



RAVEN RADIO THEATER PRESENTS!

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COMMON GROUND

A Radio Drama Script for the Classroom



Written by Joe McHugh

Introduction

The play “Common Ground” weaves together two fascinating stories, one modern and one dating back to 1903. The play starts in East LA where mostly Mexican/American students from Roosevelt High School are rebuilding a formal Japanese garden in the school’s courtyard, which was destroyed when the Japanese/American students and their families were taken to prison camps at the outbreak of WWII. Their teacher Mr. Avilla tells the students of another time when Japanese and Mexican people worked together during a farm labor union strike in Oxnard, California.

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 drama presentation.

Mp3 Playlist - lists the Mp3 music and sound effect segments that is included with your script, 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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“Common Ground” Character List

Announcer #1	10 lines	Introduces the radio play to the audience
Announcer #2	10 lines	Tells setting of the play
Louise	7 lines	Assistant principal
Roberto	10 lines	Student
Carlos	5 lines	Student
Rosa	7 lines	Student
Herman	5 lines	Student
Mr. Avilla	110 lines	Teacher, narrator of the play
Carmen	6 lines	Student
Henry	2 lines	Student
Father	8 lines	Yoshio’s father
Yoshio	49 lines	Main character
Kaname	17 lines	Yoshio’s friend who just came back from America
Mother	4 lines	Yoshio’s mother
Mrs. Katada	7 lines	Shoemakers wife in America
Mr. Katada	10 lines	Shoemaker in America
Man #1	4 lines	Anonymous man in crowd
Takahashi	17 lines	Mrs. Katada’s nephew, sugarbeet field worker
Yamoto	1 line	Sugar beet field worker
Baba	20 lines	Sugar beet field worker
Yamaguchi	14 lines	Secretary of the Japanese field workers union
Lizarras	24 lines	Secretary of the Mexican field workers union
Healy	11 lines	Local store owner
Wilcox	18 lines	Field worker organizer
Man #2	2 lines	Anonymous man in crowd
Man #3	3 lines	Anonymous man in crowd
Woman #1	2 lines	Anonymous woman in crowd
Woman #2	1 line	Anonymous woman in crowd
Nurse	4 lines	Nurse taking care of Takahashi
Edmond	2 lines	AFL organizer
Terrance	10 lines	AFL organizer
Gompers	24 lines	AFL leader
Evans	2 lines	Gompers secretary
Ramirez	5 lines	Mexican field worker
Mrs. Ramirez	3 lines	Ramirez’s wife

Casting Notes: There are 35 speaking parts in “Common Ground” Having an adult read the part Mr. Avilla can be very helpful as it helps establish the timing and expression of the young readers. You may double up parts in this play such as, student parts with field worker parts. 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.

Duplicating List

Announcer #1	pp. 1, 22-23	Announcer #2	pp. 1, 22-23
Louise	pp. 1-2	Roberto	pp. 1-2, 22
Carlos	pp. 2-3, 22	Rosa	pp. 2-3, 22
Herman	pp. 2-3	Mr. Avilla	Full script
Carmen	pp. 2-3, 22	Henry	pp. 2-3
Father	pp. 5-7	Yoshio	pp. 5-18
Kaname	pp. 5-6	Mother	p. 6
Mrs. Katada	pp. 7-8	Mr. Katada	pp. 7-8
Man #1	pp. 9, 14-15	Takahashi	pp. 9-19
Yamato	p. 9	Baba	pp. 12-14
Yamaguchi	pp. 12-15	Lizarras	pp. 12-14, 21-22
Healy	pp. 12-14	Wilcox	pp. 13-16, 18
Man #2	pp. 14-15	Man #3	pp. 14-15, 22
Woman #1	pp. 14-15	Woman #2	p. 15
Nurse	p. 17	Edmond	p. 19
Gompers	pp. 19-20	Terrance	pp. 19-20
Evans	p. 20	Ramirez	p. 21
Mrs. Ramirez	pp. 21-22		

Mp3 Playlist

With the music/sound effects Mp3 files for “Common Ground,” you will be able to add audio texture and excitement to your radio theater production. The Mp3 playlist includes in sequence the music and sound effects selections listed below as they are numbered in the script.

1. Old-time radio segments and fanfare
2. School Hallway
3. City sounds
4. Theme music
5. Birds through window
6. Theme music
7. Theme music
8. Theme music
9. Restaurant
10. Theme music
11. Theme music
12. Theme music
13. City sounds
14. Theme music

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

Sound Effects

Footsteps (most types) - 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.

For footsteps on a hard surface, use hard-soled shoes (leather are best) on a piece of plywood. For footsteps on gravel, use a tray with medium to small gravel on it.

Note: In the scene in Japan, the characters would be wearing wooden clogs and would walk with a shuffling sound.

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 sound it made. The handle was just a shade loose, so 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.

Note: The door sound used in the Japanese cabinet shop would be a sliding door. Experiment with sliding two pieces of wood together.

Digging Dirt - This effect is done by using one or more small garden hand trowels and a shoe box-size container of dirt. Put some large pebbles in with the dirt to make more sound. With a mic nearby, repeatedly push the trowel slowly into the dirt, lifting some up and pouring it back, to simulate the sound of a large shovel digging in hard ground. Be careful not to hit the sides of the box while you do this.

Sawing Wood - A small dove-tail saw and a piece of 2x4 wood is all that is needed. Saw back

and forth without pushing down on the saw. Let the saw do the work.

Chisel Cutting - First secure a piece of wood to the table or floor. Hit the hammer against the chisel in non-repetitive strokes.

Coins - Simulate the sound of coins by using different sizes of metal washers from the hardware store. Drop them from above into a hand held against the stomach.

Harmonica - These instruments are easy to find. Just blow some random notes.

Hammering Pegs into Soles of Shoes - This effect should be done with short tap, tap, taps as if pounding in short tacks. Hammering into leather will soften the sound.

Writing - Use coarse twilled paper and scratch with an unbent paper clip, fingernail, or even a pen point.

Envelope & Letter - Take a heavy, unsealed envelope and noisily remove a folded piece of paper from it close to a mic.

Plates and Silverware - Porcelain dinner plates are best for this effect. Tap and scrape a knife or fork against the plate to simulate the sound of someone eating.

Wagon - The easiest way to make wagon sounds is to combine hoof beats on gravel with a shaking bridle and an occasional banging of tin cups or metal pots. However, if you want to create the sound of rolling wheels you can experiment with any number of techniques. A large round wheel held in a wooden frame with a handle connected to the axle for turning was used in the early radio studios. As the wheel turned, it rubbed against two rollers on the bottom of the frame which were covered with sandpaper to simulate a rough dirt road. An old ice-cream maker can sound very much like a rolling wagon, the metal container inside adding just the right amount of metallic resonance. Look around and be creative.

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. Strike a leather cushion with a thin flat stick. Prick an inflated rubber balloon with a pin.

Typewriter - Use an old manual typewriter to make this effective sound. Roll the paper around the typewriter and strike a number of keys in a rhythm. Practice beforehand to be sure you do not type too fast and jam the keys.

p.1

FOOTSTEPS (Two Sets)

Wait for Cue!

DOOR (Open & Close)

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

p.2

DIGGING

2

SAWING WOOD

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

PAPER HANDLED

p.4-5

3

CHISEL

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

SLIDING DOOR (Open/Close)

FOOTSTEPS

COINS POURED
PACKAGE OPENED
HARMONICA (2 Cues)

SLIDING DOOR (Open/Close)
FOOTSTEPS

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Two Sets)
SLIDING DOOR (Open/Close)
CHISEL

BOARD HANDLED
FOOTSTEPS

Wait for Cue!

HAMMERING SHOES
SWEEPING

p.8

**FOOTSTEPS
HAMMER LAID DOWN**

7

Wait for Cue!

**PAPER HANDLED
WRITING ON PAPER**

p.9-10

FOOTSTEPS (4 Cues)

8

Wait for Cue!

**OPENING ENVELOPE
PAPER HANDLED**

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Two Sets)

p.12-13

SCRAPE OF CHAIRS

9

Wait for Cue!

**FOOTSTEPS
PLATES SET DOWN**

Wait for Cue!

**FOOTSTEPS
PLATES & SILVERWARE**

MOVING (Plates & Silverware)
UNROLLING BANNER

p.15-16

WAGON /
HOOFBEATS

11

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Two sets)

Wait for Cue!

GUNSHOTS
FOOTSTEPS (Running)

p. 17

KNOCK ON DOOR

12

Wait for Cue!

DOOR (Open & Close)
FOOTSTEPS (Two Sets)
DIPPING CLOTH
(In Water)

**CUTTING BANDAGE
SCISSORS (Dropped in Pan)**

Wait for Cue!

**FOOTSTEPS
DOOR (Open & Close)**

SCRATCH BANDAGE

Wait for Cue!

**FOOTSTEPS
POURING WATER
FOOTSTEPS**

Wait for Cue!

SCRATCH BANDAGE

**FOOTSTEPS
DOOR (Open)**

Wait for Cue!

**FOOTSTEPS
SCRAPE OF CHAIR
PAPER (In Typewriter)**

Wait for Cue!

TYPING LETTER

GAVEL (Several Bangs)

Wait for Cue!

GAVEL (Two Bangs)

Common Ground

“Common Ground”

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1

FADE-IN OLD-TIME RADIO SEGMENTS & FANFARE

Announcer #1: Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the Raven Radio Theater of the Air and our radio drama, “Common Ground.” Today’s play was written by Joe McHugh and is brought to you by (name of school/sponsor).

Announcer #2: The United States is a nation of immigrants. People have come here from every corner of the world seeking political and religious freedom and economic opportunity. Many, however, have had to overcome the hostile the prejudice of those who had arrived before them. This is the true story of two different groups of immigrants who found that, by working together, they could successfully claim for themselves and their descendants a place in American society and history.

2

FADE-IN SCHOOL HALLWAY

Announcer #1: As our play opens we find Louise Browning, assistant principal of Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles, taking a new student to meet a teacher and some students.

fade-in two sets of steps on hard surface

Louise: Mr. Avilla teaches biology but he also is the advisor for our Service Learning Task Force.

Roberto: What’s that?

Louise:: It’s a group of students who work on projects around the school and out in the community to help people out. They’re making a garden now outside in the courtyard.

Roberto: A garden? You mean, like a vegetable garden?

Louise:: No, Roberto, it’s a very special garden. It’s a Japanese garden.

Roberto: Why are they doing that?

Louise: I’ll let them tell you. Come on, they’re just outside here.

door opens and closes - steps change to gravel

3

**STOP SCHOOL HALLWAY
FADE-IN CITY**

fade-in digging and sawing wood - several steps on gravel and stop

Louise: Mr. Avilla, this is a student I was telling you about. His name is Roberto. He's just transferred from Garfield. I'm trying to get him interested in joining your task force.

Mr. Avilla: What grade are you in, Roberto?

Roberto: I'm a junior.

Carlos: You going to join our group, man. We sure could use a strong back.

Roberto: What are you doing?

Rosa: We're digging a hole to plant a plum tree. It arrived this morning.

Herman: (from short distance away) And we're cutting wooden slats for the fence.

Mr. Avilla: Take a break, everyone, and come over and let me introduce you.

**stop digging and sawing
several steps on gravel approach and stop**

Mr. Avilla: Roberto, this is Carlos, Herman, Rosa, and Carmen.

Roberto: Why are you making a Japanese garden?

Carmen: Last year, some of us visited the Japanese-American Museum downtown. We found out that a lot of Japanese families used to live here in this neighborhood before the Second World War. Their kids went to school at Roosevelt. Then the war started and the government took them away to prison camps way up in the mountains.

Rosa: People were afraid the Japanese were going to start spying for Japan, you know, carrying out sabotage, and cutting phone lines and stuff like that.

Roberto: But they weren't they American citizens?

Rosa: Sure they were, but it didn't matter. The army rounded 'em up. Told 'em all they could take was a couple of suitcases. They put 'em on trains and took them away.

handling of paper

Herman: Look at this. Rosa found this picture in an old yearbook. See, it's a Japanese garden that used to be here. They came and destroyed it after the war started. We decided we wanted to rebuild it again as a way of honoring what those people had to go through.

Henry: Last year, the school organized a special graduation ceremony for the Japanese students who had been taken away. Because of the war, they never got to graduate.

Carlos: A lot of them have offered to help us rebuild the garden. They're like in their 70s now but some come down here to help out or give us money to buy plants and supplies.

Roberto: Man, I bet this is the first time Mexicans and Japanese have worked together.

Mr. Avilla: Well, as a matter of fact, it's not.

Carlos: It's not, Mr. Avilla?

Mr. Avilla: No, Carlos, almost a hundred years ago Mexicans and Japanese-Americans started the first minority farm labor union together in California.

Herman: You mean like Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers?

Mr. Avilla: Yeah, but this happened long before the United Farm Workers got started. It was back at the turn of the century when the Mexicans and Japanese went head to head with the sugar beet industry. It was a difficult struggle but they held together for what they believed was right and didn't give up.

Carmen: Can you tell us about it, Mr. Avilla?

Rosa: Yeah, can you?

Mr. Avilla: I guess I could. It's a good story and the best part is, it's true.



Mr. Avilla: The first Asians to come to the United States in large numbers were the Chinese. They came to work in the gold fields of California or to help build the railroads. At first, the Chinese "coolie" was welcomed since he would do the dirty or dangerous work that the white Americans and newly-arrived European immigrants didn't want to do. They were all called "John," and stories went around about his ability to work fourteen hours at a backbreaking job on only a handful of rice, or about his courage in dangling a hundred feet down a cliff face with a keg of blasting powder under one arm.

Mr. Avilla: But, unfortunately, this period of goodwill was short-lived. As the gold fields played out and the last of the railroads tracks were laid, the need for cheap labor dried up and the Chinese suddenly found themselves out of work and unwanted. They drifted into the cities where they settled into segregated communities and lived apart from the main society in what became known as “Chinatowns.” They began opening their own businesses such as laundries and restaurants. But as is often the case, the fear of economic competition gave rise to racial prejudice, and the Chinese soon became regarded as undesirable aliens in the very country they had helped to build. In several cities, the Chinese were attacked by angry mobs, their homes and businesses wantonly destroyed. In Seattle, Chinese men and women were forcibly placed on board ships and sent to San Francisco, while in the neighboring town of Tacoma, the mayor, with hundreds of armed vigilantes, herded local Chinese residents into railroad boxcars which then took them to Portland, Oregon. Local laws were passed that prohibited the Chinese from owning land. A Chinese exclusion law was passed by Congress in 1882, prohibiting any more Chinese from entering the United States for ten years. In 1892, the law was extended for another ten years and eventually was extended indefinitely.

It was into this world, charged with anti-Asian feelings, that the first Japanese began arriving in America. Although similar to the Chinese in several ways—they were of the same race and spoke a strange language—they were different in other ways. For the most part, they had left Japan by choice, not by necessity, and, given Japan’s more advanced system of public schools, they were in the main better educated. Where the Chinese wore queues, long pony-tails, and preferred their own dress, the Japanese were quick to adopt American clothing and manners.

My story begins with a young man named Yoshio Nakama. Yoshio had been born and raised in a small village in Japan. His father was a cabinetmaker but his family owned no land and they often were the victims of greedy money-lenders. Then, one day a childhood friend returned to the village after a long absence with a story to tell.

5

FADE-OUT THEME MUSIC

FADE-IN BIRDS THROUGH WINDOW

fade-in chisel cutting into wood