

play focused on the theme of an imagined or real disaster and will broadcast their podcasts for the class.

Prior Learning

- Students will need to have an understanding of how to work well in a cooperative group.
- Students should be good at planning a writing task and following the broad steps of drafting, conferencing and improving on their work.
- Students will need to understand how to create an audio file and convert it into a podcast. Search the internet to find some websites with guidelines and instructions on how to create a podcast. There are many to choose from.

Activity Description

Step 1 – Whole class activity

What is a radio play?

Audio plays are just like the old radio plays. Many students may not have heard a radio play, but they are probably familiar with audio CD-ROMs and podcasts on films or books they like.

Using the Venn Diagram Graphic Organiser (available as a handout) to brainstorm with the class what features might be included in an audio play and how these might be different to a standard piece of writing or script.

This allows them to draw on their own knowledge of the medium and begin to identify the key elements that will need to be included in their audio play.

Step 2 – Small Group activity

Breaking into groups

Break the class into cooperative, mixed ability groups of 4-5 students.

Each group should have:

- A Project Leader who will be accountable for all tasks being completed and the keeping the group on task;
- A Timer who will ensure that no time is wasted and that time allocations are met for each task;
- A Reporter who reports back to the teacher and the remainder of the class on the progress the group has made;
- 2 note-takers whose role is to keep notes as tasks are being completed.

Encourage the group members to swap and share roles throughout the activities.

Step 3 – Small Group activity

Sourcing examples

Refer to the resources and links section of this activity to help get your students started in finding examples of radio plays and audio plays, but also encourage them to source their own audio tapes and CD-ROMs from home.

A particularly good example is the "War of the Worlds" audio that you can find at <http://www.rense.com/general4/hg.htm> or http://www.earthstation1.com/pgs/radio/dos-War_of_the_Worlds.ram.html.

They need to spend a brief amount of time listening to these examples as useful models to demonstrate how sound effects complement the text and dialogue to create atmosphere and tension. In addition, it would be useful for the groups to review some scripts to understand layout and dialogue. An excerpt of "War of the Worlds" is included in Handout 1 as an example.

Step 4 – Small Group activity

Planning as a group

Each group needs to identify what disaster will be the focus of their audio play. The disaster can be one that has actually occurred or one that is imagined. They may want to brainstorm a list individually and then discuss this as a group. The Group Leader will need to keep everyone on track and work to negotiate which disaster will form the play.

The group then needs to plan how they will approach the next four steps in the activity: undertaking the research, drafting the script, reviewing the script and sourcing or creating the audio files needed. It may be the case that the group undertakes several steps at once, with (for instance) three students researching the disaster via the Internet, newspapers (etc) and the remaining group members finding places (including the Emergency Management in Australia site) where useful audio sound files can be found and downloading these for future use.

Step 5 – Small Group activity

Undertaking the research

Once the group has decided on the disaster, it's time to find out more about this. Facts and figures are important, but the *human story* is key to the audio play. They should try and find out about a particular town or village, or even a family or individual.

If they have opted for an imagined disaster, they will still need to research:

- the events and conditions that lead up to these types of disasters;
- the impact of the disaster on the community;
- how people might react under such circumstances.

Step 6 – Small Group activity

Drafting the script

Once the group has collected information on the disaster (real or imagined), it's time to plan out the script.

The story should not exceed 5 minutes.

The planning process should include:

1. Basic plot: what is going to happen? How will the play start? What will happen in the middle? What will the climax of the play be? How will it end or be resolved?
2. Characters: who will the main characters be? What is their role and importance in the story? How will their different characteristics be depicted and portrayed?
3. Setting: where is the play set? When? What era? How important is the setting to the story? How will the setting be conveyed to the audience?
4. Draft the script: drafting needs to be a collaborative process with the whole group. The Note Takers need to be the ones who record the detail, but it is expected that everyone will be involved in the drafting.
5. Read the script aloud: The group needs to 'hear' the script. They should workshop it together and, where they find awkward language, change it. During this process, they should identify the sections of the script requiring sound effects.

Step 7 – Small Group activity

Reviewing the script

As a group, the script should be reviewed a second time along with the inserted sound effects information. Any improvements or alterations should occur at this time.

A list of required sound effects and music should be made so that they can be sourced.

Step 8 – Small Group activity

Sourcing or creating the audio files needed

Using the sound effects list as a guide, the group needs to find appropriate sound effects and/or music or

create these themselves. Sound files are available on the *Disaster Education Resources for Schools* CD-ROM which is available from the Attorney General's Department at the following website:

<http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.nsf/Page/TeachResources>

Other websites listed in the Resources/Links section of this activity also have sound files.

Once each sound effect is found, the students will need to download it to an allocated space/folder on the school intranet.

The script should be read with the sound effects and music and any alterations made.

Step 9 – Small Group activity

Developing the final product / performing

The final script and sound effects are ready for the recorded performance.

Make sure each group has identified:

- 'Actors' who will act out the scenario;
- One 'director' who will help to structure the acting and move the audio play towards the agreed resolution. The director will also introduce the audio play to the whole class and help field the questions which might arise afterwards;
- Sound recorders responsible for recording the radio play as well as the sound effects.
- Editors who know how to use the chosen editing software to be responsible for postproduction.

Step 10 – Whole class activity

Sharing the play with the class

Once all radio plays have been completed, it is time to share these with the whole class.

Each group's 'director' will introduce the radio play theme/issue to the class.

The group then plays their piece and responds to any questions through the class discussion that follows.

The radio plays could be posted on the school's intranet for other classes to share.

Teacher Notes

The amount of class time allocated to the development of the radio plays will depend on whether or not you want to make this a more significant event in which each group is encouraged to undertake more extensive research.

Students should have undertaken the Dingo Creek learning object to understand the impact a disaster can have on a community and explored the resources contained therein to assist in the development of their radio plays. Again, depending on the amount of class time as well as the availability of computers in your classroom, you will need to determine whether it is possible to allow them to do this within your allocated activity time.

Resources / Links / Materials Required

It is advisable that your students have had to time to review and complete the various activities in Dingo Creek learning object, particularly:

- The virtual disaster that takes place in Dingo Creek;
- The sound effects used throughout the learning object;
- The biographical information of the characters.

At school:

Getting Dramatic Venn Diagram handout.

Web links:

The URLs listed below are intended only as links to additional resources and in no way constitute an endorsement by the Attorney General's Department of the content found at these sites. Similarly, the managers of the listed websites do not view the inclusion of their website URL as an endorsement of these resources. You will need to use your own professional judgement if you decide to use these websites in your planning. These websites were active at the time of development of this activity. You will need to be connected to the Internet to go to these websites.

The Return of the Radio Play

<http://www.cbonline.org.au/index.cfm?pagelD=12,36,3,763>

War of the Worlds audio

<http://www.rense.com/general4/hg.htm>

http://www.earthstation1.com/pgs/radio/dos-War_of_the_Worlds.ram.html

Sound Effects

<http://stonewashed.net/sfx.html>

Screenwriting.info

<http://www.screenwriting.info/>

Handout 1

Background to Radio Plays and "War of the Worlds"

Radio drama achieved widespread popularity within a decade of its initial development in the 1920s. By the 1940s, it was a leading international popular entertainment. With the advent of television in the 1950s, however, radio drama lost some of its popularity, and in some countries, has never regained large audiences. However, recordings of OTR (old-time radio) survive today in the audio archives of collectors and museums.

The single best-known episode of radio drama is probably the Orson Welles-directed adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* (1938), which some listeners believed to be real news broadcast about an invasion from Mars.

As of 2006, radio drama has a minimal presence in the United States. Much of American radio drama is restricted to rebroadcasts or podcasts of programs from previous decades. However, other nations still have thriving traditions of radio drama. The BBC produces and broadcasts hundreds of new radio dramas per year on Radio 4, BBC 7 and Radio 3, - On Radio 4 as afternoon plays, Friday evenings, woman's hour daily short dramas, Saturday plays, Sunday classic serials and on Radio 3 Sunday evening drama on 3 and the once-monthly experimental wire slot. BBC7 output tends to be comedy, sci-fi, 7th dimension - and predominantly archive programmes podcasting has also offered a means to create new radio dramas in addition to the distribution of vintage programs.

The terms "audio drama" or "audio theatre" are sometimes used synonymously with "radio drama" with one notable distinction -- audio drama or audio theatre is not intended specifically for broadcast on radio. Audio drama --whether newly produced or OTR classics -- can be found on CDs, cassette tapes, podcasts, webcasts and conventional broadcast radio.

The War of the Worlds was an episode of the American radio drama anthology series *Mercury Theatre on the Air*. Directed by Orson Welles, the episode was an adaptation of H. G. Wells' classic novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and was performed as a Halloween special on October 30, 1938. The live, 60 minute broadcast, presented mostly as a series of news bulletins, frightened many listeners into believing that an actual Martian invasion was in progress. There was public outcry against the episode, but it launched Welles to great fame. Welles's adaptation is arguably the most successful radio dramatic production in history.

Sample excerpt from *War of the Worlds*

**"The War of the Worlds"
by H. G. Wells**

(as performed by Orson Welles & the Mercury Theatre on the Air and broadcast on the Columbia Broadcasting System on Sunday, October 30, 1938 from 8:00 to 9:00 P. M.)

ANNOUNCER

The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air in "The War of the Worlds" by H. G. Wells.

(MUSIC: MERCURY THEATRE MUSICAL THEME)

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, the director of the Mercury Theatre and star of these broadcasts, Orson Welles.

.....

CARL PHILLIPS

Just a minute! Something's happening! Ladies and gentlemen, this is terrific! This end of the thing is beginning to flake off! The top is beginning to rotate like a screw and the thing must be hollow!

VOICES

She's movin'! Look, the darn thing's unscrewing! Stand back, there! Keep those men back, I tell you! Maybe there's men in it trying to escape! It's red hot, they'll burn to a cinder! Keep back there. Keep those idiots back!

(SUDDENLY THE CLANKING SOUND OF A HUGE PIECE OF FALLING METAL)

VOICES

She's off! The top's loose! Look out there! Stand back!

CARL PHILLIPS

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the most terrifying thing I have ever witnessed... Wait a minute! Someone's crawling out of the hollow top. Someone or... something. I can see peering out of that black hole two luminous disks. . are they eyes? It might be a face. It might be...

(SHOUT OF AWE FROM THE CROWD)

CARL PHILLIPS

Good heavens, something's wriggling out of the shadow like a gray snake. Now it's another one, and another one, and another one! They look like tentacles to me. I can see the thing's body now. It's large, large as a bear and it glistens like wet leather. But that face, it... Ladies and gentlemen, it's indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it, so awful. The eyes are black and gleam like a serpent. The mouth is V-shaped with saliva dripping from its rimless lips that seem to quiver and pulsate. The monster or whatever it is can hardly move. It seems weighed down by... possibly gravity or something. The thing's... rising up now, and the crowd falls back now. They've seen plenty. This is the most extraordinary experience, ladies and gentlemen. I can't find words... I'll pull this microphone with me as I talk. I'll have to stop the description until I can take a new position. Hold on, will you please, I'll be right back in a minute...

(FADE INTO PIANO)

ANNOUNCER

We are bringing you an eyewitness account of what's happening on the Wilmuth farm, Grovers Mill, New Jersey.

(MORE PIANO)

ANNOUNCER

We now return you to Carl Phillips at Grovers Mill.

CARL PHILLIPS

Ladies and gent... Am I on? Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, here I am, back of a stone wall that adjoins Mr. Wilmuth's garden. From here I get a sweep of the whole scene. I'll give you every detail as long as I can talk and as long as I can see.

More state police have arrived. They're drawing up a cordon in front of the pit, about thirty of them. No need to push the crowd back now. They're willing to keep their distance.

The captain is conferring with someone. We can't quite see who. Oh yes, I believe it's Professor Pierson. Yes, it is. Now they've parted and the Professor moves around one side, studying the object, while the captain and two policemen advance with something in their hands.

I can see it now. It's a white handkerchief tied to a pole... a flag of truce. If those creatures know what that means... what ANYTHING means...

Wait a minute! Something's happening...

(HISSING SOUND FOLLOWED BY A HUMMING THAT INCREASES IN INTENSITY)

CARL PHILLIPS

A humped shape is rising out of the pit. I can make out a small beam of light against a mirror. What's that? There's a jet of flame springing from that mirror, and it leaps right at the advancing men. It strikes them head on! Good Lord, they're turning into flame!

(SCREAMS AND UNEARTHLY SHRIEKS)

CARL PHILLIPS

Now the whole field's caught fire.
(EXPLOSION)

CARL PHILLIPS

The woods... the barns... the gas tanks of automobiles... it's spreading everywhere. It's coming this way. About twenty yards to my right...
(ABRUPT DEAD SILENCE)

Handout 2

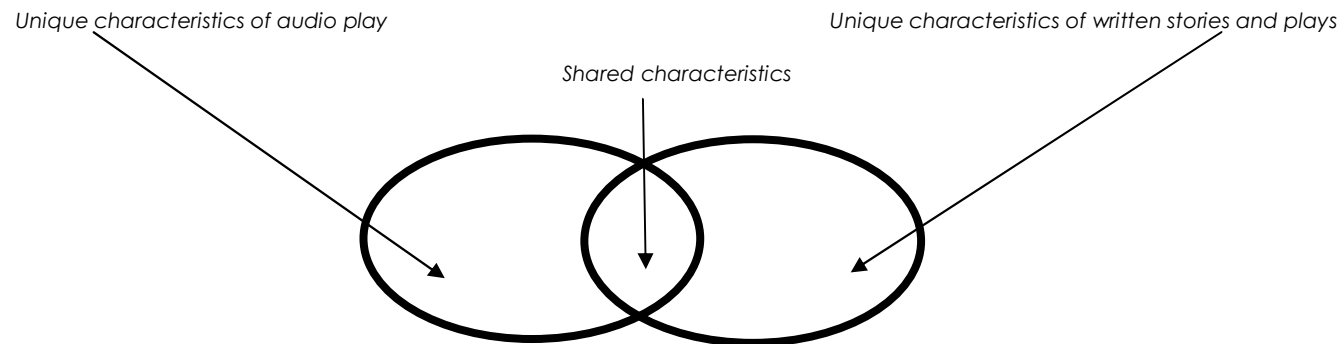
Venn Diagram

A Venn Diagram is a conceptual graphic organiser that uses two (or more) interlocking circles to sort information, comparing similarities and differences.

How to Complete a Venn Diagram

With the class, brainstorm the features of an audio/radio play (etc). Then, brainstorm the features of a traditional story or written script. Work with the students to identify those characteristics that are unique to radio plays/audio stories and those that are unique to written scripts and written stories.

The students can develop their own Venn Diagrams or you can do this as a whole class.



Individually, in pairs, in small groups or as a whole class, enter information in the appropriate sectors. In the *shared space*, identify the characteristics that are similar across the different genres.

Students then compare, discuss and justify their selections.

Venn Diagram

