues
3. Plotting 'Fake I.D.'the creative process
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Author Bio

In her 'Writing Non-Boring Family Histories' workshops Hazel Edwards met a geni (genealogist) whose job is to trace missing relatives of those who have died without a will or left unclaimed millions. Using Internet searches, D.N.A tests and document checks, these super sleuths prove or disprove family links. This gave Hazel the idea for 'Fake I.D.' where Zoe's grandmother was not who she claimed to be.

'Cluey' subjects like Genetics and Genealogy fascinate Hazel who has even travelled on a scientific expedition to Antarctica to research her books. She does NOT look like her relatives nor does she have millions to leave anyone.

Blurb for Fake I.D.

Some kids use fake ID. But to find your Gran used fake ID for years is a shock. For Zoe's family history assignment, she had to interview Gran, her oldest relative. But Zoe was too late to talk with her. On the day of Gran's funeral. Zoe found Gran's *'not to be opened until after my death'* package. So she opened it.

Turns out, Gran was not just Magda, she had other names too. And other lives. Had she been a 'con-artist' or a political activist? What could you inherit? Just red hair? A big nose? Or maybe 'bad' genes?

Zoe finds out, with the help of her hockey playing, 'techie' mate Luke, via www.finalthoughts.com, the Dead Persons' Society and Red Cross International which finds Missing People.

And, who are the others in the digitally enhanced 'family' photo? Not all families are as they first appear. And yet, do the labels really matter?

Discussion Issues (These can be used in group discussions or as literary project ideas for individual students)

- Under-age Kids using Fake ID to get into a bar. In what ways is that different from using Fake ID to get out of a war zone? Fake documents? Living under a false name?
- Link to family history, migrants, refugees and wartime displacement.
- Pretending to be someone else. Is that a crime? Does the end justify the means?
- Is it a crime to keep a secret if you think that 'telling' will make it worse for others?
- 'Cluey' skills of how to find out about the past. Tracking missing people. Surveillance. Who are the professionals? State Trustees? International Red Cross? What is genealogy?
- How important are genetics in deciding how a person will act? Are you going to be like your 'olds'? Family feeling and wanting to belong. What if you do/don't look like them?
- Using the Internet to trace someone, internationally. Espionage. Eco-politics. White collar crime.
- Historic events: Olympic Games 1956 in Melbourne. Hungarian revolution 1956
- Is it a crime to change your mind about which political side you're on? What if family members were on different sides? What if you find out something bad about your relatives?
- What does your family tree look like? Any family secrets? Can you imagine your grandmother's life as a girl? Do you have any facts to check or only the family stories you've heard? How far back can you describe your family?
- Electronic wills and 'e-mails after death'. Macabre or practical? Have you written your will?
- How can photos be digitally enhanced?
- Unusual names for historic societies e.g. 'The Dead Person's Society.
- How do you prove who you are?

Plotting 'Fake ID'

an article of 3,000 words

jotted as the novel was being plotted across a couple of years to explain the creative process of research and characterisation

by Hazel Edwards

'Do not open until after my death' was printed in black on the package. So, I opened it.

At your Gran's funeral, you don't expect to find out that she wasn't really your Gran. Fake I.D. that's what my Gran had. For years and years.

This is the start of 'Fake ID' a novel intended as a style successor to my YA 'thriller' 'Stalker'. Rarely do I get a draft opening which I keep in the final version, but in this case, I might. While it's important to be dramatic initially, it's also a challenge to sustain that conflict level for a novel.

Title Choice:

Working titles usually change, but the duality of 'Fake ID', a term which young people often use for ID to get into night-clubs and bars when they are under the drinking age, makes it relevant. Alternatively it could be 'False ID'.

Idea:

'Where did the idea come from?' 'Is the most common question writers are asked.

As my disabled cousin's guardian, I've been dealing with trustees and indirectly learnt of the amazing stories behind some wills, or the hassles caused by lack of a will. Intriguing stories of assumed or lost identities are buried in files. After getting a security clearance, I've been researching with the 'geni' (genealogists) sleuths at State Trustees. They track the descendants of those who die intestate, (without a will,) until the estate money runs out or they find a genuine relative, (substantiated sometimes by DNA testing), who becomes the beneficiary.

Protagonist Zoe will be the 15 year old grand daughter seeking the 'Gran' facts of her family history for medical reasons and her school assignment. My fictional thriller will revolve around a 60-ish political activist, who in her mid twenties assumed another woman's identity to get into Australia and how and why she sustained the fake ID.

Imagineering Exercise:

Like 3 D brain exercise, I'm jotting this 'think piece' to sort out where I am going in the novel. Posing questions to myself is a useful discipline and maybe an illuminating contrast once the novel is finished. Plots and characters often take on lives of their own. For me, the beginning stages of research and plotting lead to the pleasure of creating something multi-layered which wasn't there before, and yet sounds plausible. Fiction must have an internal logic and a thriller must be even more carefully structured, using suspense as the hooks. That's why the time sequence may not be chronological and there may need to be flashbacks.

Themes:

Is illusion necessarily false? How much do the labels matter? Are people's differing perceptions of the same events and relationships equally valid? Are people always who they claim to be, are they 'faking' or after a while do they 'believe' only their version of events? If they say, "I'm an activist," or any '-ist' often enough, do they believe it? What's the difference between a 'fact' and a 'belief'?

All these clouds of thoughts are looming around my head. I keep putting off writing the 1,000 words per day, to complete the first draft before I leave for France in July 2000, but I must start soon. There are different kinds of procrastination: the lazy kind and the thinking kind. Occasionally, the thoughts need time to shape into the right story thread formations. Thoughts like:

- How does someone maintain a 'personality' and not just a name-label for many decades? As a kid, I loved reading espionage tales about spies. Why they did it 'under-cover' and 'long-term' intrigued me. I loved reading about master spy Kim Philby. Was being a traitor more than a game of treachery? Was it an emotional and intellectual exercise?
- Were the political motives altruistic or were they just 'kidding' themselves? Not being able to 'open up' to anyone meant constant intellectual monitoring of small details. The permanent acting.
- would you become the other person? Would you 'match' in ways other than the necessary dates, height, weight etc.? How could you emotionally 'take-on' another person's life. Where did that leave them, if they weren't dead?
- would you need to have a very logical mind to maintain the multiple identities? How would you remember to whom you'd told what?

Facts

One of the 'genis' who specialised in estate/property management showed me the elaborate chart on which she'd tracked the 46 assumed identities, properties and money transactions of 'Jane' a 'con' woman who left millions, and no will. What a devious, but multi-layered mind. A coloured woman, she had a white South African identity card in the number of an native African, with her photo, and her so-called 'age' which was more than a decade younger than her biological body. What a lot to remember! Had she planned all that or had it evolved?

A 'shady lady' 'Jane's' motive was greed, and the accumulation of money via shady dealings, whereas my 'Magda' needed to have a more admirable motive for a complex life of deceit. Being an idealistic 'political' in her twenties, with the potential to being

blackmailed or deported because of some kind of documentary evidence, such as a photo or secret police report would be more credible. Even 'fear' of being exposed would be sufficient motive.

Motives:

A private detective I interviewed for other reasons, claimed that it was simpler for a woman to 'fade' into a new background because she could change her physical appearance more easily. Clothes style. Hair. Make-up. What caught fake ID women was documentation in connection with their children. If they enrolled the children for any benefits, or for schooling, they could be tracked, even if the surname had changed. Changing countries requires documentation, and that's when the new identity would be assumed.

Documentary Clues:

Some of my 'clues' would need to revolve around 'documents' such as photos, birth, marriage or death certificates and maybe paintings, postcards, ID papers or blood donor cards and family albums. A medical record was another possibility as evidence of genetic links or their absence.

The 'genis' explained that most European documentation for births, marriages and deaths centres on the town hall, and that often town names changed or were over-run during wartime. Confusion about data such as birth and death dates would be more likely then. It might be possible to take over the identity of another woman, as long as a genuine birth certificate could be used as the starting data. So it would be necessary to be superficially similar in physical details like height. Colouring could be changed. Age differences didn't matter as much as the woman became older, but five years difference for a teenager would matter. A Eurasian woman was another mysterious possibility. Someone of mixed race or dual cultures could pass more easily in some societies but not in others.

The motive for keeping the secret needed to be extremely strong. Sex, politics, money or religion are often the strong motivations. A secret to hide? Maybe a secret with political implications? Or could it be merely the 'fear' that something might be revealed? To make the plot plausible I needed some documentary evidence which Zoe would find. Could it be an old photo with 'Magda' arm-in-arm with a noted 'political' leader of the times who has now fallen into disrepute? Could Magda have been a student editor of a university newspaper? If so, in what country? If she were about 20 then, what would the date have been? Who had a revolution about then?

Background:

1956 was the Hungarian Revolution, when the Communists took over. It was also the year Melbourne held the Olympics. I rang an Hungarian acquaintance whose family had abandoned property in Budapest pre-'56, and whose grand daughter had been permitted to use some of the restitution money when she visited. My acquaintance

talked of her engineer father being forced to work for the Secret police and then being afraid, post-war, that when others talked of 'secrets' to the Americans for payment, he would be assumed to have talked. And he didn't. So fear kept him from talking or returning.

Deciding to use the '56 Hungarian Revolution as a significant date narrowed the research. A real case the genis called 'False Maria', involved a girlfriend assuming the wife's identity to exit the country in the political turmoil of '56, but the real wife dying in '63 as verified during a check by Red Cross's international search, instigated by a brother. Facts like this could be dramatised for fiction too.

Migration Selection Documents gave the name, town and birthplace. Often there would be later documents relating to naturalisation. I'd need to use these as clues for Magda's past.

Naming Characters:

I'd have to be careful that 'Magda' didn't take over from 'Zoe' as the major character. The name 'Zoe' means life and is age-appropriate, but the "Gran" needed an 'older' name, or names. 'Con' men or women with multiple identities often kept to similar initials, but maybe 'Magda' had no choice because she had to assume an existing name and personality?

If Zoe needs to admire the older woman even grudgingly, then Magda needs to have done something altruistic, or at least admirable. Being a 'con' artist, unless there are extenuating circumstances doesn't seem enough. She would need some fascinating hobbies, skills or attitudes.

Genetics Twist:

Frankly I don't always have my twist worked out at the beginning. It evolves. Maybe the twist could be Zoe's fear of carrying a genetic problem, then finding out that her grandmother is not the 'name' she claimed to be. But maybe Magda is still her biological grandmother. However, is her medical record accurate or was that false too? So I need to find a genetic motive running down the female line. More research needed.

My 'genis' told me of a case, where DNA matching was to be used to prove that the claimants were the children of the woman who died two years before. If the DNA matched, and the documentary evidence such as birth certificates were valid, they would claim the millions left when the woman died without a will. Since the woman died two years ago, how could they get a sample for a DNA match? That's where the 'genis' skill showed. Researching, they found the woman had a biopsy done, a year before her death. The pathologist still had the sample which was kept for five years. They had cells against which to check the claimants. Brilliant. What 'biological samples' from Magda might be available, that Zoe could track, even after the grandmother's death or disappearance?

Missing Person:

The next technical problem was whether to open with Gran's funeral, which meant she was actually dead, or have a memorial service, so that she was technically dead, but there was no body for checking, because she'd vanished. That would leave the possibility during the story that she was still alive somewhere and would heighten the suspense.

I needed to check police Missing Person's procedures. When was someone presumed dead, even there was no body? After how long and in what circumstances? An explosion? Lost at sea? Washed out to sea? Air crash? A bad fire? But I knew that forensic scientists were arson experts, so that was unlikely.

A disaster of some kind? Train smash? But there would need to be a substitute body? And what would be the reason that at this particular time, 'Magda' wanted to vanish? Had she 'set it up' or was it coincidental?

Another possible 'twist' had arisen during my research. A 'defacto' husband had left his estate 'to my wife' but the woman with whom he was living, was not his legal wife. So his original 'wife' or 'their' original children would inherit. This could have been prevented if he had 'named' her by her actual names, rather than by the role of his wife. Could 'Magda' who had been living as a wife, be legally by-passed? If so, why should it matter? Was a large amount of money involved as a possible inheritance or did it relate to controlling patents or formula for the family business? What should I do about getting the middle generation (Zoe's Mum) out of the way so the story focuses on the teenager?

The Personal:

'Agnes' was my father's mother and only in the last few years I've known anything about her. Glaswegian born, she apparently travelled to Russia and was probably an active Socialist; despite her seven children (I thought she had six and my father was the eldest. She didn't and he wasn't.)

Recently I'd been sent a 'scan' by e-mail attachment of a family photo including my father when he was about ten. But the greatest shock was that I was looking at my own face, in the face of his mother 'Agnes'. Genetic links. Maybe I could transfer this emotional experience to my character Zoe?

The 'genis' also mentioned occasional 'matching' where it was physically obvious that people were closely related when an adult child looked like a parent. Maybe I could give my characters distinctive physical traits like red hair?

Getting started is always the challenge. To 'think my way into the story' I look back over my notes, 'high-lighting' phrases or things which could be used as clues or twists. Red herrings such as the loop in writing a name causing Miles to be mistaken for Giles and thousands of hours wasted researching in the wrong part of the alphabet, is something I'll use as a false clue and a twist in the plot but not necessarily with those names.

Sleuthing Methods:

Zoe will be Internet familiar, and simply 'track' electronically, but she may need a computer 'nerd' friend to enable her to discuss why she is following certain leads.

Perhaps there is some doubt about Zoe's mother's natural father. i.e. Zoe's grandfather. Maybe Magda was pregnant or thought to be pregnant and maybe the disgraced 'political' activist in the documents or photographs is Zoe's grandfather? Were they divorced? Is Magda a bigamist? Or is it sufficient if Zoe worries she might be?

An unexpected phone call from a charming, elderly Hungarian count. He'd heard from my 'geni' I needed help with naming my characters. Had I realised that Hungary was a stratified society where your name, sport and occupation typed you according to class. Fencing and riding were aristocratic (and not paid). Football was working class. Swimming was a cross-class sport. A most informative half hour and I changed the names to those typical of the class, while Magda was a cross-over name.

No more excuses.
Now I must start writing....

Hazel Edwards 11.4.2000

It's now July 17th and I leave for France in three days time. For once I have not kept to my writing deadline. The shape and length of the book has changed. The publisher would prefer a 15,000 word crime story for 10-14 year olds. I'm happy about writing shorter, but the idea/theme is quite large.

September 2000.

I needed a stronger motive than Zoe's school history assignment, for Gran suddenly revealing her secret past.

While in France, a TV news item gave me a link for my plot between present day and 1956. Apparently, Hungarian secret police files had just been opened under an amendment to the law to investigate paid informers. Many 'informers' who thought their names would be kept secret, were now revealed. Journalists' reports about former dissidents who had earlier collaborated with the communists, recruiting 20 year olds to work with the spy media, was a fact. This could provide the impetus for Gran suddenly being worried that mis-information would trouble her descendants like Zoe and that she should leave an honest record of what really happened.

Another plot link came as we walked past a photo-restorer shop in the French town of Nante. 'Digitally enhanced photos were displayed in the shop window, showing how dead or missing family members could be 'inserted' or 'grafted' into an existing photo. (Or others could be deleted!) plot? If Pa's son had recently made contact with Magda via a Red Cross Internet search, did Magda want to acknowledge him (especially as his own mother (the original Magda) was now dead? Would Magda arrange for a photo of Pa's family to include a digitally enhanced son? And maybe even the original first wife

Magda? But why would she do this? And should it arrive at a suitably dramatic moment after her death, either in the letter box or via an answer phone message from the photographic shop to come and collect it?

Each fact needed to be a clue used by Zoe as the main crime investigator. Otherwise the emphasis would be upon Gran/Magda.

Next I listed the facts, (as clues), decided on how Zoe would find them, and then the significance to the plot. This was getting complicated.

Post Script; October 9th 2000

Concentrated writing over September finished the book which took months longer than expected. Frankly, I felt I was suffering researchitis in that I'd learnt so many fascinating facts, I wanted to include them all, but they needed to be dramatised and fit the character. Kath my 'geni' checked the facts, and a few procedural changes were made on the final draft, especially relating to inheritance laws. She also kindly mapped me a family history tree for my fictitious characters. A colleague said I had too many questions and ... which I tend to use for suspense. I fixed these.

September 2001.

The publishers would like me to length 'Fake ID' to at least 25,000 words to fit their Takeaway series because they feel the book does not contain a 'crime' to fit their crime-wave series. Maybe I was not specific enough about Gran's actions.

I re-read and admit the ending is abrupt. Rather than go back and insert extra material, perhaps it would be better merely to extend the story by 1-2 chapters and provide a more emotionally satisfying ending for Zoe's relationship based on the memories of her grandmother. But what else could happen? The grandmother is dead. Maybe the mother should return and share her interpretations of what might have happened with Magda? Maybe the real story is in Zoe coming to terms with her body and her life, and so the emphasis should be upon her and Luke?

So I create working titles for the extra chapters, so at least I've got something. Then I have a brainwave. I decide that Zoe should e-mail her deceased grandmother as an emotionally satisfying way of coming to terms with her past. I want to parallel the Luke-Zoe relationship with the Gran and Tibor to show that maybe personal relationships when you're young and passionate may take priority over global issues.

This is an honest account of the process by which a novel evolves. Maybe you'd now like to read 'Fake ID' (Lothian) and evaluate what has changed.

Hazel Edwards

REVIEW published in Sisters in Crime Newsletter, March 2003 and inhouse for State Trustees newsletter

Fake ID, by Hazel Edwards

Fake ID introduces the reader to the addictive and rewarding hobby of genealogy or tracing family history. Although the profile of a typical genealogist has been shown to be a female aged fifty plus with tertiary education the main character in this story is Zoe, a fifteen year old secondary student, who together with her friend Luke embark upon tracing her family history over three generations.

The author, Hazel Edwards introduces the reader to some of the ideas of true research using many differing techniques including, personal interviews, checking historic records, DNA testing and by making appropriate contacts over the “world-wide-web” by e-mail.

The results of these searches set against a background of the political situation in Hungary in the 1950’s and the Melbourne Olympic Games allow for the super sleuths to construct much more than a chart of names and dates. They are able to place family events into context and understand the actions of Zoe’s grandmother and her need for a fake ID.

This thriller is a must read for the family members of all genealogists as it may assist them to understand the nature of the hobby and its impact on their own family life where mundane things such as house-work may have to take second place to a trip to a cemetery or a visit to a library to find the missing piece to their family puzzle. Readers will be caught up with the ingenious plot and the truth uncovered by step-by-step research.

Kath Ensor

Genealogical Researcher: State Trustees

Increasingly books are being reviewed online rather than in literary journals and here is an Internet example.

January 2003: Online. Bella's Books for Kids

Title: Fake ID

Author: Hazel Edwards

Paperback ISBN: 0734404425

Publisher: Lothian RRP: \$12.95

Review: After her grandmother's funeral, Zoe begins to unravel the mystery of Gran's identity. Why had she been using a fake ID for years? What happened back in the old country that would make a person go underground? And who are these strangers in a batch of photographs?

With the help of the Internet and her nerdy friend Luke, Zoe discovers a whole new world of genealogy, cyber-history and sites where electronic 'final thoughts' can be launched after a person's death.

This is an interesting and novel approach to the issues of identity so often found in novels for teens and young adults. Ostensibly aimed at 12-15 year-olds, I wondered if perhaps the book will be more interesting to those a little younger. Nevertheless, the sleuthing theme with its up-to-date technology should keep readers sufficiently engaged.

Jing Yang Zhao's Review of Fake ID

Sisters in Crime Newsletter, March 2003

Witty and funny, Hazel has fashioned an amusing situation of a teenager finding out that her belly-dancing, cyber-surfer Grandmother Magda was not all she seemed, and that Magda might not even be her real name. Plenty of crooks and teens use fake ID for multiple reasons but an old woman? Is Gran a crook?

On the day of her grandmother's funeral, Zoe finds a box of her valued possessions. The box has evidence that her grandmother has numerous identities.

Intrigued, Zoe seeks the help of her hockey-loving, cyber surfing and slightly geeky friend Luke-warm (Luke Wearn) and uses the web to trace her mysterious and strange family history and find out who, and what, her grandmother really was.

Light hearted, with many surprises and stuffed with humour Fake ID is a good entertaining read. With a quick, consistent pace, it suits people with a short attention span. Recommended for readers looking for something fun and different.

Young adult reviewer Jing Yang Zhao

Viewpoint: on Books for Young people: Autumn 2003

Fake ID, Lothian ISBN 07344 0442 5 \$12.95

Reviewer AJ

The knowledge Zoe grew up with about her grandparents is thrown into confusion when her grandmother dies. What is the significance of a partially deleted e-mail and a package containing photos and letters which has instructions that it is not to be opened until after the grandmother's death? Zoe must unravel the mystery that surrounds her grandmother and her ancestry and her investigation forms the substantive structure of the plot.

The reader is left guessing and the ending is a surprise although appreciated in hindsight. We are able to empathise with Zoe's experience of the grieving process. FAKLE ID raises many questions, among them 'does learning about a person's past affect what they meant to you and their role in your life?'

Edwards' subtle comparison between Zoe and her friend Luke's life style is impressive. Historical comparisons between the lives of those experienced in wartime and contemporary times, add to the book's interest.

Fake Id by Hazel Edwards
Lothian Books/Takeaways
ISBN: 0-7344-42-5
P/Back
RRP \$ 12.95.

Reviewed by Stephanie, Year 12 for Lollypop Magazine

On the day of her Gran's funeral, Zoe opens a package labelled 'not to be opened until after my death'. What she finds is a mystery, her Gran has fake id. But does that mean that Zoe's Gran has been living a lie during her life in Australia? Is she a bigamist? What's her real name, and why did she hide her true identity? Zoe, with the help of her friend Luke and the website www.finalthoughts.com (a Dead Person's Society online!), intends to find out.

This is a mystery with a 21st century twist, as Zoe's search starts with postcards and photos, and leads her to question the Missing Millions TV show host, and search for clues over the internet. I'm not usually interested in mysteries, but this one sparked my interest and held it. The narrative voice, with Zoe narrating, as the reader follows her as she discovers the truth about her Grandmother's identity, not only makes the story more interesting, but it allows for the character to be developed without slowing the story's plot.

Reviewed by Stephanie, Year 12

Review: Fake ID (Book).

Source: School Library Journal; May2004, Vol. 50 Issue 5, p146-146,

144p. CIP. Lothian dist. by Star Bright. 2003.

pap. \$9.95. ISBN 0-7344-0442-5.

Gr 6-9-- When Zoe is given a package after her grandmother's death, she enlists the help of her friend Luke to help unravel the mystery surrounding Gran's secret past. Through trial and error, the two young people discover that Magda Kovacs was really Dagmar Kiss, a refugee who fled her home during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and changed her identity before settling in Australia. A journalist who stood up for her beliefs, she feared being arrested by the government and assumed the identity of another woman from her village. As Zoe discovers bits and pieces that raise questions about Gran's background and her character, she comes to the conclusion that all is not as it appears in her family and faces some painful but enlightening truths as the woman's remarkable story unfolds. Edwards handles this intriguing tale with aplomb. Zoe and Luke are likable characters, and the lively and believable dialogue enhances the narrative without ever showing signs of strain or awkwardness. The plot, with its many twists and turns, will keep readers interested until the end.

By Trevelyn E. Jones, Editor; Luann Toth, Managing Editor; Marlene Charnizon, Associate Editor; Daryl Grabarek, Contributing Editor; Jeanne Larkins, Associate Editor and Robert Gray, East Central Regional Library, Cambridge, MN

4. Article

Parent Magazine 2003 Creating a Non- Boring Family History

by Hazel Edwards

(author of Writing a Non Boring Family History')

How much do your children know about YOUR grandparents' past? Can anybody else identify that woman third from the left in the old photo? Your son has the same sandy hair and short temper! That's a worry. Would anyone else be able to relate stories about family characteristics or even illnesses? Any family secrets like the wartime practice of refugees 'passing' under fake names which was the beginning idea for my novel, 'Fake ID'. (Lothian)?

Family histories and 'herstories' may be clues to your future genes or your children's health and personalities. They are also an insight into a beep-free world, where not everything happened on a screen. Where ice-chests, pioneering emigrant families, 'dunny men' and 'yarning around the fire' rather than DVD entertainment systems were the norm. History puts current life into perspective.

Readers love 'gossip' and history is just high gossip or anecdotes which are mini stories. Your children can meet their relatives via stories on the page or from oral tales while current history happens in e-mails and digital photos.

While running workshops on 'Writing a Non Boring Family History' I've been fascinated by the sleuthing skills used by 'geni' which is what genealogists are called for short. While researching my novel 'Fake I.D.' which has a cyber-sleuthing theme I became familiar with the Internet resources available for tracking lost relatives, leaving electronic messages or even how your wishes could be e-mailed after your death via www.finalthoughts.com and how an adolescent would handle these.

History or Her story Mystery.

Creating a family history is like solving a mystery from clues such as documents, jewellery or photos. Maybe you've inherited the 'box of bits' when an elderly relative died? Maybe your family's blended or split? And you want your children to know about their 'other' ancestors? Maybe a reunion is the deadline for some kind of family record to be published?

Formats?

Decide which format according to the type of information you possess.

- photos with captions, for your young children,
- CD with scanned photos and text

- audio-tape, or 'talking book'
- electronic-book to e-mail to overseas relatives
- a recipe collection from the cooks in your family
- a story of three generations of women with the same name?

What do you include?

How do you write about family secrets? (Depends whether the information is on public record) Use discretion and small print. With Internet access, family history has become a cyber-search. You may find you're not who you thought you were. What do you do about Grandma's love letters? (They belong to the descendants of the lover-writer)

Maybe your kids won't want to read it now, but they might later. Contact local family history societies via your public library. Many issue basic 'Family History' booklets in which you can fill names and dates for your children, as a record.

Here are some hints on shaping your intriguing ancestors, quirky anecdotes and data so that 'his-story' or 'her-story' don't become a 'blandised' list of births, marriages and deaths.

Ten Hints for Creating Your Family History:

1. Consider your prospective reader: Family and friends? Does it offer unusual insights into lifestyles, periods or personalities? Is it aimed at the general reader, the specialist or just your family? Would it be relevant for tourists visiting your area? Or is it just for your children, later? That's okay too.
2. Feature the conflict: Unless there is a conflict, which doesn't necessarily mean violence, there is no drama. There are three major areas of conflict: within the individual, between individuals and between the individuals and the society. For example, a teetotaling family living in a hard-drinking community would show the conflict between the individual and the society. Feuding brothers in a civil war would indicate religious and political conflict.
3. Identify a theme: What are the common idea threads? Were they a rebellious family? Visionaries? Inventors? Were they always associated with an industry, an occupation or a family business?
4. Characterise: Which ancestor grabbed your interest? Why? Design a dossier listing the physical details and the personality traits of your major ancestors.
5. Structure: Order by themes or geographically by personalities or places. Perhaps have three parts: The Old Country. The Journey Out. The New Land. Most interesting first, second most interesting last, and then bury the boring bits in the middle.
6. Craft the Length. Same length chapters. Catchy titles rather than numbers. Or calculate minutes if making an audio or video taped history. Most histories are self-published, so cost will be a consideration.
7. Personalise Readers enjoy the day- to- day details, embarrassing moments and even four conflicting versions of significant family events.

8. Check Arrange for a 'naïve' and an 'expert' reader to check The 'naïve' reader who knows little about the subject will provide feedback on whether it is a 'good read'. The 'expert' checks facts.
9. Design: Think about print size and shape. If readers are elderly, don't try to save money by having small print on fewer pages...Children love mini-books.
10. Choose Intriguing Titles Use a common family phrase, or a group of words like 'Wheat, Wool and Whingers'.

P.S. Publishing a book is like creating a book child. There will be criticism, but there will also be praise.

Books mentioned in this article

'Writing a Non Boring Family History' Hale & Iremonger ISBN 0-86806 630 3 www.haleiremonger.com

'Fake I.D.' Lothian Takeaway series www.lothian.com.au Teen novel with a cyber history sleuthing theme. ISBN 0 7344 0442 5

Family History Activities: Cyber-Family History Sleuthing and Fake ID

1. Tape That! Invite the oldest family member to be interviewed on tape for one hour. Prepare 10 open ended questions. e.g. *what meal do you best remember from your childhood?* NOT. *Do you remember what you ate?* Compare their childhood with what you remember of yours. How many in the family? Games? Food? Type of home? Jobs? Religion? Politics? Funny things? Family rituals like weddings, funerals and birthdays?
2. Book Launch (Real or hypothetical) your 'brief' is to organise your family's historic book launch. Design the invitation. Arrange the guest list. Who will launch the book? Why? Where will you hold the launch? Why? Catering: Any 'thematic' food which could link to your family or the name of the book? e.g. Family tree-shaped biscuits?
3. e-mail: Write an e-mail to a member of your family whom you've never met. What do you want them to know about you? (Choose whether or not to e-mail it)
4. 'Fake ID' Activities Write a blurb for your book (real or imaginary). A blurb gives a 'taste' of what the book is about. Here's an example.

Fake I.D. (Lothian Takeaway series) ISBN 0-7344-0442-5

Some kids use fake ID. But to find your Gran used fake ID for years is a shock. For Zoe's family history assignment, she had to interview Gran, her oldest relative. But Zoe was too late to talk with her. On the day of Gran's funeral. Zoe found Gran's 'not to be opened until after my death' package. So she opened it. Turns out, Gran was not just Magda, she had other names too. And other lives. Had she been a 'con-artist' or a political activist? What could you inherit? Just red hair? A big nose? Or maybe 'bad' genes?

Zoe finds out, with the help of her hockey playing, 'techie' mate Luke, via www.finalthoughts.com, the Dead Persons' Society and Red Cross International which finds Missing People.

And, who are the others in the digitally enhanced 'family' photo? Not all families are as they first appear. And yet, do the labels really matter?

6. Classroom Article and Activities Cyber-Family History Sleuthing and Fake ID

by Hazel Edwards

Why do a Family History?

Families and communities change rapidly. Some blend, others split, so it's important to know where you fit and what you may have inherited in temperament, skills or genes. Schools and local organisations such as sporting clubs are also keen to record their past

The purpose is to record memories before they're forgotten, or the old photos, documents or tapes on which they've been mentioned, is lost. Of course, some events are recorded only in older people's minds and they have to be interviewed while they still remember the facts.

That's partly why family history sleuthing has become the biggest hobby worldwide, surpassing even stamp collecting. And using the Internet to research your family is a fast tool to find out WHAT happened and WHY? But you may need to evaluate which sources are reliable, as not all web material is properly checked and mistakes can be passed on.

Researching:

Researching my Takeaway novel 'Fake I.D.' (Lothian) I became familiar with the Internet resources available for tracking lost relatives, leaving electronic messages or even how your wishes could be e-mailed after your death and how an adolescent could handle these.

Realistic fiction requires research, and mysteries must have credible clues. For my recent novel 'Fake I.D.', which uses family history cyber-sleuthing skills, I was helped by the 'genis' from the State Trustees because I needed to know how they tracked beneficiaries of the unclaimed money they hold. From the dramatic beginning at Grandma's funeral when 15 year old Zoe discovers her grandmother had used a fake identity for years, my story had to appeal to 11-16 year olds.

Genealogists had attended one of my 'Writing a Non- Boring Family History' workshops but I am my disabled cousin's guardian, and have dealings with trustees and this is how I became aware of fascinating stories behind some estates. I was intrigued by the con-woman with 43 identities.

State Trustees employ family historians (genealogists) to search for lost beneficiaries of wills. Without breaching confidentiality, they demonstrated processes of tracing beneficiaries, explained DNA testing, charted trees and shared quirky anecdotes. Impressed by their thoroughness across two years plotting, involving them in my book

launch was my way of saying thank you. So 'Fake I.D.' was launched by a 'geni' and a person from 'The Dead Persons' Society' which is a family history group.

Genealogist Kath Ensor even drew a 'family tree' for my fictional 'Gran-Magda' who had many identities but altruistic motives. At the launch, family tree posters and even magnifying glasses for junior family history 'sleuths' were provided and later genealogists reviewed the novel.

References: Internet:

If you do an Internet search at www.google.com with the words Family History or Genealogy, you'll find relevant sites.

SAG-E the Society of Australian Genealogists www.sag.org.au could also be helpful.

More unusual sites include the Dead Persons' Society and www.finallythoughts.com

www.lothian.com.au has teacher resources on many titles

:

'Ancestor' (The Genealogy Society of Victoria) www.gsv.org.au and 'The Genealogist' have tips on researching family histories.

Books:

'Writing a Non Boring Family History' Hale & Iremonger ISBN 0-86806 630 3

www.haleiremonger.com

7. Film Casting and Creating a Scene in the Classroom

If you were considering making a film based on the novel Fake I.D. it's necessary to cast the main roles so a bio of each character is provided.

Which known actors would you cast in these roles? Why?

Cast: FAKE ID

Zoe: (15) Cluey. Resourceful. Responsible because as only daughter of single mother Kat who's working in Antarctica, she's been in so many schools. Required to search/pack up Gran's house because no other relatives. Boarding with 'mate' Luke's family and tracing family history for school assignment. Fears genetic inheritance from Gran of big nose, red hair and 'secrets'.

Luke Warne (15) (a.k.a Luke Warm) cyber-geek, hockey player and good 'mate' but maybe becoming more. Logical thinker who tracks clues on Internet and finds finallythoughts.com (Guardian angel) and Dead Person's Society site. Suffers 'foot in the mouth' but supportive friend in own way.

Gran (70) Magda Kovacs .a.k.a. Dagma Kiss and maybe other names. Passionate. Could speak many languages. Diverse interests such as politics and belly dancing. New cyber-convert to Internet and left e-message on finallythoughts.com for grand-daughter Zoe to find via Luke as Guardian Angel. Has operated under Fake ID since '56

when she left Hungary during revolution after being involved with activist Tibor. Assumed another woman's identity (Magda) to cross border and enter Australia where she 'passed' as the wife of Janus, an ex Hungarian sportsman and had daughter 'Kat'

Janus Kovacs (Pa/ grandfather of Zoe) defected as Hungarian athlete in Melbourne for '56 Olympics .Encouraged Kat and Zoe's hockey but died in 1999 leaving his estate to 'my wife Magda' but intended it for Gran. Has a son Sandor by original wife, who should inherit.

Mrs Nell Donna Obese, good hearted, 'fussing' next-door neighbour of Gran. Has poor eyesight and is a bad driver.

Bark: Gran's dog with a charm by-pass who 'digs' everywhere.

Bruce, the Trustee wears a Family history tree tie (IT fad) and is proud of 'fronting' 'Missing Millions' TV. program. Cheerful.

For Tuna Gran's girlhood friend who is now a geriatric belly-dancer.

.....
Imagine you are a director. This is the way in which a cast could be described for a film based on the novel and was requested of the author by a director.

Choose a scene of about a page) from the novel which you can perform for the classroom. The benefit is an opportunity to read for a purpose and perform in public. You may decide to include a Narrator to introduce and put the scene in context

e.g. This scene is taken from the novel 'Fake ID' and is important within the story because.....

Choose:

A complete scene with a definite finish

Dialogue

2-3 characters

Maybe SFX (sound effects) and costumes or props but keep to minimum.

...creating a scene

Possible scenes from 'Fake ID' might include:

The funeral

The hockey match

Illegally driving the dog to the vet

The 'oldies' belly dancing and Zoe refusing.

- Which do you consider to be significant scenes from Fake ID? Why? What do they reveal of the characters?
- Where would you film these? Locally?
- If you were director, which issues would you stress in the film? Why? How?
- What size budget will you need for your film?
- Now convince investors to back your film!