



RAVEN RADIO THEATER PRESENTS!

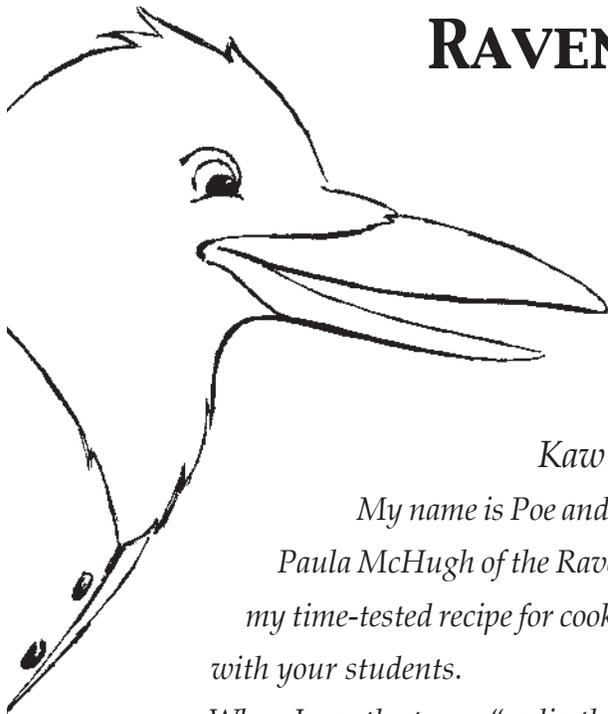
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RAVEN RADIO THEATER COOKBOOK



Recipes
for the
Imagination

Written by Joe McHugh



RAVEN RADIO THEATER COOKBOOK

Recipes for the Imagination

Kaw!

My name is Poe and I have been asked by my good friends, Joe and Paula McHugh of the Raven Radio Theater of the Air, to share with you my time-tested recipe for cooking up a first-class radio theater performance with your students.

When I use the term, "radio theater," I am speaking about a wonderful and unique artform that developed during the early days of radio. Radio theater is a story that is performed for the ears alone. It combines voices, sound effects, and music to kindle the imagination of the listener. A "do-it-yourself" radio theater can be performed rather simply in the classroom as a form of readers' theater with sound effects, or it can be presented as a school assembly in the style of a 1930s "live" radio show. With the right equipment, it can even be recorded to be enjoyed later by your students' families and friends or perhaps be broadcast to the community over a local radio station. But maybe you've never produced a radio theater performance before and you're feeling kind of "out on a limb?" Well, don't get your feathers all ruffled, there's nothing to it. I mean, if a bird-brain like me can figure this stuff out, so can you and your young friends.

So let's start by taking a bird's eye view of how to use this radio theatercookbook. To make things easy, the instructions are organized in a series of numbered steps. Follow the steps, one after another, and you'll soon find you and your students have created an exciting radio theater banquet that's sure to delight your listeners and have 'em clamoring for more.

So, if you're ready, let's get flying, I mean, cooking. . .

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Why Radio Drama?

An essay by Joe McHugh



A noted educator coined the term, “durable learning,” meaning learning that kindles the imagination and stays with a person for a lifetime. When young people are given the opportunity to listen to and then create their own radio dramas, they experience this kind of learning in a variety of exciting ways.

Developed during radio’s “golden age,” the radio drama, which joins spoken word with “live” sound effects and music, allows students to actively participate in a group effort in ways that are appropriate to their own individual skills and temperament. Unlike traditional theater or video productions, actors in a radio drama read their part, thus doing away with the need for memorization and greatly reducing the stress often associated with these endeavors. It also takes little time to rehearse and perform a radio drama because there is no need to build sets or design costumes. This helps students keep a high level of interest throughout the project.

Another unique aspect of the radio drama format is that readers are not cast by appearance, race or even gender, but by voice alone. This opens up an intriguing array of opportunities for a teacher when deciding which students will play which parts. One strategy for developing empathy and tolerance, for instance, is to cast an Hispanic of Angle youth as an Asian or African American, or a gang member to play a police officer or worried parent. In this way the student identifies with the character and experiences the characters’s perspective from the inside, emotionally as well as intellectually.

The interactive radio drama is also inherently cooperative. Unlike television or movie characters, a radio drama character is a composite brought to life by several students at the same time. While one reads the voice of the character, another makes the character’s footsteps, or dials the telephone for him. This helps significantly to lessen, rather than reinforce, issues of status among young people. Instead of students who read the

smaller parts or operate the sound effects feeling inferior to the “stars” of the show, each participant in a radio drama genuinely experiences the pride and satisfaction of having contributed to the creative process on an equal basis. This is particularly true for non-English speaking students.

A further benefit of using radio dramas in the classroom is the opportunity for student to improve their language skills by listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They experience firsthand the power of language both to communicate and influence others.

Radio dramas can be performed by students a simply and engaging form of readers’ theater with sound effects, or they can be recorded onto CD using an EARS™ kit, a unique portable recording studio developed by the Raven Radio Theater. Due to recent developments in audio recording equipment, this latter approach is now affordable and beneficial in many ways. CDs of student radio plays can be sent home for families and friends to enjoy, donated to libraries, organizations, and other schools, or broadcast to the community over a local radio station. During production, students and teachers are exposed to the latest in audio production technology. Follow-up activities can include field recording sound effects and digital editing on computers. Problem-solving skills are likewise honed as students find and/or construct a variety of imaginative sound effects devices.

In summary, the radio drama combines a story-based approach with a participatory activity that, depending on the script, can effectively integrate the language arts, history, science, health and arts curricula. It provides teachers with an effective teaching tool that can greatly aid them in the difficult work of motivating and informing students.

STEP 1. Read The Script

The first thing to do after receiving your script and supporting materials from the Raven Radio Theater, is to read it over **out-loud** once by yourself, or with a friend, to become familiar with the story, to get a feel for the different characters, and to generally figure out where the sound effects come in.

STEP 2. Character List & Duplication Page

Find the **Character List** that comes with your script. It tells you three things. It lists all the characters of the play by order of appearance, a description of each character, and a line count for each so you will know which are the major roles and which are not. On the **Duplication Page** each character is listed with a series of page numbers. These page numbers tell you which pages to duplicate for that character. By not giving every reader a full script, you minimize unwanted script noise and save paper and trees, which, as a bird, makes me happy! Don't forget to duplicate two full scripts for the directors.

STEP 3. Who Does What?

Begin casting your radio play by dividing the class into two groups, those who will read parts and those who will be part of the sound effects crew. (You may also select one or more students to help direct or handle microphones. I'll get to the directing part later on.) The number of readers you will need is determined by the character list although you can cast one student to play two, or even three, smaller roles provided none of the characters appear in the same scene together.

As for the sound effects crew, a workable number for a full length play is **ten**, although you can get by with as few as **six** or as many as **twelve**. Their job will be to help find or build the sound effect devices you will need for the play and to perform the sound effects on the day of the performance. Being on the sound effects crew can be an ideal job for students who are just learning English or who are naturally kinesthetic learners.