

Old Time Radio



Introduction

Before the internet ... Before TV ... There was radio. Families of the 1920s '30s, '40s would gather around the radio and listen to the news and their favorite programs such as *Little Orphan Annie*, *Amos and Andy*, *The Guiding Light*, and *The Shadow*.

The "Golden Age of Radio" is an important part of the history of our country. It provided people with news of wars, messages of encouragement from our leaders, and was a source of entertainment to the masses. It had the power to persuade as well as to entertain.

After completing this project, you hopefully have a better understanding of the history of radio drama and what it takes to create a radio drama. To learn more about old-time radio, visit [Old Time Radio](#) or [The Original Old-Time Radio WWW Pages](#). To learn more about the War of the Worlds broadcast, visit [War of the Worlds](#).



The Task

You work in radio during its "Golden Age" in the 1920s and 30s. You and your co-workers have the task of producing content.

You and your co-workers need to research the history of "Old Time Radio" in addition to the topic you are assigned to cover. Use this knowledge to create a radio drama. You must draft a script which contains an accurate portrayal of your assigned topic and use sound effects in addition to the actors' dialogue. You will, of course, then either a) perform your drama before a live studio audience as you are recorded, or b) pre-record a podcast to be played back during class time.

You will also need to incorporate as much slang lingo from the 1920s-1930s as possible!



The Process

Step 1:

Each person in your group is to select one of the following positions:



Playwright

The playwright writes the actual script for the radio drama. The other members of the group will provide creative input, but the playwright will be held accountable for actually writing the script on paper.



Foley Artist

The Foley artist creates the sound effects and music for the radio drama. This person will be responsible for ensuring that all props are brought to the recording studio when needed. The Foley artist will make sure that the playwright includes all sound effects in the script. ALL MUSIC MUST BE PERIOD APPROPRIATE TO THE 1920s-1930s.



Advertising Executive

The advertising executive writes the commercials for the radio drama. This person should decide where the commercials should be placed in the script and inform the playwright of these decisions.



Actors

You will ALL have speaking roles in your drama.

All members of the group are expected to contribute in each area. The person in charge of each area will make the final decisions.

Step 2:

Each member of the team is to research his or her particular area. References for each area are included below.



Playwright

[Format for a Radio Play Script](#)

This page presents a sample format for writing a radio play script. Read through this page so you will be familiar with this format. This is the format you will follow when you write your own script. You might want to print this page and use it for reference when you write your own script.

[Vintage Radio Script Library Page](#)

Click on one of the scripts provided on this page. Read through the script to become familiar with what a real radio play script looks like. Pay particular attention to the story line, noticing how they present the setting, character, plot, etc.

[1938 "War of the Worlds" Radio Broadcast Wavs](#)

Listen to some of the sound files on this page. Pay particular attention to how the actors read the script. When this broadcast was originally aired, people in the United States actually believed that Earth was being invaded by aliens. A copy of the script for this play can be found at <http://members.aol.com/jeff1070/script.html>.



Foley Artist

[Sound Effects](#)

Read through this history of sound effects in radio. Pay particular attention to the examples given of how to make particular sounds.

[The Art of Foley](#)

Read the section titled "What is Foley" and view the movie clips located near the end of the page. This should provide you a good definition of what Foley artists do.

[Movie Sound Effects](#)

Read through the *Insights & Connections* and the *Vocabulary* sections. This will add to your background knowledge of sound effects. You might also consider trying to do the *Main Activity*.

[Radio Sound Effects](#)

Read through the information in this site, focusing your attention on the section titled "Using Sound Effects."



Advertising Executive

[Radio Sounds Showcase](#)

Listen to the wav files for some of the 1930s era commercials. This will give you some ideas of how radio commercials were designed.

[Vintage Radio Script Library Page](#)

Click on one of the scripts provided on this page. Read through the commercials in the script. Use this as a guide to writing your own advertisements for your radio play. Pay particular attention to where the commercial interruptions take place.

Step 3:

Research popular lingo from the 1920s and 1930s and work as much of it as possible into your drama. Also, research appropriate attire for the period and plan to look the part! These are just the first few sites I found. You can easily find dozens more through a quick search.

http://www.lsrhs.net/departments/history/ShenM/Site/Trials_classwork,_handouts_files/Jazz%20Age%20Slang%20Terms%20-%20short.pdf

<http://local.aaca.org/bntc/slang/slang.htm>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/everythings-copacetic-guide-jazz-age-slang-617888.html>

http://thedailynewsonline.com/entertainment/article_2afdfc52-dbd3-597a-b3e7-f85f151f57bf.html

<http://www.vintagedance.com/dress-20s.htm>

<http://fashionbloglife.com/1920sfashion/>

<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/1920s-clothing-fashion-of-the-twenties.html>

Step 4:

Once you have researched your particular area, get together with your group members and discuss your findings. This is the chance for all group members to give their input on script ideas, sound effects, commercials, etc.

Step 5:

After each member has contributed his or her ideas, you should write your part of the radio drama. When all parts have been written, all parts should be revised by the other members of the group. A final copy should then be written.

Step 6:

A) Rehearse your radio drama in preparation for your live performance, including the commercials and sound effects, or B) record and mix your podcast for playback during class. Make sure that you put a lot of emotion and feeling into your reading of the script.

Step 7:

Live performance! Perform your drama in front of a live studio audience (your classmates). Make sure you have all necessary props for the sound effects!

The Lindbergh Kidnapping

Create a dramatic reenactment of the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's son; the police investigation which followed; the arrest, trial, and execution of the man responsible; and responses from the federal government and general public to the crime.

The Sacco & Vanzetti Trial

Create a news story on the arrest, trial, and execution of Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco. Capture responses of all those involved in the case as well as members of the general public.

American Consumerism in the 1920s

Create a radio comedy/drama capturing the thrill of the easy credit and new consumer technologies of the 1920s which epitomized the era.

Harding Ohio Gang

Create a dramatic reenactment of a meeting of the "Ohio Gang" members of the Harding Administration discussing their corrupt schemes and the public reaction to these scandals.

Scopes Trial

Create a news story on the Scopes Trial in Tennessee, including interviews with Clarence Darrow, William Jennings Bryan, John Scopes, and members of the public on both sides of the issue.

Flappers in a Speakeasy

Create a comedic scene of young ladies going to dance the Charleston and the Lindy Hop in a jazz age club.

Okies

Create a tragedy of Dust Bowl farmers abandoning their farms for greener pastures in California.

Wall St. Bankers

Create a two-act play capture Wall St traders celebrating a booming economy in the summer of 1929 and weeping over the sudden stock market collapse at the end of October 1929.

Hooverville Hobos

Create a scene of unemployed men discussing their fates in a "Hooverville" just days before the November 1932 election.

Bonus Army Marchers

Create a news story covering the break-up of the Bonus Army encampment in Washington, DC. Explain the background of the event and include interviews with marchers and the US Army officers responsible for disrupting the protest.

FDR's Brain Trust

Create a dramatic reenactment of a meeting of FDR and his "Brain Trust" brainstorming plans to pull the US out of the Great Depression.

The St. Valentine's Day Massacre

Create a detective story investigating the St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago as the hero of the story attempts to track down those responsible for the crime.

Duke Ellington band performance in Harlem/ Harlem Renaissance

Create either a comedic or dramatic scene of an evening's entertainment in a Harlem club including performances by Duke Ellington's band and recitations by Langston Hughes of several of his poems.