

**RADIO**

**ROOKIES 101:**

**THE BASICS**

**OF AUDIO**

**JOURNALISM**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>MODULE 1: RECORDING BASICS</b>	<b>04</b>
Recording Apps	07
Exersize 1: Demonstrate Recording Audio	08
Handout: Recording Basics	10
Handout: Writing for the Ear	11
Handout: Audacity Guide	13
Handout: Garage Band Tutorial	20
<b>MODULE 2: INTERVIEW SKILLS</b>	<b>23</b>
Exersize 1: Introducing Interviews	25
Exersize 2: Fishbowl Demo	28
Exersize 3: Prep and Practice	31
Exersize 4: The Art of Followups	33
Handout: Interview Skills Tip Sheet	35
Handout: Interview Skills Video Worksheet	36
Handout: Interview Prep sheet	37
<b>MODULE 3: WRITING &amp; NARRATING A COMMENTARY</b>	<b>38</b>
Exersize 1: Selecting a Commentary Topic	40
Exersize 2: Writing The Commentaries	44
Exersize 3: Writing for Radio	50
Exersize 4: Recording Narration & Making Simple Edits	52
<b>MODULE 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER</b>	<b>57</b>

# WHY BRING RADIO ROOKIES IN THE CLASSROOM?

Students are already media makers. They record on their smartphones, remix in GarageBand and self-publish on social media. By teaching them tools of journalism and production, you will help them learn media literacy, interview skills, improved communication, and vital critical thinking skills.

Radio Rookies stories offer serious, sometimes humorous, and always thoughtful perspectives on some of the most complex issues facing teenagers.

The materials included in this package are for educators (classroom or informal) who want to teach their students the basics of journalism and how to produce audio content. These teaching tools aren't meant to be prescriptive but guideposts to help inspire creative approaches to integrating media production into class goals and activities. Here are some examples of possible projects uses in the classroom:

- Working on the college Common Application personal essay
- Primary source research for a history assignment
- Ice breakers for a group that needs to get to know each other better
- Improving listening skills
- Projects for ELL students to practice written and spoken English
- Publishing the knowledge they learn in class to a wider audience

The teaching tools are broken down into four modules, which you can mix and match depending on the scope of project you hope to work on with your class:

## 1 RECORDING BASICS

## 2 INTERVIEW SKILLS

## 3 WRITING AND NARRATING A COMMENTARY

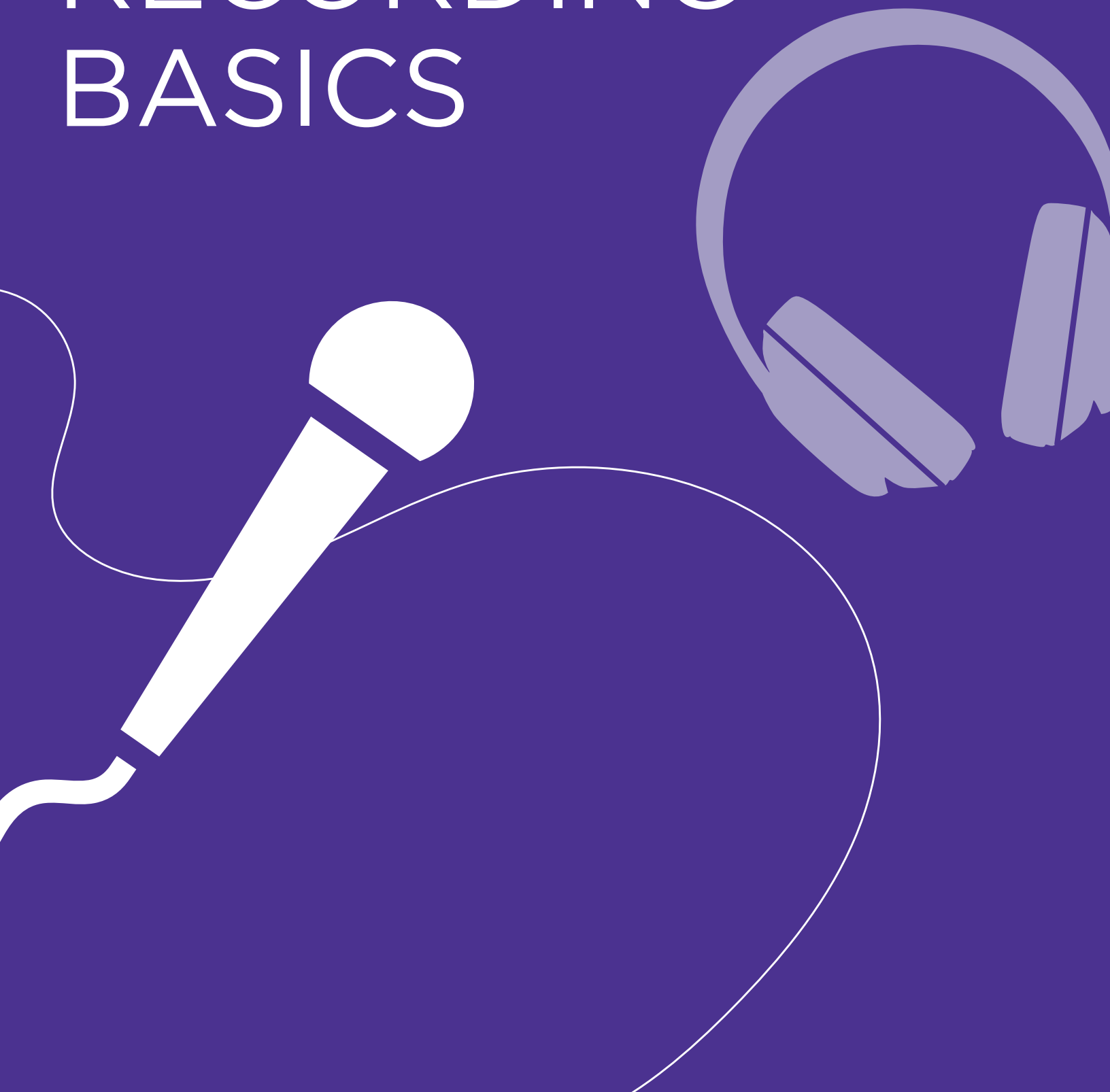
## 4 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: A LIST OF RESOURCES FOR CREATING A RADIO STORY

### WHERE TO LISTEN

- If you haven't heard them before, you can listen to our documentaries [here](#).
- For teachers, introducing students to these stories can be a way to bring strong youth voice to the center of classroom conversations—we have a [guide](#) for doing just that.

# MODULE 1

## RECORDING BASICS



# MODULE 1:

# RECORDING BASICS

## OVERVIEW

The simplest and cheapest way to record audio in your classroom is to use smartphones. If at least 40-50% of your students have smartphones, you'll be in good shape to take on an audio project. The actual recording is quite simple; the trickier part will be downloading and storing the audio (*we'll get to that later*).

**Objectives:** Students will be able to record audio by finding and downloading an audio app. Students will be able to place the microphone properly and start, stop, and play back the recording.

**Equipment:** Smart phones for at least half your students, or iPads or tablets with microphone capability. If you have audio recording equipment, you can also use that. We don't recommend using video equipment because the lessons aren't designed to teach camera work.

**Time:** 30 minutes

# COMMON CORE STANDARDS

## Grades 6-8

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.3**

Follow precisely a multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.

## Grades 9-10

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.3**

Follow precisely a complex multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks, attending to special cases or exceptions defined in the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 9-10 texts and topics.

## Grades 11-12

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.3**

Follow precisely a complex multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks; analyze the specific results based on explanations in the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 11-12 texts and topics.

## RECORDING APPS

**Android Phones:** Students who have android phones will need to download a voice recording app. **Digipom Easy Voice Recorder** (shown below) is easy to use and should work on most phones. If you would like to have students make simple edits to the audio, the Sony Audio Recorder App is a free option.



**iPhone and iPad:** Students with iPhones can use the **voice memo function** or if they want to edit the audio in the app, use **WavePad**. The voice memo function will work well and is simple to use:



# EXERCISE 1: DEMONSTRATE RECORDING AUDIO STANDARDS

## Grades 6-8

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.3**

Follow precisely a multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.

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### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 9-10 texts and topics.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to place the microphone properly and start, stop, and play back the recording.

## EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- At least half the students must have a smartphone or tablet with a recording app already downloaded and ready to go.
- Copies of "Recording Tips" handout sheet.

**TIME: 15 Minutes**

## Grades 11-12

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.3**

Follow precisely a complex multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks; analyze the specific results based on explanations in the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 11-12 texts and topics.



# EXERCISE 1: DEMONSTRATE RECORDING AUDIO

## LESSON PLAN

### DEMONSTRATE RECORDING (See [Recording Basics Tip Sheet](#))

- 1. Microphone Placement:** Show students where the microphone is located on their phones or tablets (usually along the bottom, closest to where your mouth would be when talking on the phone). Hold the equipment with the mic pointing one fist's distance away from the subject's mouth or the source of the sound they're recording. That is closer than you might think! It's closer than most people are comfortable with.
- 2. When you are recording an interview,** remember to move the phone back and forth between the interviewer and the subject—whether that's you or the person you're interviewing.  
  
*Tip: Position your body close enough to the interview subject so that your arm doesn't get tired. If sitting, sit close and put your elbow on a desk.*
- 3. Headphones:** If your students have their own headphones, encourage them to use them while recording. Usually what is being recorded sounds different than what you hear. It helps them feel and appear more professional, stay focused on the interview and monitor that they're actually recording. It makes all the difference!
- 4. Record:** Hit the red record button and watch the time run, showing that sound is being recorded. Hit **STOP** when done. **Don't use pause buttons!** They can be confusing and often lead to not recording.
- 5. Locate Sound File:** Show students where they can find the sound file once they've recorded on and how to play it back.

### TURN AND TALK

After you demonstrate the basics, have students pair off and show each other the steps you just demonstrated. Have them practice recording by asking each other questions and help each other if they have trouble.

*Tip: Keep an eye on mic placement. If they're holding the phone too far from the other person's mouth, the sound will be low quality.*

### PLAYBACK

Once everyone in the room has had a chance to try recording, have them pair off again to experiment with playing back the sound. They should be able to find the sound file, play the audio and move around as needed.

# RECORDING BASICS TIP SHEET

## MICROPHONE PLACEMENT

### Get in close!

- The mic should be about 4-5 inches from the subject's mouth
- Just under the chin - so that they forget it's there
- Hold it at a slight angle, and not so close that you get "P-Pops"



Drawing by Masayoshi Nakamura

## WEAR YOUR HEADPHONES!!

Headphones aren't dorky, they're professional. **ALWAYS** wear your headphones. Really - we mean it. You need to hear what's going on with your recording!

## RECORD SOUNDS TO HELP TELL YOUR STORY!!!!

Good sound and lots of it makes the difference between a blah story and a great story. Record **ACTION SOUNDS** and **PICTURE SOUNDS** close up. Are you talking to your mom while she's cooking? Record the bacon sizzling in the pan. Are you interviewing someone about his job as a mechanic? We want to hear wrenches twisting screws. Are you recording yourself on a journey? Get a clean recording of the bus pulling away. We cannot emphasize this enough! You will need these sounds for transitions and emphasis to help tell your story!!!

## SLATING THE TAPE

Always begin every recording yourself saying who you are, where you are, what time it is, who you're interviewing. This tape helps us set the scene and we often use it in the story.

## KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR MACHINE!

Every so often, double check to make sure that you're still recording. Make sure the counter is still counting and the pause light isn't blinking. And keep an eye on your levels - make sure your recording isn't too high or too low.

## RECORD EVERYTHING!

Long pauses are okay. Ums are okay. Saying stupid or embarrassing things is okay. Often the stuff you think is weird, worthless or what you initially want to edit out will end up as the best and most surprising parts of your story.

# WRITING FOR THE EAR

Before you write your commentary, here are some pointers for effective ways to write a piece the audience will want to listen to and care about.

## 1. SHORT SENTENCES WORK WELL!

Try reading this sentence aloud:

“I know that I’ll never have it easy because when Diego grows up he’s not going to be like other grown-ups and maybe I’ll end of caring for him then too.”

Now try reading this example from Radio Rookie Sara Martinez’s story about her autistic brother (<http://www.wnyc.org/story/438-the-second-mom/>):

“I know that I’ll never have it easy.

When Diego grows up, he’s not going to be like other grown-ups. And maybe I’ll end up caring for him then too.”

In general, short sentences are easier to get off the tongue!

## 2. WRITE THE WAY YOU SPEAK!

You will sound more like you when you record your narration! For this audio commentary, you have permission to throw in some slang, as long as you explain it in case the listener wouldn’t know what it means. NOTE: This only works if you use words you really use in conversation.

This is what Radio Rookie Jacuyra wrote at first:

In my community, if you’re the girl that everyone wants to date and you would like to be noticed, you might go to Franklin Avenue. It’s a place where teenagers go to hang out and if I go there all dressed up, people will definitely take note.

Here is how Jacuyra edited it to read for the radio—which has a lot of slang, but works because it’s all understandable, it sounds authentically like Jacuyra and tells a lot about her as a narrator.

In my neighborhood, if you’re “that chick” and you want to be seen, you go on Franklin Avenue. Franklin’s a “chillable” place where if I dress to impress, I get mad attention. (<http://www.wnyc.org/story/89241-my-mother-vs-the-streets/>)

## WRITING FOR THE EAR (CONT'D)

### 3. WHY SHOULD PEOPLE CARE? CAN YOU MAKE THEM CARE?

Make sure there is something at stake in your narration, a reason for people to keep listening. Here is an excerpt from Erikka's story about growing up poor and trying to find ways to pay for prom:

When I asked my mom about senior dues at first she said "Ayyyy yo no tengo." She said "no." I said "This is really important." I walked away. Then she called me "Erikkita," opened her wallet and pulled it out. Cha-ching! I was like "Dag!" Mami is like super mom because when she doesn't have it she always finds a way. No food in the house? Mami goes downstairs to get credit from the bodega.  
(<http://www.wnyc.org/story/88314-money-stress/>)

- What is at stake for Erikka?
- What are some of the ways that Erikka uses language to draw listeners into her problem?
- How do we get a sense of who Erikka is? Who her family is? How does that affect how we might listen to her story?

### 4. BE SPECIFIC!

Clear and well-chosen examples of a point you're trying to make will go much further in convincing your audience than a broad generalization.

For example, Dakota writes about masculinity and gender norms through the lens of his own experience:

When I was younger my parents tried to make me act more like the other boys. I watched *The Little Mermaid* everyday after school in my parent's room. I wanted to be Ariel so I could live in the sea-- a place where I could be me. When I heard my dad come home I'd hide the tape underneath the bed. If my dad caught me he'd say: "Pa ese es sucio, tu no ves, tu es un hombre. That's dirty! You don't watch that, you're a man!" But I still couldn't and wouldn't hide who I am. Lots of guys can and do.

### 5. AVOID CLICHÉS

Cliches are words or phrases that have lost their impact through over use. Here is one list, though there are many to reference online: <http://www.be-a-better-writer.com/cliches.html>

### 6. BE HONEST!

Commentary is a non-fiction genre, so what you write must be true, as audiences will expect you are telling the truth.

# HOW TO USE AUDACITY

**About Audacity:** Audacity is a free application that allows the user to record and edit audio. It is available for Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, and other operating systems.

**Downloading Audacity:** To download Audacity, go to the following link (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/>) and choose the download for your operating system. Then follow the instructions for putting it onto your computer.

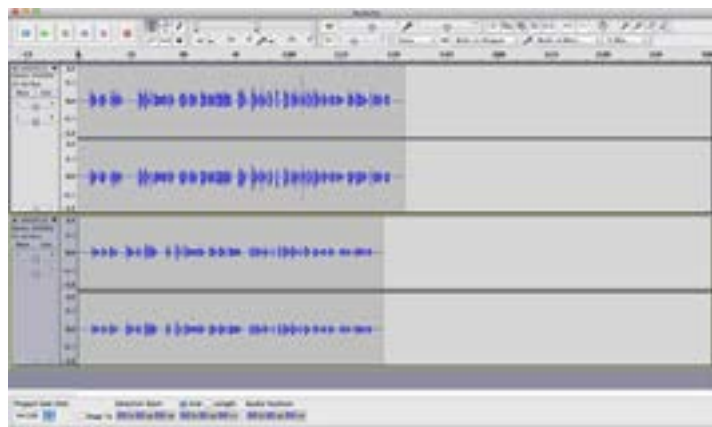
## Importing Your Audio Files

Before using Audacity, you will need to import your audio from whatever device you were using to record.

1. Create a folder on your desktop, with your “First Name Last Name.”
2. Plug in your recorder to the USB port on your computer. You will either plug your recorder in directly or connect it to the computer with a cable.
3. Once connected, find the audio files you want to Import. Drag and drop those files into your folder.

## SET UP YOUR AUDACITY SESSION

1. Open Audacity. Press “ok” when it gives you a welcome message.
2. From the desktop folder, drag your audio files the Audacity window. They will load as separate tracks within the Audacity window. When they have loaded, your window should look something like this (this is two tracks):

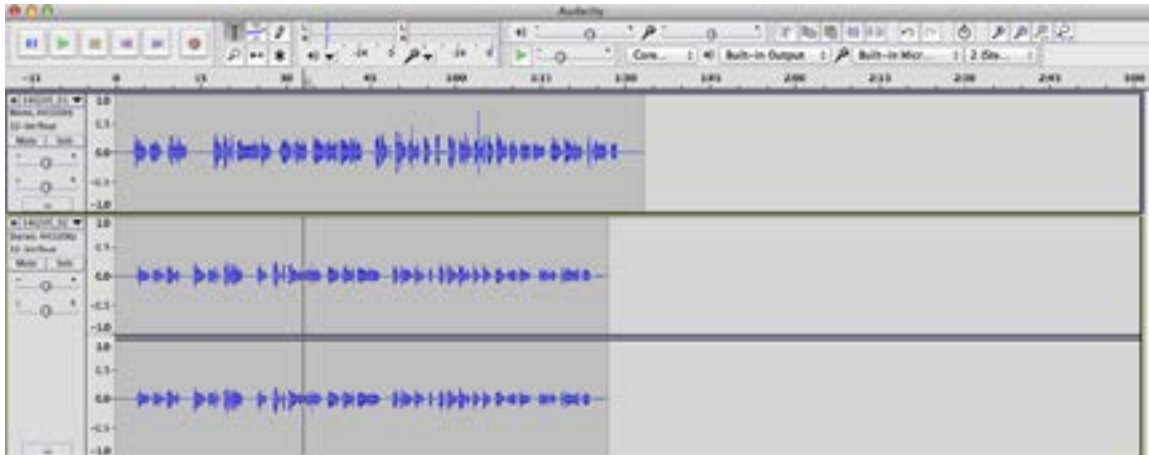


3. Each of these tracks contains two waveforms (called channels). This means that the track is in Stereo. When a track is in stereo, it has two channels that correspond to the left and right speakers, and each of these channels are distinct from each other. When a track is in mono,

## HOW TO USE AUDACITY (CONT'D)

there is only one channel, because the same audio plays out of both the left and right speakers. Whether the track is in stereo or mono depends on the device that recorded it.

*Notice the difference between a mono track (top) and stereo track (bottom)*



It is not a problem if an audio project contains both stereo and mono tracks – it will still export without a problem. However, the sound will be more consistent if the tracks are all of the same type.

You can convert a stereo track to mono by selecting the track, going to “tracks” in the top menu, and pressing “stereo track to mono”

4. To identify your different tracks, you can label them. In the top left hand of your track, it will be labeled with a number. Select the arrow next to the number, and press “Name...” in the drop-down menu. Identify the track however you like.



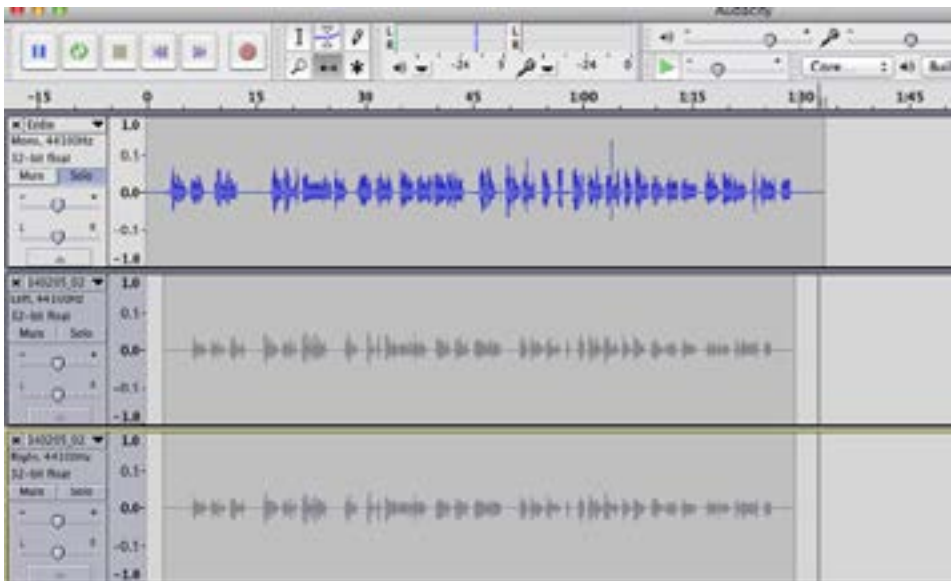
## EDITING TOOLS

### 1. Solo vs. Mute:

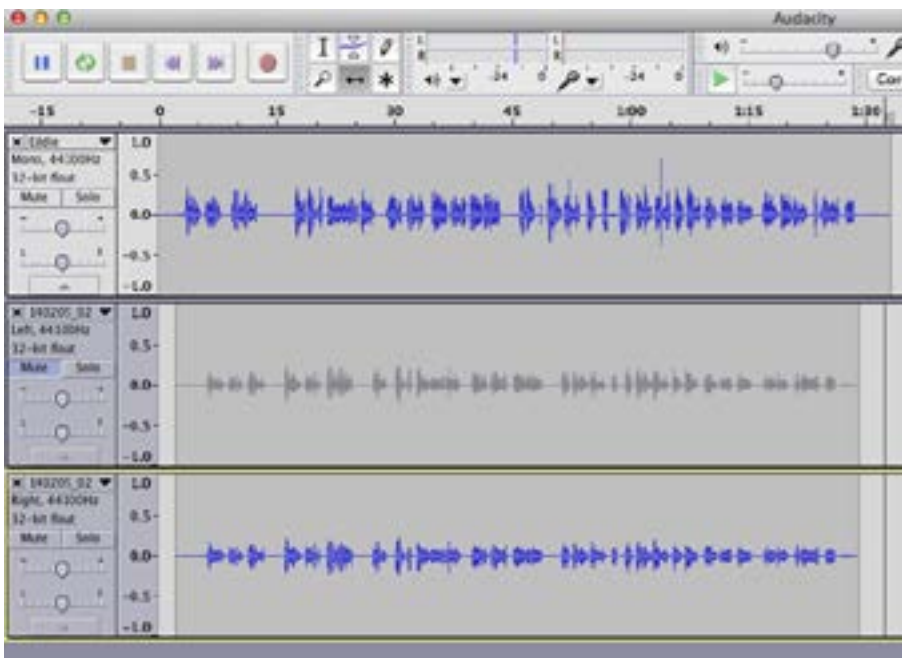
If you put a track in **Solo**, it will be the only track that plays. All other tracks will go grey:



## HOW TO USE AUDACITY (CONT'D)



If you put a track in **Mute**, it will not play and all other tracks will continue to play. It will go grey.



Multiple tracks can be in solo at the same time, and multiple tracks can be in mute at the same time. If solo doesn't seem like it is working – because you can hear several tracks playing at the same time – it means that you have put them all in solo.

## HOW TO USE AUDACITY (CONT'D)

### 2. Selection and Shift tools:

#### Selection tool:



The selection tool is the most basic editing tool. You can use it to select where to start playing the audio, and to select pieces of audio to delete or to do effects to.

If you want to play the audio from a place that is not the beginning, simply choose the selection tool, click where you would like to begin (directly on the waveform), and press the spacebar. You will see the playhead moving as it plays the audio.

If you want to highlight a piece of audio to delete, move, or apply an effect, click the selection tool where you want to begin (again, directly on the waveform), and drag until you have highlighted the segment that you want to use.

#### Shift Tool:



Use the shift tool to move around segments of audio. This can be segments from within the same track, or between tracks.

Choose the shift tool, click the segment you want to move, and drag it to the new location.

### 3. Play, Pause, Stop, and Record:



You can do these actions either by using your cursor to press the buttons, or by using hotkeys...

Press the spacebar to play (green triangle), and again to stop (yellow square)

Press “p” to pause (blue lines).



## HOW TO USE AUDACITY (CONT'D)

The advantage to “pause” as opposed to “stop” is that when you press pause, the playhead will stay on the part of the audio that you were last listening to. When you press stop, the playhead goes back to the place that you initially clicked when you began listening.

Note that if the audio is in “pause” and you highlight a segment to delete, the segment will not delete. The audio must be in “stop” to delete or alter it.

To record directly into the audacity window, press the red circle button.

### 4. Zoom:

To zoom in, press command + 1

To zoom out, press command + 3

### 5. Delete, Copy and Paste, Split, and Mend:

**Delete:** To delete a piece of a track, highlight the piece with the selection tool and press “delete” on your keyboard. Remember the session must be in “stop,” not “pause”

**Copy and Paste:** Much like copy and paste in a word document, you can move segments of audio around using command + c (copy) and command + v (paste). Using the selection tool, highlight the segment that you want to move. Press command + c, press the new location where you want the segment to go, and press command + v.

You can also use command + x. command + x removes the segment of audio that you want to move (with audio on either side mending together). Then press the new location where you want the segment to go, and press command + v. The segment will appear there.

**Split:** To split one audio segment into multiple pieces, place the playhead on the place where you want to create a boundary. Press command + I. A white line will appear, and you will be able to use the shift tool to move the two pieces apart.

**Mend:** To combine two audio segments, use the shift tool to move them so their boundaries are touching. The line will become white. Click the white line and the two segments will mend together.

### EDITING YOUR AUDIO PIECE

1. Plug your headphones in the computer. Listen through your tracks, so you can figure out what is there. Eventually you will have interviews, narration, and any other background sounds (“ambi”) in different tracks in your Audacity session.
2. Start with the interviews. Figure out which parts of your interviews you want to include in your story. You do this by splitting the track to isolate the parts of the audio you want to keep.

## HOW TO USE AUDACITY (CONT'D)

3. Figure out the order of your interview cuts. Remember: you will have narration cuts in between. You will record this narration later with a microphone.
4. If you have interesting ambi, cut that too. Figure out where it belongs in your story.
5. Write narration to move the story through its different scenes. Record it, import it into your audacity session, and follow the same process of splitting and arranging tracks to get everything in the order that you want it.

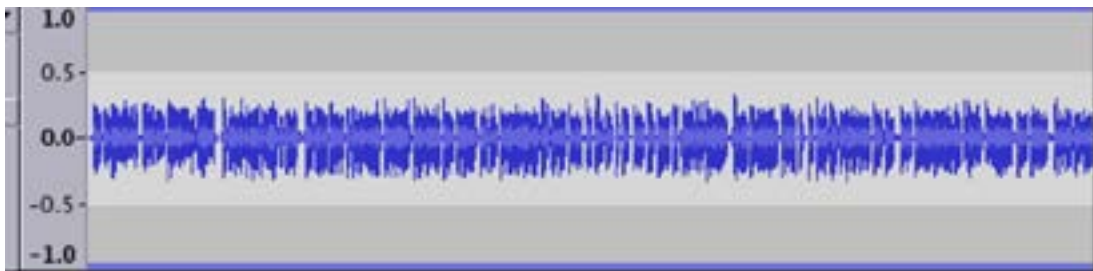
### SHARING YOUR STORY

1. Before you share, listen through your story entirely. Make sure there are no gaps and the audio levels are OK. **Your audio levels are too loud if the level meter is going into the red zone.**

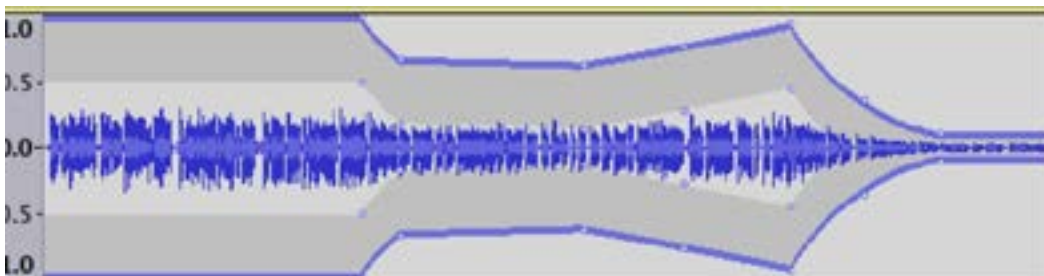
**Envelope Tool:** One way to adjust your sound levels is the envelope tool.



When you press the envelope tool, blue lines frame the track.



Use your cursor and press the places on these lines where you want the volume to increase or decrease. Small circles appear where you click, and you can drag these up or down to adjust the volume in that spot. You can also play with the volume here to fade in or out. Keep listening to make sure you are adjusting the volume as you want.



## HOW TO USE AUDACITY (CONT'D)

### 1. Export

When you are ready to export, go to file → export. In the “save as” window, choose a name for the file and the location where you want to save it. Where it says “format” at the bottom of the save window, make sure you choose WAV. If it does not automatically choose wave, find it in the drop-down menu.



Press save. Another window will appear, requesting the artist's name, track title, etc. Fill out as much or little of this information as you want – it effects how it appears in programs like Itunes. Press OK.

The file will export and you will be able to find it where you saved it. To hear it in Itunes, drag the file into the Itunes window and it should load.

### More Questions?

Audacity provides an extremely in-depth free online manual. Check it out to trouble shoot or learn more about what you can do with the program.

<http://manual.audacityteam.org/o/>

# USING GARAGE BAND

## Importing Your Audio Files

1. Create folder on your desktop, with your “First Name Last Name.”
2. Plug in your recorder to the USB port on your computer. You will either plug your recorder in directly or connect it to the computer with a cable.
3. Once connected, find the audio files you want to Import. Drag and drop those files into your folder.

## Set Up Your Garage Band Session

1. Open Garage Band. Select **New Project** → **Podcast** → Save as “First Name Last Name” in your desktop folder
2. You will see three tracks: Male Vocals, Female Vocals, and Jingles. We need to change these tracks to say “No effects.”
3. Double click on the Male Vocals track. The info menu will pop up on the right hand side. From the vocals menu, select **No effect**. Then, on the bottom of the menu, click Save Instrument. Title it “**Narration track**” and click save.
4. Double click on the Female Vocals track. The info menu will pop up on the right hand side. From the vocals menu, select **No effect**. Then, on the bottom of the menu, click Save Instrument. Title it “**Interview track**” and click save.
5. Double click on the Jingles track. From the top drop-down menu, select Track → Delete track.
6. From the top drop-down menu, select Track → New Track. Choose Real instrument and create. From the right menu, click Save Instrument. Title it “**Ambi track**” and click save.
7. Last step. From the desktop folder, drag your audio files into the correct track. If they are INTERVIEW files, drag and drop them in the interview track. If they are NARRATION files, drag and drop into the narration track.
8. When you are done, it should look like this:



## USING GARAGE BAND (CONT'D)

### EDITING YOUR AUDIO

1. Plug your headphones in the computer. Listen through your INTERVIEW files, so you can figure out what is there.
2. To play and pause your audio, hit the “Spacebar.”
3. To move through your audio track, toggle the “Playhead.”



How do I solo?



How do I mute?



4. Figure out which parts of your interview you want to include in your story. You do this by “SPLITTING” the track to isolate the parts of the interview you want to keep. These are called your “INTERVIEW CUTS.”

How do I “split”? → **COMMAND + T**



5. Figure out the order of your “INTERVIEW CUTS.” Remember: you will have NARRATION CUTS in between. You will record this narration later with a microphone.

## USING GARAGE BAND (CONT'D)



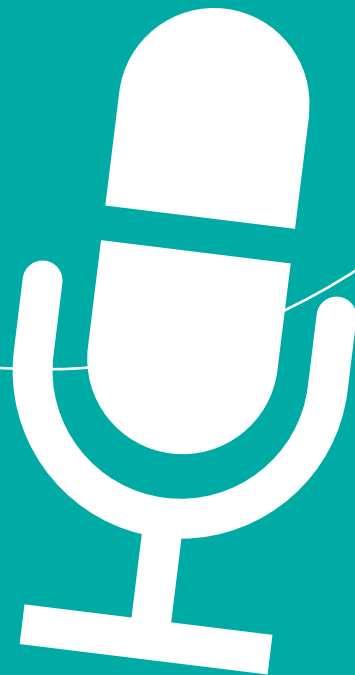
6. If you have interesting AMBI, cut that too. Figure out where it belongs in your story.

### SHARING YOUR STORY

1. Before you share, listen through your story entirely. Make sure there are no gaps and the audio levels are OK. **Your audio levels are too loud if the level meter is going into the red zone.**
  - a. You can change the entire volume of a track by adjusting the volume slider. You can raise the volume by moving it to the right and lower the volume by moving it to the left.
2. When you are ready to **Export**, click **Share** → **Export podcast to disk** → Select “MP3 encoder” and “Spoken podcast” → Export

# MODULE 2

## TEACHING INTERVIEW SKILLS



# MODULE 2:

## TEACHING INTERVIEW SKILLS

### OVERVIEW

Teaching interview skills puts students at the center of inquiry and exploration on any topic-- historical, personal, political, or artistic. Learning how to do effective interviews helps students to spark their own inquisitiveness, listen more carefully, think critically about difficult topics, and engage deeply with their subject.

Interviews can be incorporated into many different kinds of activities, such as:

- Oral history projects
- Primary source research for a paper or presentation
- Non-fiction writing
- Media production, such as creating a documentary, podcast, or sound montage
- Ice breakers to help students get to know each other better
- Social science research
- Media literacy projects

### NOTE

- Let your students know that the microphone gives them permission to be nosy and ask questions some might think are too intrusive. Also let them know if they are the interview subject they don't have to answer anything they don't want to.



# EXERCISE 1: INTRODUCING INTERVIEWS

## STANDARDS

### Grades 6-8

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to define a vox pop interview as approaching a person on a street to ask them specific questions. Students will be able to describe proper microphone placement and the importance of listening to the person they are interviewing.

### EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- Laptop and projector to show animated short: <http://vimeo.com/95749725>. If no projector is available, students can gather around a computer with an external speaker.
- Copies of [\*Interview Skills Video Response Worksheet\*](#) to encourage active engagement with the video.

**TIME: 15 minutes**

## EXERCISE 1: INTRODUCING INTERVIEWS

### STANDARDS CONT'D.

#### Grades 9-10

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.3**

Follow precisely a complex multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks, attending to special cases or exceptions defined in the text.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 9-10 texts and topics.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 9-10 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

#### Grades 11-12

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.4**

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 11-12 texts and topics.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3**

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

#### **VOCABULARY:**

- **Interview:** A guided conversation between a journalist and a subject in which the reporter seeks to find out facts, opinions, true stories, and information.
- **Vox Pop:** The phrase vox populi is Latin for "voice of the people." The term vox pop is a common newsroom term for person-on-the-street interviews.
- **Follow-up:** In this context, a follow-up refers to when an interviewer asks a question in response to the subject's answer, usually to ask the person to clarify or go deeper.

# EXERCISE 1: INTRODUCING INTERVIEWS

## LESSON PLAN

To get your students excited about interviews, play [this animated short](#) from Radio Rookies. It has a lot of specific instructions on how to interview strangers on the street, but the tips really apply to any interview, even when you sit down with someone you know.

As students watch the video, they should fill out the Interview Skills Video Response Worksheet individually.

Give students time to complete the worksheet after the video ends.

Ask students what tips on interviewing they remember and list them on the board.

Remind students that the microphone should be a fist's distance from the subject's mouth.

Go to questions 3-5 from the worksheet and discuss possible answers.

## EXERCISE 2: FISHBOWL DEMO STANDARDS

### Grade 6

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4**

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will observe and reflect on interviewing skills

#### EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- One smart phone or recording device

**TIME: 15 minutes**

### Grade 7

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7**

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4**

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

### Grade 8

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4**

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

### Grads 9-10

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

### Grads 11-12

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

## EXERCISE 2: FISHBOWL DEMO

### LESSON PLAN

In this exercise you will need to be a terrible disaster of a journalist, and then a star reporter. As you well know, some of your shyer kids may find the prospect of interviewing very scary, so giving them a chance to observe an interview first can take some of the pressure off. This exercise will work especially well for students who learn through observation.

Students should take a sheet of paper and fold in down the middle “hot dog” style. On the left top, they should write the number 1. On the right top, they should write the number 2.

Ask for a volunteer and pick a student you know would be comfortable in front of the class. You will then demonstrate a terrible interview with your student as the subject.

As they observe, the class to make a list of everything they notice on the left side under the number 1.

For the demo, you should pick a topic that will be simple for the student to answer questions about, such as “a time you broke the rules” (and define “the rules” as broadly as they want), or their favorite artist (musician, actor, visual artist etc.).

#### **First you will demonstrate the terrible interview.**

- Fail to introduce yourself
- Don't make eye contact
- Ask yes and no questions
- Go off topic (I mean really off topic!)
- If you are using recording equipment, hold it far way from the speaker's mouth and forget to turn it on
- Don't ask any follow up questions
- Rudely interrupt the speaker

You get the idea!

Once the demo is done, have the students share what they write down that they noticed. Then, they should reflect on what they saw and come up with a list of recommendations for you the next time around.

#### **Second, you will demonstrate the excellent interview.**

*Instruct students to write everything they observe on the right side of the paper under number 2.*

- Introduce yourself and why you're doing the interview

## EXERCISE 2: FISHBOWL DEMO

### LESSON PLAN

- Ask open ended questions-- who, what, where, when
- Show that you're prepared (perhaps with a list of questions)
- Ask follow up questions -- we can't emphasize the importance of follow ups enough!
- Listen carefully
- Include "tell me more about that" as a question
- Don't be afraid to ask an obvious question - sometimes they get the best answers!
- Nod enthusiastically while you're listening (but avoid saying, "uh huh" or "yea" - because you don't want to be on the tape)
- If you're recording, hold your mic a fist's distance from the interviewee's mouth and make sure to turn on the recorder

Again, ask students to share out what they wrote down that they noticed. Reflect with the class about what they observed. Make a list of what they learned from this interview and what else you might have asked.

## EXERCISE 3: PREP AND PRACTICE STANDARDS

### Grade 6

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.C**

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

### Grade 7

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C**

Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

### Grade 8

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.C**

Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.

### Grades 9-10

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C**

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to write interview questions that elicit compelling responses.

### EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- At least half the students will need either a smartphone or a recording device.
- Pen and paper.
- Copies of the Interview Prep worksheet.

**TIME: 30-45 minutes**

### Grades 11-12

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C**

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

## EXERCISE 3: PREP AND PRACTICE

### LESSON PLAN

The next exercise is very simple, but it really is the best way to get students started on doing interviews. Pick a topic for your students to interview each other about. You could make suggestions, such as:

- Your first crush (this one always makes the room shift into a kind of sweet and giddy mood)
- A time you broke the rules
- If you were mayor of the city, what would you change?

Have them vote which topic they'll tackle for their first interview. Alternatively, you can simply assign a topic that you think would fit well for class.

Give students 15 minutes to prepare their questions, using the "Interview Prep" (LINK) worksheet. If you think it would help students who may struggle with coming up with their own questions, have them brainstorm as a group. Each student should have a minimum of 10 questions. Break them into pairs and give them 5 to 7 minutes each to interview each other.

Once they've wrapped up their practice interviews, reflect on observations about the process.

#### Follow-up questions for class discussion:

- What question was your best question and why?
- How did this exercise feel?
- What did you learn about your interview partner?
- Was there anything you wanted to ask but didn't?
- What did you notice about what it was like to be interviewed?
- What can we learn from experiencing both sides of the equation?
- What might you do differently next time?

*NOTE: Collect their prep questions at the end of class because they will use it again in the next exercise.*

Listening to examples of strong interviews will give your students some ideas about techniques, here are some you can stream off the internet to share with your class:

- **Radio Rookies:** [\*The N-Word: It Represents Hatred\*](#): (For example, point out her follow questions in the interview with the little girl. Each one gets the girls to articulate her world and her understanding of the world more fully.)
- **StoryCorps:** <http://storycorps.org/listen/albert-sykes-and-aidan-sykes-150320/> and loads more examples there.
- **This American Life:** Host Ira Glass considers [\*this interview of Myron James and his sister Carol Bove\*](#) one of the best he's ever done. It's long, but you can play an excerpt.



## EXERCISE 4: THE ART OF FOLLOW-UPS

### STANDARDS

#### Grade 6

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

#### Grade 7

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

#### Grade 8

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

#### Grades 9-10

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.3**

Follow precisely a complex multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks, attending to special cases or exceptions defined in the text.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to ask follow-up questions during interviews.

#### EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- At least half the students will need a smartphone or tablet.

**TIME: 25 minutes**

#### Grades 11-12

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3**

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

#### VOCABULARY:

- **Follow-up question:** A question an interviewer asks of a subject that asks for more information, clarification, or to go deeper.

## EXERCISE 4: THE ART OF FOLLOW-UPS

### LESSON PLAN

Asking questions comes naturally to some students, while others find it more challenging, so this exercise is really for them (though all will benefit!). Once again they'll practice interview skills, using the prep questions from last time. But with every question they **MUST** ask a follow-up question that isn't on the page. This is an excellent activity if you want your class to take their interview practice and skills to the next level.

Tell students: The art of interviews involves both being well prepared and being present enough to go off script and really engage with what your subject is saying. It's like a great conversation, albeit a somewhat one-sided one. Their follow up questions can be as simple. Here are a list of examples you can post on the board or run through verbally:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What do you mean?
- What else do you remember?
- How did you feel?
- Can you walk me through it step by step?
- Why?
- They can also throw in some silly ones of their own! Like "if your first crush was an animal what would he or she be and why?"

Have them pair off with someone else this time and practice their interviews and follow-ups. Ask the subject to remind the interviewer to ask follow-ups!

*After the exercise, reflect on what was different this time around.  
Ask students how it feels different from being the journalist and being the subject. When you're the journalist, what should you keep in mind about how the subject is feeling?*

# INTERVIEW SKILLS TIP SHEET



Drawing by Masayoshi Nakamura

## GETTING A GOOD INTERVIEW

- Be open to possibilities, but prepare your questions before you begin.
- Don't be afraid to get close!
- Stay in control of the situation.
- Always get the interviewee's name, age (and contact info, if you can).
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to repeat something.
- Ask open-ended questions. Avoid Yes-or-No questions-- they lead to boring answers.
- Ask for explanations/ follow-up questions.
- Don't talk over your interviewee. Let them finish completely before you jump in with the next question.
- Don't be afraid to ask a question several different ways if you're not getting a good answer
- It is sometimes a good idea to have your last question be: "Is there anything I haven't asked you that you'd like to say?"
- Leave the recorder on until you've completely walked away. Amazing things happen as soon as the "official" interview is over. You don't want to miss them!

# INTERVIEW SKILLS VIDEO WORKSHEET

1. What are the top three tips you remember most from the video?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. How close should the mic be from your subject's mouth?

3. If you were doing an interview about school lunches, write a sentence that you could use to introduce yourself and your project:

4. Have you ever done an interview before? If yes, describe what it was for and what you learned. If not, list some possible topics you would like to conduct interviews about.

5. What, if anything, makes you nervous about the idea of doing an interview?

# INTERVIEW PREP WORKSHEET

1. What is your interview going to be about?

2. What are some things you would like to find out?

3. When preparing your questions, you can use the 5 Ws as a way to get started:  
*who, what, where, when, and how.*

You don't have to use all of them, and you could wind up with 5 *what* questions and no *where* questions, that's okay!

List as many who, what, where, when, how questions as you can think of related to your interview topic:

4. Not all of your questions have to be one of the five Ws. Try writing questions finishing these prompts:

- Can you tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_
- Walk me through what happened \_\_\_\_\_
- Describe \_\_\_\_\_

# MODULE 3

## WRITING & RECORDING A COMMENTARY



# MODULE 3:

# WRITING AND RECORDING A COMMENTARY

## OVERVIEW

The radio commentary is a 2.5 to 5 minute essay that is read aloud, recorded, and published to Soundcloud or a class website or Tumblr page. This is an excellent project if you want your students to work on:

- Improving their writing skills
- Non-fiction writing
- Memoir writing
- Persuasive writing
- Understanding the connection between written and oral communication
- Publishing their work
- Practicing reading aloud
- Improving their personal statements for college essays

**Technical note:** This project requires that you are able to record and upload your audio and do very minor editing (if they stumble on a word, for example). Students do not have to do interviews or more complicated production.

We are not structuring this section as a tutorial on writing, but as a way to understand what kinds of pieces make good topics for commentaries and then how to take something written for print and turning it into an audio piece. More about that below!

# EXERCISE 1: SELECTING A COMMENTARY TOPIC STANDARDS

## Grade 6

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2**

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

## Grade 7

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2**

Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

## Grade 8

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2**

Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to describe the elements of a strong topic for a radio commentary or essay and pick a topic to write about or identify an essay they've already written that could be turned into a commentary.

## EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- Computer with internet access
- Speakers or headphones.
- Projector

**TIME: 20-30 Minutes**

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3**

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.



## EXERCISE 1: SELECTING A COMMENTARY TOPIC

### STANDARDS CONT'D.

#### Grade 9-10

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3**

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

#### Grades 11-12

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3**

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

#### VOCABULARY:

- **Radio Commentary:** An audio version of an essay or opinion piece that is recorded and published for others to listen to on a radio show, a podcast, social media or a website.
- **Memoir:** A literary non-fiction genre that includes a story or series of stories from the author's life, often recounting a turning point.
- **An opinion piece or op-ed:** a non-fiction genre that includes short essays that argue a distinct point of view on a specific subject, often backed up by facts and or the author's own experiences.
- **Narration:** The written text of the commentary that is read aloud and recorded.

# EXERCISE 1: SELECTING A COMMENTARY TOPIC

## LESSON PLAN

**STEP 1:** Listen to these radio commentaries and pick one that you think will resonate with your students:

- This I Believe essays: <http://www.npr.org/series/4538138/this-i-believe> (there is also an associated curriculum: <https://thisibelieve.org/educators/>)
- A young woman in Kentucky reflects on the scourge of prescription pill addiction in her community: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=15143695>
- This isn't strictly a commentary, but much of it is and includes many examples of excellent writing: Act 3 by Stephanie Foo: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/552/need-to-know-basis>
- Classic oldie from NPR, David Sedaris on working as a Christmas elf: <http://www.npr.org/2014/12/23/372623577/time-for-a-holiday-favorite-santaland-diaries>

Discuss as a large group or in small groups:

1. What is the main idea of the commentary?
2. What specific examples does he or she give of their main point?
3. What is the unique perspective of the speaker? Why is he or she qualified to delve into this? Or, if you don't think he or she is uniquely qualified to express an opinion, who might be in a better position?
4. How would you categorize the tone of the piece? Or- How does the narrator feel in this piece?
5. How is listening to the commentary different from reading an opinion piece? (you may wish to hand out the transcript after (usually included in the link) to have them read it after they listen)
6. What are some topics that come to mind in your life, your school, your community as worthy of a commentary?

**STEP 2:** Watch 1 or both of these Radio Rookies animated shorts on selecting a story topic:

- *Radio Rookies reporting on an issue:* <https://vimeo.com/95745636>
- *Radio Rookies reporting on a personal story:* <https://vimeo.com/95749724>

List the elements of a strong commentary topic, such as:

- Specific point of view or unique perspective on an issue
- A recent news story the writer has personal experience with and can add a new voice to the conversation

## EXERCISE 1: SELECTING A COMMENTARY TOPIC

### LESSON PLAN CONT'D.

- A clear opinion that the commentator can back up with facts and/or personal experience
- A point of view about a tension or change in the writer's community, such as at school or in their neighborhood.
- A funny or surprising story that would be of interest to a wider audience.

As a whole group, list topics that you would be interested in writing a commentary about.

With a partner or individually on paper, discuss or write the answers to these questions based on a single example topic. Don't worry, you can change your topic later if you'd like to; this is just for practice.

- What's an example of a personal commentary you'd like to write?
- What makes you care deeply about the subject?
- What is your unique perspective?
- If a lot has been written about your topic (for example: police brutality, teen pregnancy, suicide), what new angle or specific story will your piece contain?
- What kind of tone would you like to have? (funny, passionate, serious, intimate, etc.)
- Can you think of a funny commentary you could imagine writing about your school or your family?

### **STEP 3:** What makes a compelling subject for a commentary?

Now that you've identified several of the elements of a strong story idea, have your class discuss a story idea or two as a large group. If they need guidance, have them ask their fellow students questions about the subject (see list of questions directly above).

## EXERCISE 2: WRITING THE COMMENTARIES

### STANDARDS

#### Grade 6

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.A**

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.B**

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.C**

Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.D**

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to write an essay describing their opinion on a particular topic with which they have firsthand experience.

#### EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- Paper and pen.
- Copies of “Writing for Radio” handout.

**TIME: 30 Minutes**

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.E**

Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## EXERCISE 2: WRITING THE COMMENTARIES

### STANDARDS CONT'D.

#### Grade 7

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.A**

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.B**

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.C**

Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D**

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.E**

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

#### Grade 8

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.A**

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.B**

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

## EXERCISE 2: WRITING THE COMMENTARIES

### STANDARDS CONT'D.

#### Grade 8

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.C**

Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.D**

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3.E**

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

#### Grade 9-10

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.A**

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.B**

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.C**

Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D**

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

## EXERCISE 2: WRITING THE COMMENTARIES

### STANDARDS CONT'D.

#### Grade 9-10

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E**

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

#### Grade 11-12

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.A**

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

#### Grade 11-12

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.B**

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C**

Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D**

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E**

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## EXERCISE 2: WRITING THE COMMENTARIES

### LESSON PLAN

The commentaries should be 400-800 words (or so) and:

- Be on a topic that would be of interest to others,
- Include the unique voice and point of view of the author,
- Have details that draw listeners in

Before students start writing, give them this **(LINK)** handout Writing For The Ear about writing for radio and then go through the examples with the class:

#### 1. Short sentences work well!

Have a student try reading this sentence aloud:

“I know that I’ll never have it easy because when Diego grows up he’s not going to be like other grown-ups and maybe I’ll end of caring for him then too.”

Now have a student try reading this example from Radio Rookie Sara Martinez’s story about her autistic brother (<http://www.wnyc.org/story/438-the-second-mom/>):

“I know that I’ll never have it easy.

When Diego grows up, he’s not going to be like other grown-ups. And maybe I’ll end up caring for him then too.”

In general, short sentences are easier to get off the tongue!

**2. Write the way you speak** (though be sure to have proper grammar) as you will sound more like you when you record your narration! You have permission to throw in some slang, as long as you explain it in case the listener wouldn’t know what it means. NOTE: This only works if you use words you really use in conversation. If it doesn’t sound like you, the listener will be able to hear it.

This is what Radio Rookie Jacuyra wrote at first:

In my community, if you’re the girl that everyone wants to date and you would like to be noticed, you might go to Franklin Avenue. It’s a place where teenagers go to hang out and if I go there all dressed up, people will definitely take note.

Here is how Jacuyra edited it to read for the radio—which has a lot of slang, but works because it’s all understandable, it sounds authentically like Jacuyra and tells a lot about her as a narrator.



## EXERCISE 2: WRITING THE COMMENTARIES

### LESSON PLAN CONT'D.

In my neighborhood, if you're "that chick" and you want to be seen, you go on Franklin Avenue. Franklin's a "chillable" place where if I dress to impress, I get mad attention. (<http://www.wnyc.org/story/89241-my-mother-vs-the-streets/>)

*(Teachers: if this is too casual for your class, give students clear guidelines about what kind of language they can use, though you might experiment with them using slang as a device)*

### 3. Why should people care? Can you make them care?

Make sure there is something at stake in your narration, a reason for people to keep listening. Here is an excerpt from Erikka's story about growing up poor and trying to find ways to pay for prom:

When I asked my mom about senior dues at first she said "Ayyyyy yo no tengo." She said "no." I said "This is really important." I walked away. Then she called me "Erikkita," opened her wallet and pulled it out. Cha-ching! I was like "Dag!" Mami is like super mom because when she doesn't have it she always finds a way. No food in the house? Mami goes downstairs to get credit from the bodega. (<http://www.wnyc.org/story/88314-money-stress/>)

Ask the class some questions to further the conversation:

- What is at stake for Erikka?
- What are some of the ways that Erikka uses language to draw listeners into her problem?
- How do we get a sense of who Erikka is? Who her family is? How does that affect how we might listen to her story?

### 4. Avoid Clichés

Cliches are words or phrases that have lost their impact through over use. Here is one list, though there are many to reference online: <http://www.be-a-better-writer.com/cliches.html>

We'll leave it to you to walk your students through the specifics of the writing process, depending on what works well with your class and context.

Remind your students that commentary is a non-fiction genre, so what they write must be true, as audiences will expect they are telling the truth.

Next up, once each student has a draft of their commentary, it's time to make the written text work well for the ear!

## EXERCISE 3: WRITING FOR RADIO STANDARDS

### Grade 6

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.A**

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to edit their commentaries to be more appropriate for the radio format and give each other feedback on their edits.

### EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- Completed drafts of student commentaries
- Stopwatches or timer app

**TIME: 30-40 Minutes**

### Grades 7-8

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7-8.3**

Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

### Grades 9-10

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3**

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3.A**

Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (e.g., MLA Handbook, Turabian's Manual for Writers) appropriate for the discipline and writing type.

### Grades 11-12

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.3**

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.3.A**

Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte's Artful Sentences) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

## EXERCISE 3: WRITING FOR RADIO

### LESSON PLAN

**STEP 1:** Have your students read their pieces aloud in small groups while they time each other. As they read, students should circle any sentences they tripped over—they will need to edit them later.

Then, discuss as a group or in pairs:

- What is the commentary about?
- What's the tone of the piece? How could the student author bring more of his or her voice into the commentary through humor or emotion?
- Is there anything missing from the piece? Details or critical facts?
- What length is the story? Is it between 2.5-5 minutes?
- What could be trimmed or added?
- Is the structure of the commentary working? Is there a different order that might create a more engaging story arc?
- Does the piece have an introduction that draws you in and a strong conclusion?

**STEP 2:** Rewrite your commentary to sound better for the ear.

With [this list](#) (LINK TO WRITING FOR RADIO WORK SHEET) of pointers in mind, have your students write another draft of their essay and read it aloud again. Students will give each other constructive feedback based on the criteria of strong writing for radio.

*Note: Special thank you to Transom.org's manifestos on writing for radio.*

# EXERCISE 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER! RECORDING NARRATION AND MAKING SIMPLE EDITS

## STANDARDS

### Grade 6

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4**

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.5**

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.6**

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.

### Grade 7

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.6**

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to perform their audio commentaries and publish them to a wider audience online.

### EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- Computer with internet access
- Audio recorders or smartphones
- Headphones, if available

**TIME: 50 Minutes**

### Grades 7-8

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7-8.4**

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7-8.5**

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

## EXERCISE 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER! RECORDING NARRATION AND MAKING SIMPLE EDITS

### STANDARDS CONT'D.

#### Grade 8

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.6**

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

#### Grade 6-8

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.5**

Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

#### Grades 9-10

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

#### Grades 9-10

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5**

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5**

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6**

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

# EXERCISE 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER! RECORDING NARRATION AND MAKING SIMPLE EDITS

## STANDARDS CONT'D.

### Grade 11-12

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5**

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

### Grades 11-12

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5**

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6**

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

### VOCABULARY:

- **Commentator:** The writer and narrator of the commentary.
- **Producer:** A person who oversees and directs the production of recording and publishing the content.

# EXERCISE 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER! RECORDING NARRATION AND MAKING SIMPLE EDITS

## LESSON PLAN

The day has arrived! It's time for your students to "perform" their pieces for the microphone and to record versions that you will be able to publish and share out to a wider audience.

It will be best to edit on a recording app that will allow students to make simple internal edits, unless you think they'll be able to record the whole thing in one take (even if it's not the first take).

Using these apps, students will be able to cut out stumbles but they won't be able to mix and match different reads with ease. If students want to experiment with more advanced editing, try downloading the free software Audacity (<http://transom.org/2004/audacity/>) OR use GarageBand if you're using Macs and have access.

The best apps for recording and making simple edits are: WavePad for iPhone and iPad and the Sony Audio Recorder for Android phones. More about this in Module 1.

### STEP 1

Before students start practicing recording narration, here are some tips for recording excellent narration that you can go over with them:

- Imagine someone you feel most yourself around and tell them your story as you read. Maybe even make a little sketch of them for your partner/producer to hold!
- Use hand gestures. By reminding our bodies we are communicating, we often sound more engaged.
- Stand up! Your voice will have more energy than if you're sitting
- Slow Down! Usually when people are a little nervous they speed up. Don't race through the script
- Speak clearly and enunciate each word
- Look at the person who you're recording with as much as possible. This will remind you that you are telling a story.
- If you mess up, don't worry! Record again!

### STEP 2

Students will work in pairs, with one of them acting as the producer and the other as the commentator, recording their narration. First they should practice just reading without recording several times. If there is something they keep tripping over, students should rewrite

# EXERCISE 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER! RECORDING NARRATION AND MAKING SIMPLE EDITS

## LESSON PLAN

it in a way that will be easier to read.

Remind students that they want people to care and to listen to what they have to say. If they sound bored or flat, it'll be hard to get others very interested. Also, remind them to hold the mic a fist distance from the person's mouth when recording. If possible have one student hold the mic for the student who is reading, so he or she can hold the script and focus on narrating.

### STEP 3

\*As a warm-up you might want to have students watch this video about why we hate the sound of our own voices: [http://www.slate.com/articles/video/video/2014/10/hate\\_the\\_sound\\_of\\_my\\_own\\_voice\\_the\\_science\\_behind\\_how\\_we\\_hear\\_our\\_own\\_voices.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/video/video/2014/10/hate_the_sound_of_my_own_voice_the_science_behind_how_we_hear_our_own_voices.html)

After students have recorded a few takes, they should go back to listen and reflect on what's working and what could be improved. It can be difficult to listen to your own voice, so remind them it's okay to hate the sound of it! That's normal.

### STEP 4

If you have time, have students edit their audio files (audio editing resources here [LINK](#)). Once they're done, they should email their best takes to you!

### STEP 5

After you've gathered all the commentaries, have the students write short descriptions of their pieces. Publish the pieces on SoundCloud where you can share on a Tumblr or a class blog and the wider school community.

*\*Note: SoundCloud files can be shared privately, only accessible to those with the link, or publicly to blogs, websites and social networks.*



# MODULE 4

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:

### A LIST OF RESOURCES FOR CREATING A RADIO STORY



# MODULE 4:

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:

### A LIST OF RESOURCES FOR CREATING A RADIO STORY

For educators with the time and interest in helping students produce mixed audio stories that include written narration, interview clips and even ambient sound, here are additional resources to support the process.

#### 1. CREATING A SCRIPT

Producing radio stories is often a back and forth between the written script and the audio production. For an understanding of the typical format of a radio script, these Radio Rookies stories demonstrate the difference between written narration, interview clips and sounds mixed in to create a sense of place:

- <http://www.wnyc.org/story/89961-gamun-pyul/transcript/>
- <http://www.wnyc.org/story/cost-being-poor-teen-investigates-his-own-family/transcript/>

#### 2. STRUCTURING A STORY

For tips on structuring a story, Transom.org is an invaluable resource, with “Manifestos” from many radio greats, offering advice on everything from how to write in and out of tape, to strong intros, to best use of sound and music:

- <http://transom.org/features/manifesto/>

#### 3. SIMPLE EDITING

Audacity is a free and relatively simple audio editing tool you and your students can use to mix their stories. We’ve created a basic guide to using the program, which you can find [here](#).

If you’re using macs, GarageBand is also a useful editing tool: <https://www.apple.com/support/mac-apps/garageband/>

## 4. HELPFUL GUIDES

Finally, many other youth media and independent media outlets have produced resources for people seeking to produce and teach audio content. Here are some of the most helpful guides:

- <https://youthradio.org/for-teachers/>
- <http://www.ypress.org/subjectmatters/>
- <http://www.radiodiaries.org/diy-radio/>
- <https://store.thisamericanlife.org/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=RADIO:ANILLUSTRATEDGUIDE>

## CONCLUSION

We hope you've found these lessons and resources helpful in working with students on journalism and audio production. We also value your feedback. Please write to Radio Rookies Senior Producer Kaari Pitkin (kpitkin@wnyc.org) with comments or questions.