

Introduction

Inspired by the “Hardy Boys” and “Nancy Drew” adventures, the radio drama, “Doc Merriweather and the Case of the Carved Wooden Box,” written by Joe McHugh, tells the story of several youngsters who start their own detective agency only to find themselves caught up in a sinister mystery involving a treasure and possibly a ghost!

For step-by-step instructions on how to perform a radio play with students refer to the “Radio Theater Cookbook, Recipes for the Imagination” available from the Raven Radio Theater of the Air! This script is published with the following materials and information to help you prepare your students for their own radio theater presentation.

Master CD - a CD that contains the pre-recorded music and sound effects segments you will need to perform this play.

Master CD Index - lists the music and sound effect segments on the Master CD, their duration, and instructions.

Character List - tells you which characters are in the play, how many lines each one has, and which pages of the script to duplicate for each character.

Sound Effects Suggestions - ideas for finding or building the mechanical sound effects you will need to perform the play.

“Get-Ready” Cards - a master set of cue cards that you can copy onto card stock and use during the performance to cue sound effects crew.

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www.callingcrane.com

7605 Boston Harbor Road

Olympia, WA 98506

(360) 943-3206

“Doc Merriweather and the Case of the Carved Wooden Box” Character List

Narrator	47 lines	Margo as an adult telling the story
Announcer	11 lines	Introduces the radio play to the audience
Doc	116 lines	Young Detective
Margo	28 lines	Friend of Doc Merriweather
Arnie	57 lines	Friend of Doc Merriweather
Anderson	100 lines	Woman in distress
Smith	85 lines	The villain
Mrs. Baker	2 lines	Customer in book store
Burglar	13 lines	Works with Mr. Smith
Harry	9 lines	Miss Anderson’s fiance
Aunt	3 lines	Margot’s aunt who they visit in England

Casting Notes: There are 11 speaking parts in “Doc Merriweather and the Case of the Carved Wooden Box.” Having an adult read the part of the Narrator can be very helpful as it helps establish the timing and expression of the young readers. Remember you are casting by voice alone, not by appearance. Become familiar with the script and try and match the reader to the voice of the character. The idea is to inspire the readers to bring as much life to their characters and the action of the story as possible. You will need 8 to 12 students for the sound effects crew.

Duplication List

Narrator	pp. 1, 11-13, 17, 22-23		
Announcer	p. 1, 23	Doc	full script
Margo	full script	Arnie	full script
Anderson	full script	Smith	pp. 4-8, 12, 17-20
Mrs. Baker	p. 4	Burglar	pp. 5-8
Harry	pp. 18-19	Aunt	pp. 222

Master CD Index

With the music/sound effects *master CD* for “Doc Merriweather and the Case of the Carved Wooden Box”, you will be able to add audio texture and excitement to your radio theater production. The *master CD* includes **in sequence** the music and sound effects selections listed below

1. Old-time radio segments and fanfare
2. Theme music
3. City Street
4. Approaching police siren
5. Theme music
6. Theme music
7. Birds
8. Crickets
9. Rain
10. Crickets
11. Theme music
12. Crowd noise with ship's horn

CLIPPITY-CLOP! SPLASH! PLOP! CRASH! BANG! WHOOSH!

Sound Effects

Chime - A single tone (or several tones such as NBC's "Do - So - Me") alerts the listener to the upcoming radio drama. A glockenspiel makes fine tones but a variety of other items can work as well even a discarded bearing-ring hanging from a cord which is struck with a small wooden mallet.

Shuffling Cards - Shuffle a deck of cards briskly near the mic to set the scene.

Door - There was always a framed, half-size door in all the old radio drama studios. It either sat on a table top or, if larger, had castors so it could be easily moved around. The bigger the door and heavier the frame, such as one made of hardwood, the more realistic the sound it made. The handle was just a shade loose, so that it could be rattled a little as the door was opened. A variety of other door fittings were often installed on the door and frame including a lifting-type latch, a bolt, a knocker, etc. Sometimes the door doubled for window sounds with a sash window set in the back of the boxed frame.

If you build your own sound-door, or have a parent or local business donate one, it can be used over and over again in future radio drama productions.

Another solution is simply to use a real door close enough to be picked up by a microphone.

For the door to the bookstore, have someone ring a little hand bell as the door is opened or closed.

Footsteps - Walk in place or hold a pair of shoes with the hands and "walk" on a table. It is important to get a realistic rhythm to the footsteps. If walking in place, a "heel to toe" step is best but takes practice to master.

On Sidewalk - Cement stepping stones or flagstones can be used to simulate the sound of the castle or a city sidewalk.

On Fire-escape - Use a heavy flat pan or skillet with two hand-held shoes.

On Gravel - Use a tray with medium to small gravel on it.

On Leaves - Collect leaves in the fall and let them dry. As leaves break down quickly, you may want to put them in a box and use your hands to mimic the sound of steps. You can use corn flakes if you don't have any leaves.

Body Falling - Let your bare arms slap onto a hard table starting with elbows, wrists, and then hands.

Ice Cubes - Find or make three wooden blocks the size of ice cubes. Drop the blocks, one after another, into a large glass close to a mic and fill with water. Swirl the blocks around to continue the illusion of someone drinking an iced drink.

Soda, Opening and Pouring - Open a can of soda near the mic, being careful not to get it wet, and pour some into a glass.

Tissue - Pull a tissue from the box near the mic.

Cash Register - A simple way to make this effect is to ring a desk bell and open a drawer at the same time. A toy cash register can sometimes work quite well.

Elevator Door Opening - Use an old metal roller skate, a block of wood and a desk bell to create this clever effect. Hit the bell and then roll the skate along a hard surface into the block of wood.

Tools - Take some all-metal tools like wrenches and pliers and rattle them together loosely in your hands near a mic.

Window Breaking - Take a glass jar (an applesauce or mayonnaise jar works best) and place it in a medium-size paper bag. Close the top and hit the jar in the bag with a hammer. Hit the bag just hard enough to break the glass but not the bag and hold the bag still to avoid a paper sound.

Clothes Hangers - Hold a short section of a wooden closet pole or metal pipe with one hand and roughly move several metal clothes hangers back and forth with the other.

Searching Chest of Drawers - Begin with someone sliding two pieces of wood together to sound like a drawer or find a wooden box with a sliding lid or drawer you can use. Follow this with someone else roughly handling some costume jewelry and cloth.

Knife Opening - Use a knife, preferably a dull one, or anything that makes a distinctive click when opened or closed.

Ripping Mattress - Rip a piece of old window shade or unbleached muslin near the mic. Remember to start the tear beforehand.

Purse Zipper - Use an old purse with a zipper next to the mic followed by rummaging through plastic and cloth items and keys.

Box - Use a wooden box and place it on hard surface.

Secret Door Latch and Open - Find and use a switch of some sort followed by sliding two pieces of wood together.

Paper - Paper sounds pick up well over a microphone and make a telling effect. Try different types of paper for the best sound.

Typewriter - Use an old manual typewriter to make this effective sound. Strike a number of keys and follow this by pulling a piece of paper smartly out of the machine. Practice beforehand to be sure you do not type too fast and jam the keys.

Telephone - Use a windup alarm clock, the kind with the bells on top. Wind the alarm but not the clock itself! Set the alarm and time to the same time and pull out the alarm stem whenever you need the telephone to “ring.” For dialing, simply use an old rotary telephone. Pick-ups and hang-ups can also be done with a real telephone.

Voice Box - (This device is used by an actor when indicated on the script.) Cut a silver-dollar size hole in each end of a cardboard box. Make the hole A cigar box is the best size although a cardboard tube often works well. Place your lips firmly on the hole in one end with hole in the other several inches from a reader’s mic. Speak into the box to create the illusion of someone be heard speaking through a telephone.

Other ways to create this effect is to speak into a small plastic or earthenware cup next to a mic or plug a set of headphones into a microphone input on the mixer and speak into them. If the impedances are reasonably correct, the headphone diaphragm corresponds in performance to the cheap microphone in a telephone.

Breaking Branches - Have some sticks or thin piece of wood to snap at the right time.

Lantern - Use an old kerosene “hurricane” lantern. Push the lever that opens the glass globe next to a mic.

Striking a Match - There are two distinctive sounds of lighting a match, the scratch and the flare of the flame. Use a large wooden kitchen match and draw it slowly across the striker about 6 inches from the mic.

Opening King Arthur’s Chest - Scrap a metal hinge with a screw driver or butter knife followed by a heavy switch or something to imitate a latch giving way. Then slowly open the hinge. Only hinges that are rusty or bind when twisted will make any noise. A smooth-working or well-oiled hinge is useless. Squeaky swivel chairs also can work .

Wind - A wind machine is made by hanging a piece of heavy canvas with lead fishing sinkers sewn in a seam along one end over a large, cylinder made of wooden slats and turned on a frame with a hand crank. The rubbing of the canvas against the slats makes the sound of wind.

You can also simulate wind by pulling a length of silk-like material across two or three upright wooden boards. The strength of the wind can be increased or decreased by varying the amount of drag. For wind in the trees agitate a handful of old recording tape in front of the microphone.

Thunder - Go to a sheet metal shop and try different pieces of scrap metal until you get one that makes exactly the sound you want (18 gauge works well). Bolt a piece of wood along the top and a piece of leather for a handle to the bottom. You can hang the thunder-sheet or have it held up by two people while a third shakes it. (Be careful when laying it down afterwards you don’t make any unwanted noise.) Students who handle the thunder-sheet should wear leather work gloves as sheet metal often has sharp edges.

Another way to make thunder is to buy some lead shot from a sporting/hunting goods store (“OO-buck” is best). Put a handful into a heavy balloon and blow it up. Shake the balloon next to the mic to simulate thunder. A little practice will get it right. If you shake it too hard the balloon may break. Lead is poisonous so please use caution around children.

Campfire - An old standby of radio theater, this effect is created by gently crumpling a piece of cellophane. Different pieces of cellophane create different sounds so experiment to get just the right “crackle” for the campfire. You can add to this effect if you want by taking a small whisk broom and running your fingers along the top of the bristles while someone else snaps a thin piece of wood from time to time.

Ripping Bandages - (See “Ripping Mattress”)

Horn - A hunting horn works the best but a trumpet, French horn, or bugle will suffice. A horn can also be done with the voice into a mic with cupped hands.

Hoof Beats and Bridle - Take two halves of an empty coconut shell and drum them rhythmically in a tray of gravel. You can also cover the coconuts with cloth to imitate hoof beats on a soft surface. The easiest way to imitate a bridle sound is with a whole bridle or just the bit or piece of light chain. Shake it lightly along with the hoof beats to create a convincing illusion of a horse and rider galloping.

Gunshots - Use a starter’s pistol with blanks or a cap gun. You can also make this effect by striking the edge of a snare drum with a drumstick. Strike a pile of alternate layers of heavy duck canvas and heavy wrapping paper with a thin flat wooden stick. The stick should be about two inches wide and not over a 1/4” thick. Another way to make a gunshot is to strike a leather cushion with a thin flat stick or prick an inflated rubber balloon with a pin.

Ship’s Horn - Fasten a 5’ cardboard mailing tube to a 10’ piece of pipe. Either blow hard or make a horn sound with your mouth through the pipe end.

SHUFFLING CARDS

Wait for Cue!

KNOCK ON DOOR

Wait for Cue!

DOOR (Open and Close)

FOOTSTEPS

PERSON FALLING

Wait for Cue!

ICE - SODA POURING

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS

ICE CLINKING

TISSUE

Wait for Cue!

DOOR (Open & Close with Bell)

Wait for Cue!

CASH REGISTER

& COINS

FOOTSTEPS (Fade Away) 4
DOOR (Open & Close with Bell)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS
**DOOR (Open & Slam Close
with Bell)**

FOOTSTEPS (2 sets) 5
ELEVATOR With Bell
FOOTSTEPS (2 sets)

Wait for Cue!

TOOLS BANGING

METAL ON METAL 6

Wait for Cue!

GLASS BREAKING

Wait for Cue!

DOOR (Open and Close)
FOOTSTEPS (2 Cues)

METAL HANGERS

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS

DRAWERS (Open & Close)

RUMMAGING / JEWELRY

Wait for Cue!

KNIFE

RIPPING MATERIAL

WINDOW (Open)

FOOTSTEPS (Fire Escape)

Wait for Cue!

ZIPPER

REMOVE BOX

Wait for Cue!

PURSE (Rummaging)

SLIDING DRAWER

Wait for Cue!

PAPER HANDLED

Wait for Cue!

PAPER HANDED OVER

TYPEWRITER

(Ending with Paper Pulled Out)

Wait for Cue!

TELEPHONE (2 Rings)

TELEPHONE (Pick-up)

Wait for Cue!

TELEPHONE (Hang-up)

TELEPHONE (Dialed)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

Wait for Cue!

PAPER (Unfolded)

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

FOOTSTEPS (Running)

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

Wait for Cue!

BREAKING BRANCHES

LANTERN (Open)

MATCH (Strike)

LANTERN (Close)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

KNIFE (Opened)

Wait for Cue!

LATCH (Giving Way)

RUSTY HINGE (Open)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

Wait for Cue!

WIND

THUNDER

FIRE

Wait for Cue!

SNAPPING WOOD

Wait for Cue!

MATERIAL (Ripped 3 times)

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

HORN (One Blast)

WIND

HOOFBEATS w/ BRIDLE

(Get Louder and Louder)

Wait for Cue!

THUNDER

GUNSHOTS (Several)

HOOFBEATS (Fade Away)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

Wait for Cue!

SHIP'S HORN (3 Cues)

Doc Merriweather and the Case of the Carved Wooden Box

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1

FADE-IN OLD-TIME RADIO SEGMENTS & FANFARE

Announcer: Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the Raven Radio Theater of the Air and our exciting audio adventure, "Doc Merriweather and the Case of the Carved Wooden Box." Today's radio play was written by Joe McHugh is brought to you by (name of class and school).

So now, sit back, listen carefully and let your imagination be your guide as we present "Doc Merriweather and the Case of the Carved Wooden Box" . . .

2

FADE-IN THEME MUSIC

Narrator: Hi! I'm Margo Carter, an associate and personal friend of the famous Doc Merriweather, the greatest private detective since Sherlock Holmes. Doc's powers of deductive reasoning and undaunted courage are legendary and the mere mention of his name sends shudders through the criminal underworld.

Now I'm going to tell you how Doc first got into the detective business. The year was 1946 when Doc was only 16 years old. The Second World War had just ended and the Red Sox were making a run at the pennant. Arnie Grossman and I were Doc's best friends and we were always reading mystery books together. But what Doc really wanted was to solve some real-life mysteries himself. His family had piles of money. They owned the Merriweather Radio Corporation. So Doc talked his father into giving him an empty office in a building he owned downtown. Doc then had a telephone put in and ran an ad in the newspaper. The ad read:

The Merriweather Detective Agency
Confidential, Efficient, Money No Object!
Room 62, the Merriweather Building.

He hired Arnie and me as Associate Detectives for \$5 a week.

Well, one July afternoon Doc, Arnie and I were hanging out at the office. We didn't have a case to work on yet, so we were passing the time playing cards. Little did we foresee what fate was about to drop into our laps. . .

FADE-OUT THEME MUSIC

fade-in shuffling cards

Margo: (frustrated) Come on, Arnie, stop shuffling the cards and deal.

Arnie: (calmly) Don't rush me, Margo. To create a scientifically random assortment of playing cards requires skill, concentration and patience.

Doc: Ah yes, the "Professor" at work.

Arnie: Don't make fun of me, Doc. You have your talents and I have mine. That's why we get along so well.

knock on door - stop shuffling cards

Doc: Come in.

door opens and closes followed by several footsteps and stop

Anderson: (a little uncertain) Excuse me, but is this the Merriweather Detective Agency?

Doc: Sure is, lady. What can I do for you?

Anderson: Perhaps you could tell me when Mr. Merriweather will be in? I read the ad in the newspaper and I wish to engage him to help me with a very distressing problem.

Doc: Let me introduce myself. The name is Doc Merriweather, private investigator and crime solver, at your service. And these two are my very capable associates, Margo Carter and Arnie Grossman.

Anderson: (more confused) Oh, there must be some mistake. I mean . . . well . . . I don't wish to offend, but . . . I was expecting someone quite a bit older.

Doc: No need to apologize, Miss, it does take some getting used to. Why not start by telling us what kind of trouble you're in.

Anderson: (sounds progressively weaker as she speaks) Very well. My name is Sally Anderson and I've been threatened by this horrid little man. You must understand, this sort of thing has never happened to me before. I mean. . . I'm. . . well, I'm not sure what to do. I've never felt so scared . . .

sound of person falling on floor

Doc: (urgently) Jumping lizards! She's fainted! Margo come help me!

Anderson: (very weak) I'm so sorry. I don't know what came over me. I just suddenly felt dizzy.

Doc: You blacked out, lady. Let me help you to the couch. Arnie, go get our client a soda pop and put some ice in it.

(to Miss Anderson) Now, easy does it, Miss. . . There you go.

sound of ice dropping into glass and soda being opened and poured

Doc: How do you feel now?

Anderson: Oh, much better. Thank you. I didn't eat this morning. That must be it.

Margo: Looks more like worry and exhaustion to me.

footsteps approach and stop

Arnie: Here, Ma'am, drink this. It should help.

sound of ice clinking in glass

Anderson: Thank you, Arnie. I'm sorry to inconvenience you all like this but I feel so desperate.

I've been to the police but they say there's nothing they can do until I'm actually attacked . . . but then, it could be too late!

Doc: Now back up a little, Miss Anderson. Why don't you tell us the story from the beginning? And be sure and leave nothing out.

Anderson: All right. You see, I was engaged to a young man named Harry Bellington before the war. He was was a pilot and after Pearl Harbor he joined the Air Corps and was stationed in England. Two years ago I received a small package in the mail. Wrapped up in it was a wooden box with a carving of a bird on the top. There wasn't a letter or anything but I just knew it had come from Harry.

Then, not long afterwards, I got a telegram from the Army saying Harry had been shot down over Germany and killed. (begins to sob a little) . . . I just never thought I would

lose him. . . He meant so much to me. . . (another sob) I'm sorry, I must look a fool.

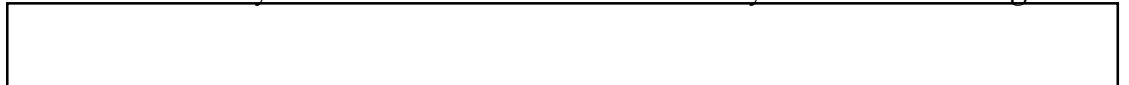
Doc: (gently) No, not at all, Miss Anderson. Here, have a tissue.



sound of tissue being pulled from box

Doc: I'm sure losing your fiance was very difficult. Please, go on.

Anderson: (still sniffing) Yes . . . well . . . I work for a small bookseller on Nicholas Street. The other day this man came into the shop. He was short, not much taller than I am, in fact. His hair was dark and dirty and his clothes had seen better days. He was looking for me.



door opening and closing with bell followed by several footsteps and stop

Smith: Excuse me, Ma'am, does a Sally Anderson work here?

Anderson: I'm Miss Anderson.

Smith: That's good cause I got to talk to you.

Anderson: Just wait a moment while I ring this order up.



cash register and handling of coins in drawer

Anderson: One seventy, one-eighty, one-ninety, and two dollars.

Mrs. Baker: Thank you, Sally. Now and be sure and tell me when the new Hemingway book comes in.

Anderson: I won't forget, Mrs. Baker.



footsteps fading away - door opening and closing with bell

Anderson: Now, what can I do for you?

Smith: (lowering his voice in a more confidential tone) I want to talk to you about your fiance, Captain Bellington. You see, him and me was buddies. We flew in the same outfit. It's terrible what happened to him, poor guy.

Anderson: I'm sorry but I didn't get your name?

Smith: Yeah, right ... (slight hesitation) the name's . . . Smith, . . . that's it, Allen Smith. As I was saying, some time ago Harry mailed a package to you?

Anderson: Yes, it contained a carved wooden box.

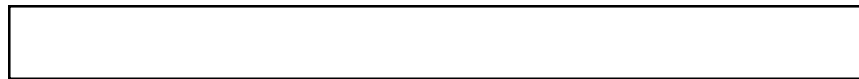
Smith: (excited) Yeah, that's it! The truth is, Miss Anderson, that box belongs to me. You see, Harry sent it to you as a practical joke . . . he was always kidding around like that. Anyway, I've come a long way to get it back. It has sentimental meaning for me, you see.

Anderson: (thinking while speaking) Yes . . . well . . . I'm not exactly sure what happened to the box, Mr. Smith. I think I gave it to a friend for a present.

Smith: (talking in a threatening whisper) Look, lady, I wasn't born yesterday so stop stalling. You've got that box and I want it, see. The best thing for you is to give it to me, and be quick about it!

Anderson: (in offended tone) I don't know who you think you are to come in here and threaten me, Mr. Smith but I'll not stand for it. (calling loudly) Mr. Caruthers, Mr. Caruthers, would you please come out here. . .

Smith: Ok, Lady, if that's the way you want it but I'll be back . . . and I'll get that box one way or another.



several footsteps - door opening and slamming with bell

Doc: So, why didn't you tell Mr. Smith the truth about having the box?

Anderson: I'm not exactly sure. Something told me not to trust him. I think it was his eyes. There was something sneaky about them, like a weasel's. They scared me. Besides, Harry had never mentioned knowing any Allen Smith and he wasn't what you'd call a practical joker. It just didn't add up.

Margo: So what did you do then?

Anderson: Well, I was so upset that Mr. Caruthers let me have the rest of the day off. I went home and took the box and gave it to Mrs. Pearson, a neighbor of mine, for safekeeping. But then, something terrible happened the next day. . .

3



FADE-IN CITY STREET

Smith: That's her apartment house across the street. The broad thinks she can hold out on me but I'll show her.

Burglar: Sure is a dump. I don't think she has anything worth stealing.