



## MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### **Historic Narrative Writing Assignment**

You are going to turn the interview you conducted during Lesson 1 into a complete historical narrative like the ones you read during Lesson 2. To make sure that your story is complete, you can use the Narrative Organizer Checklist that your teacher will give you. In addition, there are a few steps you can take at the beginning of the writing process that will help you to organize your story so that it's interesting and reader friendly.

1. **Choose a short and snappy title for your story.** For example, instead of "John Smith Recalls the day he heard about Pearl Harbor," "Remember Pearl Harbor!" gets across the same idea in a concise and urgent way.
2. **Outline your narrative.** You can use the graphic organizer attached, or just make notes that refer to the **beginning, middle, end, and conclusion** of the story.

**Use the Do's and Don'ts below as guidance and REMEMBER TO PROOFREAD!**

### **Writing Dos and Don'ts**

1. **Do make it interesting.** Ask yourself what you'd like to know about your subject. Start with a good **lead sentence** that grabs your reader and makes him/her want to know more. For example, instead of Mary Joy Breton telling us that her family's house is for sale, she begins her story about the Depression with a quote from the auctioneer: "I'm bid 900 dollars, now do I hear 950? Will ya give me 50? Nine-fifty, nine fifty? I hear 950, now 975, will ya give me 975, now 975?" It makes the reader wonder what's being sold and why!
2. **Do include as many details as possible.** Be sure to get the "**Who-What-When-Where-Why-How**" of the story. As you may have noticed in newspaper articles, almost all journalists answer these questions in the text of their articles.
3. **Do make your story as accurate as possible.** Be sure to check the facts of your story. Don't embellish, and if you're uncertain about the details, be honest. Remember, when you quote a subject directly, the comma goes inside the quotation marks.
4. **Don't editorialize.** That means don't tell the reader what you think or believe. You can report the opinions of your subject, but remember to distinguish between opinions and facts in your story.
5. **Proofread.** Check spelling. **Don't just run spell check**, read through the story a few times, and make sure the grammar is correct, quotes and punctuation are accurate, and that it makes sense. It helps to have someone else to read through your story and offer feedback too.