



## Teacher/Viewing Guide

### Arab American Stories – Episode 106

#### Ralph and Adeline Abercia

#### Family History

**Grade Level** 9-12

#### **Episode Overview:**

In this episode, we meet three generations of the Abercia family in Houston, Texas. Ralph and Adeline Abercia share their personal history with their children and grandchildren and tell stories of their parents, their culture, and their family. In answering questions from their children, they tell a remarkable story of how they fulfilled the American Dream while keeping their Lebanese culture and history alive for future generations. Ralph tells them that his parents came to the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in 1923. His family was very poor and he would sell things his mother made on the streets of Houston to help support them. He fought in World War II and was able to go to college after the war on the GI bill. He eventually became a lawyer and raised his family out of poverty with his education. Adeline was not as poor growing up, though her grandmother used to travel around Oklahoma selling carpets that she carried on her back. Both Abercias do a lot of volunteer work in the greater Houston community, and teach their children and grandchildren the value of giving back.

#### **Previewing Questions:**

1. What is a family history?
2. What is the importance of older generations sharing their stories?
3. What does it mean to leave a legacy?

#### **Vocabulary:**

1. Family History: The narrative and research of past events relating to a specific family or families.
2. Generation: The average period, generally considered to be about thirty years, during which children grow up and have children of their own.
3. Assimilation: The degree to which people of different backgrounds come to see themselves as part of a larger national family.

#### **Lesson Overview**

**Review:** After viewing the segment on Ralph and Adeline Abercia, students should be prepared to discuss the idea of family history, legacy, and the idea of “passing on” history from one generation to the next.

**Journal option:** Have students take a moment to reflect on their own family history. Ask students to write a one-page response to the following writing prompt: Is there a special meal or family tradition that is important to everyone in your family?

**Post-viewing Class discussion:** After viewing the segment, consider the following questions:

1. In the episode Ralph Abercia states that “when he was young, you were known for where you came from.” Do you feel that we still group people in the US based on the country they or their ancestors came from?
2. Ralph Abercia states that his parents wanted them to be “full-fledged Americans.” What do you think his parents meant by that statement? In today’s world, can you retain your heritage and be American at the same time?

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3. The Abercias spent time asking questions about their parents' history. Have you ever asked your parents or grandparents stories about where they were born, how they met, or other interesting stories from your family? What did you learn?

**Activity:** Write a family history: For this project, you will create a history of your family! A great way to uncover clues to your family history is a family interview. By asking the right open-ended questions, you're sure to collect a wealth of family tales. You can interview anyone in your family, but some of the best information will come from older members of your family, such as grandparents, or even great-grandparents. Use this list of family history interview questions to help you get started, but be sure to personalize the interview with your own questions as well:

- What is your full name? Why did your parents select this name for you?
- When and where were you born? How did your family come to live there?
- What was the house (apartment, farm, etc.) like? How many rooms did it have? Bathrooms? Did it have electricity? Indoor plumbing? Telephones? Were there any memorable items in the house?
- What kind of games did you play growing up?
- What was your favorite thing to do for fun (movies, beach, etc.)?
- Did you have family chores? What were they? Which was your least favorite?
- What was school like for you as a child? What were your best and worst subjects? Where did you attend grade school? High school? College?
- What school activities and sports did you participate in?
- What was your religion growing up? What church, if any, did you attend?
- What world events had the most impact on you while you were growing up? Did any of them personally affect your family?
- Describe a typical family dinner. Did you all eat together as a family? Who did the cooking? What were your favorite foods?
- How were holidays (birthdays, Christmas, etc.) celebrated in your family? Did your family have special traditions?
- How is the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?
- After you get answers to these questions, create a PowerPoint or other visual display that includes pictures of your family and answers to these questions, along with other images that help convey your own family history. As an option you can videotape your interview and create a video including images and music throughout the times.

**Explore online:** Use the following resources to allow your students to further explore the topic:

1. <http://www.al-sahafa.us/AllAboutArabAmericans.htm>
2. <http://www.acchouston.org/>
3. <http://www.hiddengenealogy nuggets.com/familytreefun/familytreeschoolproject.php>

**Interdisciplinary Options** Writing, Media

### Common Core Alignment

- RI 7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
- W3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.