AN EAR FOR DRAMA
Radio Drama Remixed
WHAT is Radio Drama?

• A dramatized audio performance broadcast on radio or published on audio media, such as CD

• With no visual component, radio drama depends on dialogue, music, and ambient sound to help the listener imagine the characters and story

• Also known as: audio drama, audio play, radio play, radio theater, or audio theater
WHEN was Radio Drama?

- Radio dramas were widely popular in the United States during the 1930’s.

- There were dozens of programs in many different genres including mystery/thrillers, ‘soap operas’ and comedy.

- The popularity of radio dramas declined with the advent of television. By 1960, most remaining radio dramas were cancelled.
ELEMENTS of Radio Drama

The **STORY**
- Introduction
- Characters
- Setting
- Problem/Solution
- Conclusion

*Can you describe each of the following?*
- Dialogue
- Music
- Ambient Sound
ELEMENTS of Radio Drama

DIALOGUE
- Gives Information
- Reveals Characters & Themes
- Directs Attention
- Foreshadows

MUSIC
- Identifies the program
- Creates a short connection between scenes
- Underscores dialogue & creates mood

AMBIENT SOUND
- Different noises used to establish the environment

These elements are critical to a radio drama. Why?
EXAMPLES

We have two examples for you!

The first is a classic radio drama from the 1940s. The second is a modern-day youth media project.

When you listen, pay attention to these elements:

• Dialogue
• Music
• Ambient Sound
• Story *(Intro, Characters, Setting, Problem/Solution, Conclusion)*
This is the story of a woman who overhears a murder plot. The play was written by Lucille Fletcher and it first aired on the Suspense radio program on May 25, 1943.

There have been multiple adaptations of this play on radio and in film throughout the years.

In 2015, the Library of Congress deemed this original broadcast ‘culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant,’ and it was selected for inclusion in the National Recording Registry.
Let’s REFLECT on the STORY

CHARACTERS
Telephone operator, Mrs. Albert Stevenson, Man 1, Man 2, Policeman, Telegram caller

SETTING
New York City, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Avenue, evening (after 5pm and before 11pm)

SITUATION/PROBLEM/CONCLUSION
What’s the focus of this story? How did it unfold? How does it conclude? Why do you think this?
Let’s REFLECT on the ELEMENTS

DIALOGUE
What did the dialogue revolve around? How was it delivered? Was their emotion in the voices?

MUSIC
Was music used? What did it sound like and how did it add to your listening experience?

AMBIENT SOUND
Dialing rotary phone, operator “speak,” operator’s dialing, phone ringing, banging phone against wall.

How were these sounds created and captured?
Facebook Cyber Bullying Radio Drama

Part of *Audio Revolutions!*, this show about bullying was created by Santa Fe High School’s Student Wellness Action Team (SWAT). This radio drama is meant to illuminate the dangers of cyber bullying.

This radio drama focuses on the abusive language that is commonly part of bullying over the internet.

*Some language may be found offensive.*
Let’s REFLECT on the STORY

CHARACTERS
Johnny, Logan, Stacey, many of their classmates (20-ish other peers: some entertained/indifferent, some upset, some accusing, some defensive, other roles?)

SETTING
Geographically anywhere, each character in separate location, all online using Facebook, during out-of-school hours (after school is over but before bedtime)

SITUATION/PROBLEM/CONCLUSION
What’s the focus of this story? How did it unfold? How does it conclude? Why do you think this?
Let’s REFLECT on the ELEMENTS

**DIALOGUE**
What did the dialogue revolve around? Was their emotion in the voices? What is the connection between the computer and the dialogue?

**MUSIC**
Was music used? Would you have used music? If so, how would it effect the listening experience?

**AMBIENT SOUND**
Typing on computer keyboard, clicking of computer mouse, use of silence. How were these sounds created and captured?
COMPARE the Dramas

Take a few minutes to summarize each drama.

How are they alike?
How are they different?

Take note of and be sure to discuss:

• Story
• Dialogue
• Music
• Ambient Sounds
MAKING a Radio Drama

**STORY**

– What emotions did you feel as you listened?
– How did the writers create those feelings?
– Do these dramas have the same story? The same ending?

**DIALOGUE**

– How might the actors have prepared for their roles?
– What role does “voicing” play? Is it important?
– Are there any moments when the dialogue confused you? Surprised you? Bored you?
MAKING a Radio Drama

• MUSIC
  – Can music detract from effective storytelling in audio? Explain.
  – What are the rules behind music usage? Can you make your own music?

• AMBIENT SOUND
  – Did you immediately recognize all the sounds in Sorry, Wrong Number?
  – Would your 70 year-old grandparent immediately recognize all the sounds in FB Cyber Bullying?
  – Audio producers use the term “natural sound” or “nat sound.” How did these writers make nat sound work for them?
WRITING a Radio Drama

Work as a **GROUP**

Start with a **STORY**

Who are your **CHARACTERS**?

What is the **SETTING**?

Develop the **SITUATION/PROBLEM**

Finish with the **CONCLUSION**
WRITING a Radio Drama

Writer’s Block?  Think about issues that are important to you. Consider situations that happen in your school.

Here are some story topic suggestions to get you thinking:

- Bullying
- Drugs/Alcohol
- Education/Testing
- Gender/Stereotypes
- Graduation/Challenges Along the Way
- Peer Pressure/Fitting In
- Poverty
- Race Relations
Add the ELEMENTS

CHOOSE A TEMPLATE
We recommend using a script template to help your group organize final ideas.

Find our recommended template on the Ear For Drama project webpage!

**Hint - One page of script typically equals one minute of time. Be sure to read through your script and time it. WSKG is seeking submissions for radio dramas that amount to 15 minutes of air time.
Add the ELEMENTS

**DIALOGUE**
Your story unfolds through the character dialogue. Use dialogue to help establish setting and development of characters and the plot! Every word and phrase matters.

**MUSIC**
Will music enhance your radio drama? If so, consider the style and how to infuse it throughout the story. Make note of music intro and outro points throughout your script.

**AMBIENT SOUND**
Consider will ‘nat sounds’ are necessary to best augment the dialogue as your story develops. Include notes such as ‘lockers close as the bell rings’ or ‘airbrakes of bus hiss’ as needed throughout your script.
SHARE your Radio Drama

EMAIL your script to Acartie@wskg.org

COMPLETE the online submission form found online wskg.org/education

DEADLINE to submit your work is April 8, 2016

QUESTIONS along the way? We’re here to help! 607.729.0100 x318

Project support provided by Darryl Wood & Toby Wolin and Anne Taft.
Youth media at WSKG is supported in part by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and BCK/IBI Group.