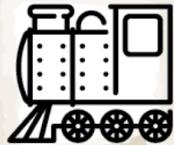


# PAST-TIMES



*Introduction to Fact-Checking*

# Module 3, Unit 3: Online Research Techniques for Checking the Facts

*Introduction to Fact-Checking*



## Appreciating the Value of Oral History

- Oral history provides depth, texture, flavour, nuance, and colour to history and analysis.
- As social history, it fills in gaps, gives voice to otherwise hidden people and potentially corrects the official record.
- Oral history can also provide an older generation with a way of connecting to the younger generations.

## Understanding the Limits of Oral History

- Individual testimony is highly bias and often two accounts of the same event will contradict.
- Even memories shared by the same individual can be contradicting because psychology has taught us that individuals often make alterations in their memory and exceptions in their beliefs in order to make sense of them
- Oral history can be bad for dates, statistics, financial information, and the big picture

## Understanding the Limits of Oral History

- Inconsistencies and conflicts among individual interviews and between interviews and other evidence point to the inherently subjective nature of oral history.
  - Although John F Kennedy was elected with just 49.7% of the vote in the fall of 1960, almost two-thirds of all Americans remembered voting for him when they were asked about it in the aftermath of his assassination.
- This represents an act of memory shaped as much by the moment of telling as by the history being told

## Understanding the Limits of Oral History

- When recording oral history interviews, narrators may not always have the facts straight; and sometimes they may even share something which they believe to be a fact which later turns out to be untrue.
- For this reason it is important that oral historians know and understand how to validate what is shared in their oral history interviews.
- It is important to check “the facts” recorded in your oral history interviews, especially before it is published in the public domain.

Why should we check facts?

***“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond  
measure.”***

Who said this?

## Why should we check facts?

- Many people online will tell you that in his inauguration speech as the first black president in South Africa in 1994, Nelson Mandela famously made this proclamation.
- If you look this up online and found the transcript from this speech, you would realise that these are not Nelson Mandela's words.
- In fact, they are instead attributed to the best-selling work of Ms. Marianne Williamson in her book: *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles*, (1992).

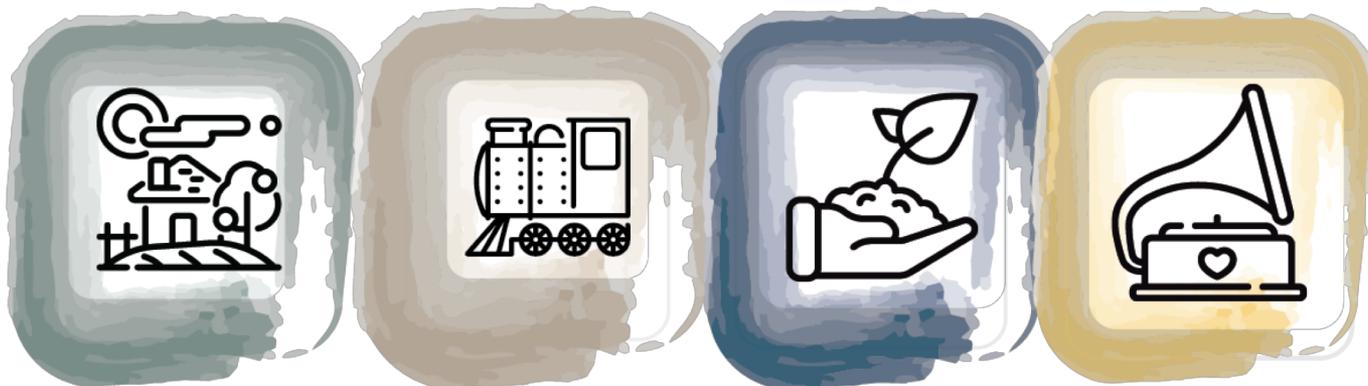
## Simple tips for Fact-Checking

1. Ask the person making the claim – in this case your narrator – to provide supporting evidence.
  - While this is a basic step, going directly to the source is often the best place to start.
2. Look online to see what facts have already been checked by others.
  - Online repositories like Snopes, Factchecker and Polifact are a good starting point for checking more contemporary supposed facts.
3. Ask local experts and check different perspectives.
  - If you know other local people witnessed the same event or had the same experiences as your narrator, ask them for their account of the event or time, and see if they validate what has been shared.

## Simple tips for Fact-Checking

4. Check online repositories in your region which may have the specific information you are looking for.
  - Try verifying facts through newspaper archives, library databases, historical photographs, etc.
5. Try Googling it!
  - We know that a Google search is basic, and that we Google everything these days but it is it with good reason. Google's algorithm is powerful and it can make careful and relevant suggestions that may support you in your fact checking.
  - In addition, Google's advanced search settings allows users to research specific sites, dates and time periods.

# PAST-TIMES



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.