

Family Homes and Histories

In what ways is my home an important part of my family's history?

Theme

This lesson introduces students to how families are organized, how families have histories, and how the buildings we live in play an important role in our lives. Using artifacts from an early 20th Century Chicago family and their own families, students will create family trees and family-home timelines.

Student Objectives

- apply family tree knowledge to an early 20th Century family by adding pictures to a family tree for the Williams Family
- graphically represent and verbally describe three generations of their family by creating a simple family tree
- create a timeline to represent personal family and home information
- be able to tell a brief personal family history using time information

Activities

- learn about an early 20th Century Chicago family and the homes the family members lived in
- make family member “leaves” for a family tree
- draw a family tree diagram
- create a personal timeline
- create a family home timeline

Type

indoor, desktop activities

Timeframe

five class sessions of 30–40 minutes each, with help from home being part of Days Three, Four, and Five

Materials

- **Handout A** - Williams Family photograph
- **Handout B** - photographs of Williams Family homes, United States map
- **Handout C** - Williams Family tree diagram
- **Handout D** - drawing of a tree
- **Handout E** - template for leaves
- **Handout F** - interview sheet about a favorite home
- long narrow pieces of drawing paper for timelines, approximately 8" x 24" (*one per student*)
- scissors, glue
- crayons



Vocabulary

family tree diagram showing how family members are related to each other

family members (mother, father, sister, brother, etc.)

history the study of things that happened in the past

timeline a line on paper that shows the order of events that happened in the past

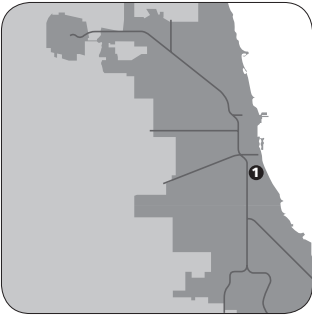
genealogy the study of family members who were born before you

genealogist a person who studies family members from the past

oral history an interview with a person about the past, recorded on tape

generation a line of your relatives (grandparents are one generation; children of grandparents are your parents, aunts, and uncles and they form a second generation; you, your siblings, and your cousins are a third generation)

siblings brothers and sisters



Location Information

- 1 Williams Family neighborhood in the early to mid 20th Century, around 31st Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Chicago, Illinois

Discussion Points

- Which students have made major moves in their lives? What do they remember about the other places they have lived?
- Are there any students in your class who have lived in the same home all their lives?
- Discuss their memories of special events that have taken place in their homes.
- Discuss the many different kinds of families and family members.

Teacher Prep

- photocopy or scan **Handouts A and B** for display or projection
- photocopy **Handouts A, C, and D** (*one per student*)
- photocopy **Handout E** onto green paper (*one per student*)
- photocopy **Handout F** (*two per student*)

Background Information for Teacher

The word “home” (and not “house”) is used throughout the lesson on purpose. “Home” helps to encompass all the different types of dwellings where students may live and indicates a relationship between the people and the building.

This lesson includes information about the Morris Williams family. Around the time of World War I, this African-American family moved from rural Texas to Omaha, Nebraska before moving to Chicago in the 1920s. Morris’ brother, Dr. Lacey Kirk Williams, was already living in Chicago when the family arrived here. Dr. Williams was a well-known pastor of Olivet Baptist Church which is now located at 31st Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Father Morris (born 1869 in Alabama) and Mother Annie (born 1875 in Texas), and their three children Willa Lou (born 1908 in Nebraska), Morris Jr. (born 1909 in Nebraska), and Levi (born 1913 in Texas) lived near 31st Street and Giles Avenue.

Morris Williams worked as a cook and later owned and operated a restaurant at 427 East 31st Street. By 1930, Annie (age 55) and Willa Lou (age 22) both worked as machine operators in a dress factory. Oldest son Morris Jr. (age 21) worked as a mail clerk at the post office, and the youngest son Levi (age 17) was a student. In 1930, the Williams Family also had Morris’ nephew, Fletcher B. Williams (age 20, born in Texas), living with them and working as a kitchen helper in the family’s restaurant.

As an interesting side note, the 1930 census asked every family in the United States whether or not they owned a radio. The Williams Family was the only family on their block to own one.

(Information about the Williams Family was obtained from *Chicago’s South Side, 1946–1948* by Wayne F. Miller, the Chicago Historical Society archives, and the Fifteenth Census of the United States (1930) in the archives of the Newberry Library.)

Activity Procedures

DAY ONE

Introduction to the Williams Family

- 1 Tell your students the history of the Williams Family using the Background Information. Display the photographs on **Handouts A and B** to help as you describe what the family looked like, their names, the homes where they lived, etc. Use the U.S. map to trace the places where the family lived (Texas; Omaha, Nebraska; Chicago). You may also wish to point out where the Williams Family lived on a Chicago city map and show how it relates to the location of your school. Talk about the two photographs of the homes the family lived in. How are they similar? How are they different? Describe the materials of the home, the number of floors, the porches, the arrangement of windows, and the front yards. Ask students why they think the Williams Family may have moved to Chicago.
- 2 Help your students make connections between the Williams Family and their own families: location of their home, number of children in the family, gender of the children, occupation of the parents, places they have lived, etc. Help the Williams Family come alive for your students by discussing what can be learned from studying a photograph of a family. Talk about clothing styles, shoes, the way people are seated, hairstyles, the smiles on the faces of the parents but not the children, etc.
- 3 Introduce the concept of a timeline by drawing one on the board. Together as a class, make a simple timeline for the Williams Family. Don't worry about the exact dates of events. Instead, talk about what event and people came first, second, third, etc. Include information about birth order of Williams family members and the order of the three states they lived in.
- 4 Give each student a copy of **Handouts A and C**. Talk about how a simple family tree (with boxes and lines) can be used to show how the members in the Williams Family are related. Have students cut out the faces of the Williams Family members and glue them onto the family tree in the correct spaces.



Morris



Annie



Willa



Morris Jr.



Levi

DAY TWO

Family trees

- 5 Discuss the parts of a real tree. Point out the roots, the trunk, branches, and leaves of a tree, indicating how the parts are connected. (Example: roots grow first, the trunk rises up from the roots, the branches grow from the trunk, and the leaves grow from the branches.) Point out that there are many different types of trees, just as there are many different types of families.



Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Sciences

Ask students to bring in old family pictures. Encourage them to bring photographs with family members standing near their home whenever possible. Have students write a sentence about each person in the picture and a sentence about the home they lived in. Make photocopies of these photographs (so the originals can be carefully returned home) and post them on a bulletin board.

Science

Use a long rib of celery in a glass of water that has had some red food coloring added in order to illustrate how the celery will draw up the water. Make connections between this "tree" and family trees.

Science

Sprout lima beans or other large seeds. Make connections between family trees and the roots, stem, and eventual leaves of the bean plants.

Resources

All for the Better: A Story of El Barrio, Nicholasa Mohr, Alex Haley, gen. ed., Rudy Gutierrez, illust. Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1993. A Puerto-Rican girl moves to New York City during the Great Depression.

Do People Grow on Family Trees? Genealogy for Kids and Other Beginners, The Official Ellis Island Handbook, Ira Wolfman, Michael Klein, illust., foreword by Alex Haley. New York: Workman Publishers, 1991.

Grandfather's Journey, Allen Say. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993. A Caldecott winner; tells the story of a boy's journey from Japan to California and back.



Resources (continued)

Homeplace, Anne Shelby, Wendy Anderson Halperin, illust. New York: Orchard Books, 1995. A young girl learns about the history of her home from her grandma.

Island Boy, Barbara Cooney. New York: Viking Kestrel, 1988. A little boy grows and watches his beloved quiet island homeland change.

Little House in the Big Woods, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Garth Williams, illust. New York: Harper Trophy, 1971.

Me on the Map, Joan Sweeney, Annette Cable, illust. New York: Crown, 1996. A girl draws maps of her room, home, street, city, etc.

On the Banks of Plum Creek, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Garth Williams, illust. New York: Harper Trophy, 1971.

Through the Eyes of Your Ancestors: A Step-by-Step Guide to Uncovering Your Family's History, Maureen Taylor. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

When I Was Built, Jennifer Thermes. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2001. An 18th Century house talks about all the changes it has seen and the families who have lived there.

6 Help one student list the members of their own family on the board as an example. Ask them to include grandparents, parents, and themselves. Make associations between the branching and leaves of a real tree and how a family grows and branches out.

7 Give each student a copy of the tree and leaves on **Handouts D and E**. (You may want to enlarge the tree drawing and copy it onto a larger sheet of green paper.) Have students label each leaf with the name of one of their family members and the relationship to the student (example: grandma Marie; brother Eric, etc.). Then, have them cut out the leaves and glue them on the tree branches in any arrangement. *Important:* Don't worry about going beyond the student, their siblings, parents, and grandparents.

8 Using the information from the leaves, demonstrate on the board how it is possible to take the information from the students' leaves and trees to construct a simple diagram of a family tree. Refer to the Williams Family tree from the previous day. Start with the student and work backwards. Draw a family tree on the board as an example. (Again, don't worry about relationships beyond the student, their siblings, parents, and grandparents. Depending on the size and complexity of student families, the family trees may need to be adapted.) Discuss how this diagram can be used to show how family members are related. Use the vocabulary list provided. Point out that genealogists often draw diagrams like this in their work.

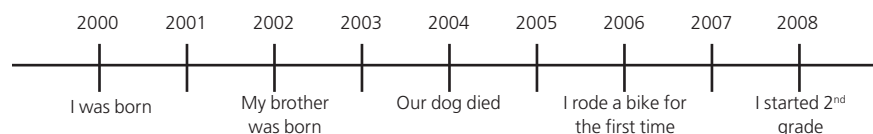
9 *Optional:* As a home project, ask students to get help from their families to gather information and construct a family tree diagram. (You may wish to start this activity with them in class, and then have them take the diagram home to add information.) After students have returned with their family tree diagrams, display them on the wall and talk about their work. Discuss similarities and trends.

DAY THREE and DAY FOUR

Creating personal timelines and family home timelines

10 Start this activity in class, and then have students add information at home. Review the concept of a timeline with students. Refer to the Williams Family timeline made on the board in Day One. Discuss the definition of a "significant event." Then, give each student a long, narrow piece of drawing paper (approximately 8" x 24") so they can create a simple timeline of their own life. (Students will be using the same piece of paper to create two different timelines. Have students fold the timeline paper in half lengthwise and tell your class they will make the first time line on the top half and the second timeline at another time on the bottom half of the paper.) Students should draw the horizontal baseline and then draw and label a vertical line for each year of their life. With help from their families at home, have students add details about one event that happened each year. (Examples: sibling was born; first experience; new pet; vacation; achievement.) Have them bring their completed timelines back to school.

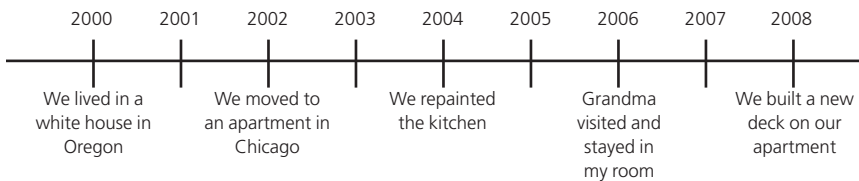
Family Timeline



11 Using their timelines, discuss how buildings are connected to our lives. Talk about how we often remember significant events by the location where they took place. Discuss buildings that are important to your students.

12 Again, start this activity in class, then have students add information at home. Have students draw another timeline on the bottom half of the paper that will highlight the places students have called home and the changes in those places. Have students take this second timeline home to complete with help from their families. If students have lived in only one place in their life, suggest that they include events that have changed their home such as new paint for the kitchen, new neighbors moving in next door, new TV set or sofa, replacing a kitchen sink. Or, if students have moved from one home to another, have them include the move. Once back in class, have students draw a picture of one of the buildings or an event that took place at home.

Family Home Timeline



13 Once the two timelines are complete, display them on the wall. Review how buildings play an important part in our memories and in special events by talking through several of the timelines.

DAY FIVE

Interviews about a favorite home

14 Distribute **Handout F** to each student. Divide students into pairs and have them interview each other and record the answers as a warm-up practice for the take-home assignment. Talk about the process of interviewing each other. Was the process enjoyable? Why or why not? (Note: Students may not be able to remember previous places they have lived. If this is the case, don't despair: have them answer questions about the home where they currently live.)

15 Give students another copy of **Handout F** to take home and use to interview an older neighbor or family member about their favorite home. Students should bring the completed interviews back to class. Discuss their findings. (Optionally, have the students imagine the home described by their family member, and have them draw a picture of what they thought the home looked like.)



Illinois Learning Standards and Benchmarks

3A Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and structure.

3.A.1a Construct complete sentences which demonstrate subject/verb agreement; appropriate capitalization and punctuation; correct spelling of appropriate, high-frequency words; and the appropriate use of the eight parts of speech.

3B Compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences.

3.B.1b Demonstrate focus, organization, elaboration and integration in written compositions.

3C Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.

3.C.1a Write for a variety of purposes including description, information, explanation, persuasion and narration.

4A Listen effectively in formal and informal settings.

4.A.1c Follow oral instructions accurately

4B Speak effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience.

4.B.1a Present brief oral reports, using language vocabulary appropriate to the message and audience.



Illinois Learning Standards and Benchmarks (continued)

5C Apply acquired information, concepts and ideas to communicate in a variety of formats.

5.C.1b Use print, nonprint, human, and technological resources to acquire and use information.

16A Apply the skills of historical analysis and interpretation.

16.A.1a Explain the difference between past, present, and future time; place themselves in time.

16.A.1b Ask historical questions and seek out answers from historical sources (e.g., myths, biographies, stories, old photographs, artwork, other visual or electronic sources).

Extensions

- When students interview family members about memories of their favorite home, encourage them to turn on a tape recorder before they begin and to save the tape in a special place. Talk about the definition of oral history and why it is important to obtain and record information about students' ancestors.
- As a class, make a big collage with pictures and words to show students' families and describe the places they call home.
- Have students write a poem about their home. Include pictures or drawings.
- Use the photographs and information about the Williams Family to supplement a lesson on the Great Migration of thousands of African-Americans from rural areas in the southern United States to urban areas in the north.

Handout A

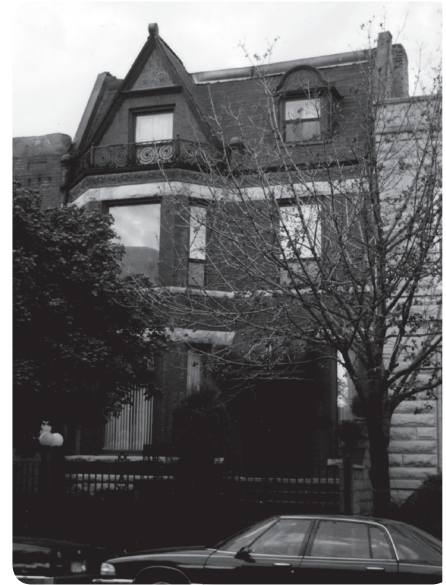


Morris and Annie Williams and their children, Morris Jr., Levi, and Willa about 1920, Chicago. (CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ICHI-26565)

Handout B



LEFT Former home of the Williams Family, Omaha, Nebraska. (CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ICHI-34494)

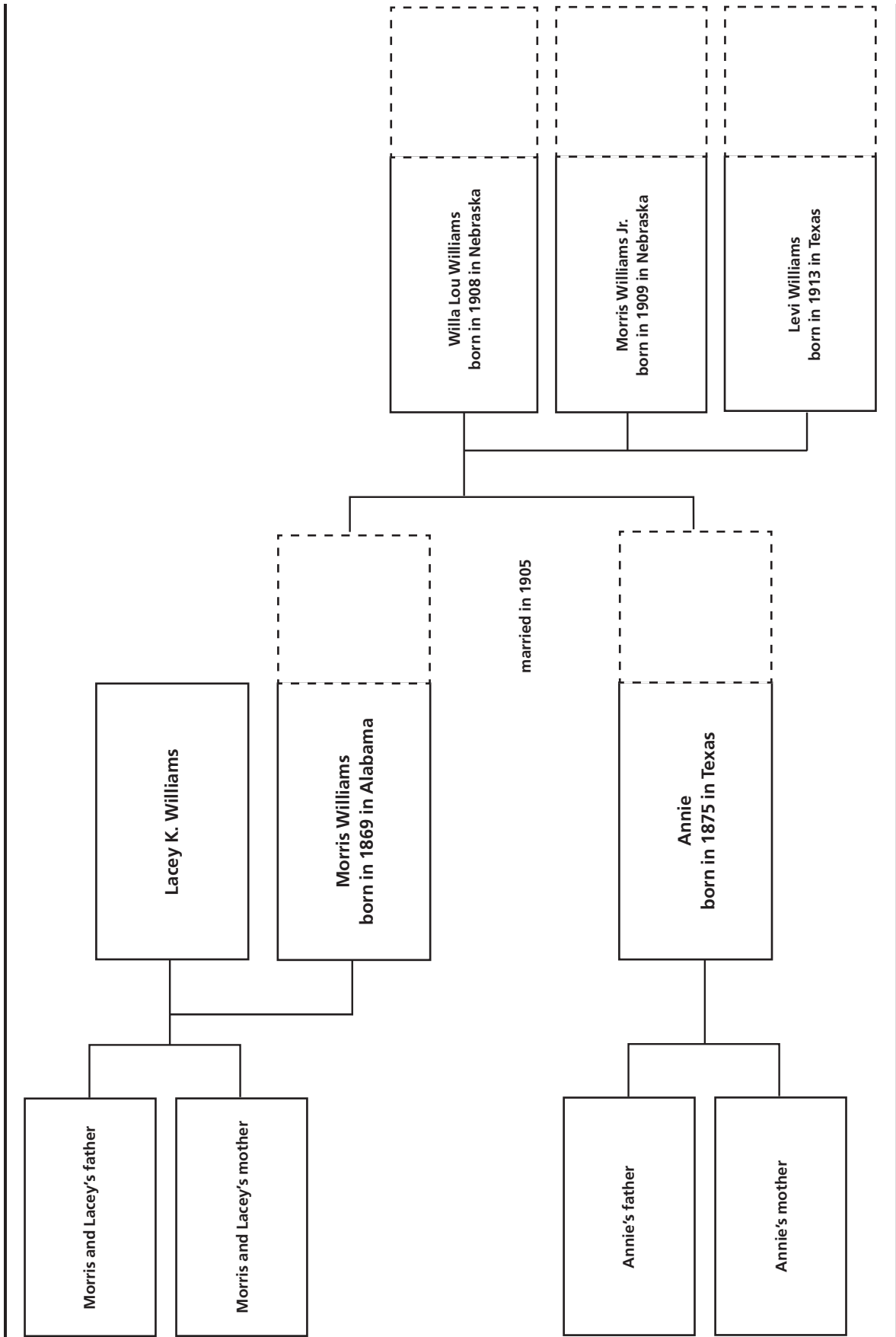


RIGHT Former home of the Williams Family, Chicago. (CAF, 2002)



The three states where the Williams Family moved to and lived. (CAF, 2002)

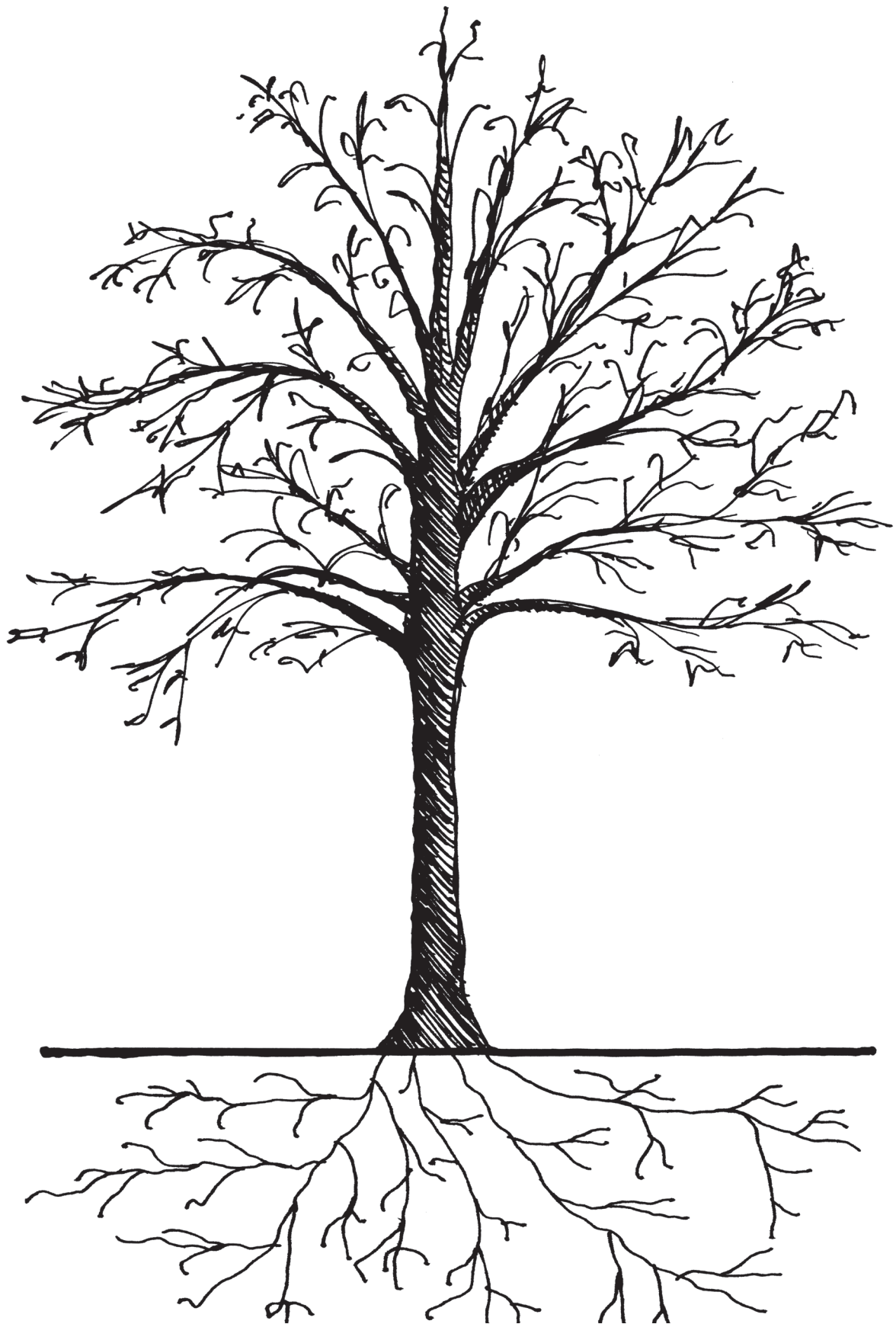
Williams Family Tree



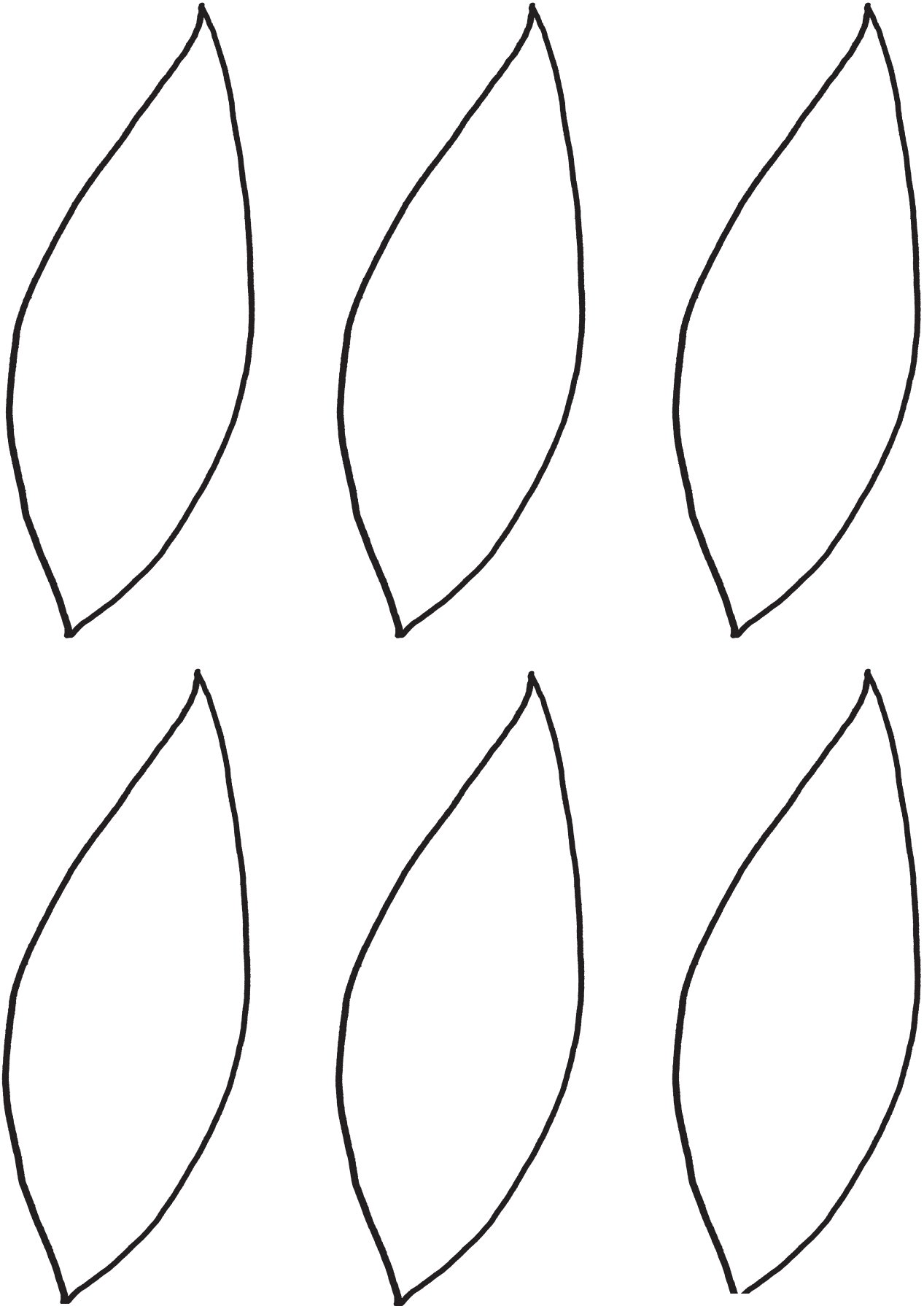
CHILDREN

PARENTS AND AUNTS / UNCLES

GRANDPARENTS



Handout E



Handout F - Interview about a favorite home

My name _____ Date _____

Name of the person I am interviewing:

How do I know this person?

Questions to ask:

1. I'm sure you have lived in more than one home in your life. Which one was your favorite?
Where was it located?

2. How old were you when you lived there?

3. How many other people lived there with you?

4. What was the best part about this home?

5. What are four words that you would use to describe this home?

6. Did any big changes happen in your family while you lived there?
