

When engaging in the IEEE REACH hands-on activities contemplated in the IEEE REACH lesson plans please proceed with caution and use all reasonable safety measures. All IEEE REACH hands-on activities are designed for classroom use only, with supervision by a teacher or an adult educator. Please be advised that IEEE shall not be responsible for any injuries or damages related to the use of these lesson plans or any activities described herein.

Original Radio Program – Hands-On Activity

Radio Inquiry Unit

(Featured Sources, Supporting Question 3)

Task:

Create an original radio program using the same techniques utilized in early radio studio productions. You will need to write and perform a scripted dialogue that includes at least 5 sounds that must be created artificially in your “studio.” Practice recording each of the sound effects until you achieve the effect you want.

Background

Radio plays, also called radio drama or audio plays, are a form of entertainment that rose to prominence in the 1930s and '40s. They were a major revolution in pre-television entertainment and allowed people to experience live theatrical performances starring popular actors in their own homes for the first time. The setup of the traditional radio play broadcast involved several actors statically positioned around either one or two microphones who performed the script, often playing multiple characters. In addition to the cast, sound effects or “foley” artists would be stationed around the studio using various props to add sound effects and ambient noise to the production in order to increase the realism of the scene.



Photos taken from *Back of the Mike*, a 1930s insiders view to a radio studio.

Archive.org

<https://archive.org/details/Backofth1938>

Accessed December 15, 2021



Learning Outcome

Create an engaging experience in which students will learn about early radio production and gain an understanding of how much the advancement of radio technology changed entertainment and how people consumed it.

Materials

Depending on how you wish to complete this activity, you can either have the students attempt to create their sound effects on their own, using materials they can find, or provide them with materials commonly used to create sound effects. If you choose the latter, the list below provides some examples of materials as well as the sound they can be used to create.

- 1 pair of dress shoes
 - Simulate footsteps using your hands to “walk” on a desk or floor
- A roll of cellophane
 - Crinkle to simulate the sound of a fire
- A metal pan and a bag of rice
 - Slowly drop the rice onto the metal pan to simulate the rainfall on a roof
- A piece of aluminum sheet metal or a thin metal baking sheet
 - Shake quickly back and forth to simulate the sound of thunder
- 2 hollowed-out coconut shells
 - Clap together to create the horse hooves on a road
- A textbook or similar hardcover book
 - Tap softly on the cover to simulate the sound of a heartbeat

You will also need:

- A recording device. (Both Apple and Android phones should have a built-in voice-recording app or voice memo app.) Or you could use an old tape recorder, which would show students another recording device.

You can use many other materials to create sounds, but this should give you and your students a good starting point. If you would like to explore the subject further, more information can be found [here](#) and [here](#). If your school has a music or AV department, consult with their staff for further information.

Procedures:

1. Have students listen to the radio play, [The Lone Ranger](#), and watch the video recording, [Back of the Mike](#), an insider's view of a 1930s radio studio that shows the production of dramatic sound effects. (Note: From 5:14 to 6:52 many sound effects are shown.) Then organize students into groups of 4 or 5.
2. If you chose to use the provided materials, present those to the class and show them what sounds they can make with them. If not, tell the students ahead of time about the assignment to give them time to think about what sounds effects they like and to collect the materials necessary to make them.
3. Once that is complete, have them begin writing the script for their radio play within their groups using the handouts. For an example of a radio play script click the following link for a [Sherlock Holmes](#) radio play from 1939.
4. Once they've finished writing, have them create the 5 sound effects they need for their play.
5. Once they've achieved the effects, have them record the sounds on a phone or other recording device so they can be played back during their performance.
6. Have the students present their plays in the traditional radio play style (similar to *Back to the Mike*) with one or two students in each group assigned to play the sound effects.
7. After all of the performances are complete, have the students answer the following questions:
 - a. Has this exercise changed the way you think about television, radio, and movies?
 - b. Do you think that today's TV and movies are influenced by these radio plays? If so, how?
 - c. Do you think providing sound effects along with the dialogue helped make the radio plays more engaging than if they had just been dialogue?
 - d. What developments in the field of radio and broadcasting do you think helped lead to the success of radio plays during the 1930s and '40s?

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY – ORIGINAL RADIO PROGRAM

Listen to the following 1937 broadcast of [The Lone Ranger](#). Programs like this one were a regular staple of the early days of commercial radio. While the story of this particular episode takes place both outdoors and indoors, the entire show was produced and performed inside a small studio and all the sounds were created artificially. Watch the following video recording of [Back of the Mike](#), an insider's view of a 1930s radio studio, showing the production of dramatic sound effects. (From 5:14 to 6:52 many sound effects are shown.) Pay attention to the sound effects artists and watch how they create various sounds, some using everyday items. Finally, take a look at an actual script from [Sherlock Holmes](#) and note how the dialogue and sound effects are intermingled so that each effect is perfectly timed to make the show seem more realistic.

Your task is to create an original radio program using the same techniques utilized in early radio studio productions. You will need to write and perform a scripted dialogue that includes at least 5 sounds that must be created “artificially” in the studio. Practice recording each sound until you achieve the effect you wanted.

Use the space below to plan your episode.

Original Radio Program

TITLE _____

CHARACTERS _____

SOUNDS EFFECT CHART

Sound	Possible Tools

Outline your script on the back of this page.