activity: Uncovering Your

Like the stories surrounding the beginnings of Rome, most families have stories that have been passed down from generation to generation that may or may not be completely true.

These could be stories about how great-uncle Matt was a horse thief in Montana, or how grandmother Elsie saved the family jewels by sewing them into the hem of her coat when she got on a boat to come to America. Think about how stories are often passed down by word of mouth and consider the fact that along the way they might have gained a few interesting details.

In this activity you'll uncover some of the fact and fiction of your own family history. The goal is to learn something about your family that you didn't know before, and then to write it down.

1 First, make a list of all your living relatives.

2 Now choose at least six people to interview. You can concentrate on one side of the family (your mother's people or your father's people) or do both. You are the combination of both sides of the family and get to inherit all the stories! Interview older relatives like grandparents and great-aunts and uncles if you can.

3 Make up a list of questions to ask when you interview. Here are some ideas:

- What is your full name and when and where were you born?
- If married, when and where did you get married and what is the name of your spouse?
- If you have children, what are the full names of your children and when and where were they born?
- Tell me one story from your childhood.
- Tell me one family story that your parents or grandparents told you when you were a child.
- Are there any family stories you've heard that you think are particularly interesting?

supplies

relatives
pad of paper
pen or pencil
tape recorder
tapes

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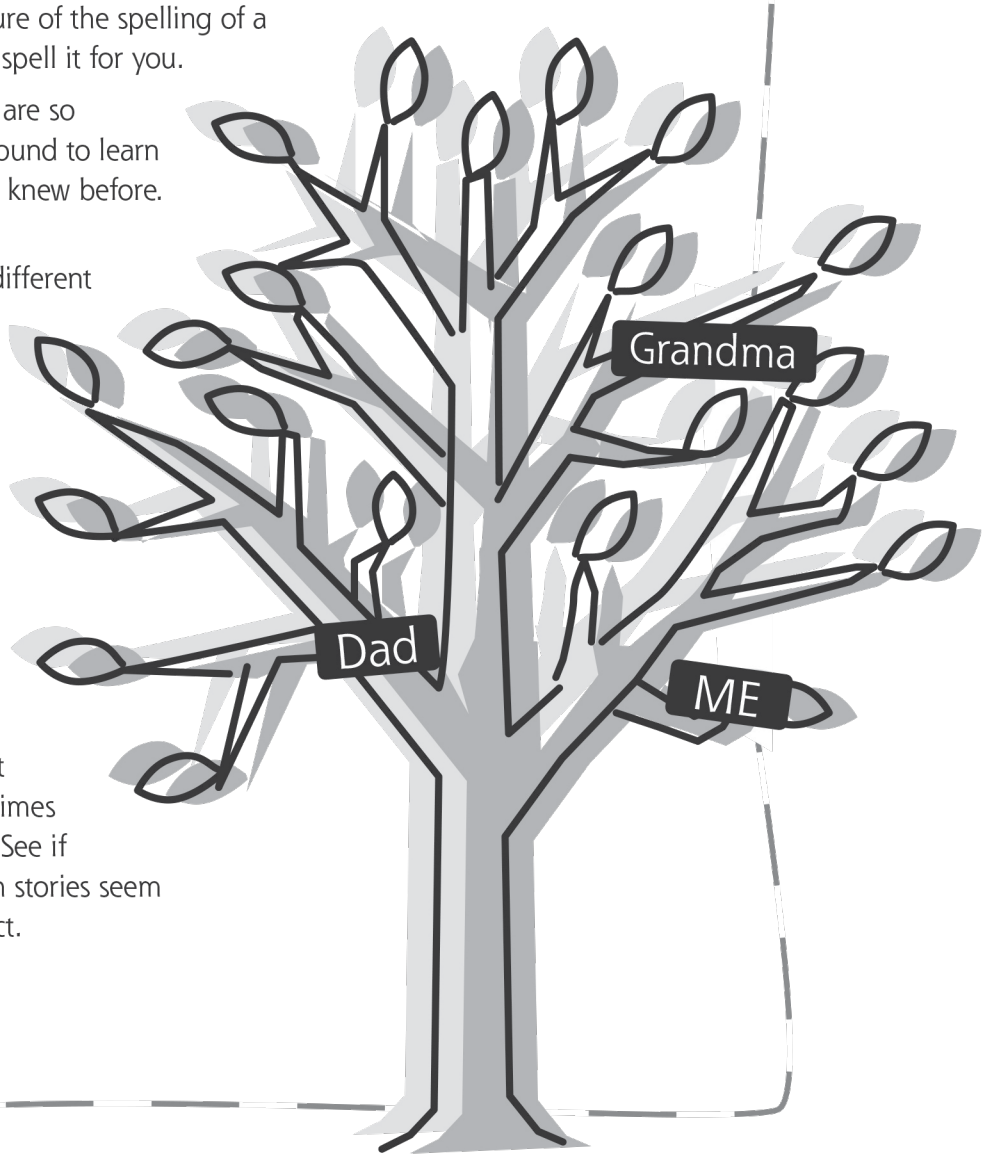
Family History — Fact and Fiction

4 Conduct your interviews. Make sure to tape record them if you can. If you're unsure of the spelling of a name, ask the person to spell it for you.

Have fun! Family stories are so interesting and you're bound to learn a lot of things you never knew before.

5 Compare the stories of different relatives. If you interviewed several relatives from the same side of the family, there are bound to be some stories that come up several times.

6 Once you've heard a story from one person ask others about it. It's interesting when you get different versions, sometimes really different versions. See if you can figure out which stories seem more like fiction than fact.