**TOPIC: RADIO PLAYS/PODCASTS**

**Discipline**

Language Arts, History, Technology, Performing Arts

**Grade Level**

6 – 12

**Type of Activity**

Small Group, Large Group, Cumulative

**Objectives**

* Students will strengthen their abilities in creative writing, particularly writing dialogue.
* Students will demonstrate their understanding of key scenes in *The Grapes of Wrath*

**Overview**

The 1930s were the apex of the radio era, long before television became a staple in American homes in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The challenge of creating and recording a radio play is that narration and traditional exposition are minimal. The plot moves forward primarily through dialogue and sound effects. Students must keep in mind at all times that they cannot be seen, and that they must create the story this way. This should be a great way for students to experience the limited media of the 1930s.

This activity can be done simply as live, unseen performances (behind a room divider or curtain). Or, for teachers with access to some basic recording equipment, the radio plays can be recorded, edited, and turned into a podcast.

**Materials Needed/Preparation**

* Basic materials
  + A room divider, hiding the performers
  + Sound effects devices
* Materials for recording
  + Microphones
  + A simple sound board
  + A computer with recording and editing software (free downloadable Audacity audio software-- <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/> is an easy solution)
    - There are many mobile apps which now have many of the same features.
* Optional: Access to “The Grapes of Wrath” Audiodrama by L.A. Theatre Works
  + Can be found on different streaming music services.

**Estimated Time**

2 – 5 class periods

**Procedures**

* Introduce the concept of a radio play (many middle school and high school Literature books have sections devoted to screen plays, radio plays, etc.).
  + Very little, if any, narration
  + Dialogue driven
  + Sound effects
* Consider playing excerpts from “The Grapes of Wrath” Audiodrama.
* Assign student groups
* Have each group choose a scene from the novel, subject to teacher approval.
* Allow students time to create a script (this could take anywhere from 1 – 2 class periods). Set a deadline!
  + For *The Grapes of Wrath*, students may need to write additional dialogue (in context) to replace narration.
  + Include necessary sound effects.
* Students should create a list of items needed for sound effects
  + Use existing dialogue in the novel.
  + Use realistic voices.
  + The final script should be typed
* Allow rehearsal time
* Performing
  + Set up a room divider (a curtain or sheet works well, anything to hide the performers).
  + Each performer needs a copy of the script.
  + Set up recording equipment (optional).
  + Have groups perform their radio play

**Post Activity/Takeaways/Follow-up**

* Post Activities
  + Have students write reviews of the other radio plays performed.
  + Have students critique their own group. What would they do different next time? What did they do well?
  + Have students edit their recorded radio play.
* Takeaways
  + Because this is a fun, interactive activity, students should come away with a memorable connection to the novel.
  + Students should have a stronger understanding of the role dialogue can play.
* Follow-up
  + Have students refer to their scripts, critiques, and reviews prior to creating another radio play, one act play, etc. Doing so will help reinforce what they learned about the writing and performing process.

**Assessment**

* How well did students adhere to the radio play style?
* How realistic was any new dialogue that was created?
* Was the performance successful in creating a vivid image of the scene?
* How well did students work within their group?

**Standards Met**

* Reading Standards for Literature 6-12
  + Key Ideas and Details: 2, 3
  + Craft and Structure: 4, 5, 6
  + Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 7, 9
* Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12
  + Key Ideas and Details: 3
  + Craft and Structure: 4
* Writing Standards 6-12
  + Text Types and Purposes: 3
  + Production and Distribution of Writing: 4, 5, 6
* Speaking and Listening Standards 6-12
  + Comprehension and Collaboration: 1, 2
  + Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: 5, 6
* Language Standards 6-12
  + Conventions of Standards of English: 1, 2
  + Knowledge of Language: 3
  + Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 4, 5
* Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12
  + Craft and Structure: 6
* Visual and Performing Arts: Theatre Content Standards
  + Creative Expression: 2
  + Historical and Cultural Context: 3