



RAVEN RADIO THEATER PRESENTS!

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A Radio Drama Script for the Classroom



Morningstar of Liberty
John Peter Zenger 1697-1746

Written by Joe McHugh

Introduction

Set in New York in 1735, this play tells the story of the German-born printer, John Peter Zenger and his wife, Anna. Their heroic struggle, against a corrupt colonial government, established the right of the American people to freely criticize their government, a right that eventually was embodied in the constitution of a new nation.

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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The Raven Radio Theater offers a wide variety of scripts and books on radio theater and storytelling. If you would like more information or see our catalog on-line:

The Raven Radio Theater
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“The Morningstar of Liberty”

Character List

Announcer #1	9 lines	introduces the radio play to the audience
Announcer #2	6 lines	introduces the radio play to the audience
Narrator	120 lines	the play’s storyteller
Zenger	60 lines	German-born printer
Hans	4 lines	printer’s son
Nicholas	4 lines	printer’s son
Alexander	20 lines	lawyer opposed to colonial governor
Smith	9 lines	lawyer opposed to colonial governor
Anna	50 lines	printer’s wife
Ned	17 lines	man in tavern
Boy	1 line	newspaper boy
John	8 lines	man in tavern
Molly	8 lines	tavern serving maid
Edgar	9 lines	man in tavern
Cosby	46 lines	corrupt colonial governor
Harrison	35 lines	city recorder and governor’s lackey
Sheriff	12 lines	colonial sheriff
Soldier	2 lines	colonial soldier
Nathan	1 line	sheriff’s slave
Sergeant	1 line	colonial soldier
Delancey	18 lines	colonial judge
Bradley	9 lines	colonial prosecutor
Chambers	4 lines	court-appointed defense attorney
Hamilton	44 lines	elderly famous colonial lawyer
Clerk	2 lines	court clerk
Foreman	2 lines	foreman of jury

Casting Notes: There are 26 speaking parts in “The Morningstar of Liberty.” 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 may want to double-up some of the parts such as Edgar with Bradley and Hans with Foreman . You will need 8 to 12 students for the sound effects crew.

Duplicating List

Announcer #1	pp. 1, 22	Announcer #2	pp. 1,22
Narrator	Entire script	Zenger	Entire script
Hans	pp. 2-4, 13	Nicholas	pp. 2, 12
Alexander	pp. 2-4	Smith	pp. 2-4
Anna	pp. 2-3, 9-16	Ned	pp. 5-7
Boy	p. 5	John	pp. 5-6
Molly	pp. 5-6	Edgar	pp. 5-6
Cosby	pp. 7-9 13-14	Harrison	pp. 7-12
Sheriff	pp. 7-9, 14-15	Soldier	p. 8
Nathan	p. 8	Sergeant	p. 12
Delancey	pp. 17-21	Bradley	pp. 17-20
Chambers	pp. 17-18	Hamilton	pp. 17-21
Clerk	pp. 21-22	Foreman	pp. 21-22

Mp3 Playlist

With the music/sound effects Mp3 files for “The Morningstar of Liberty, 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. Some mp3 tracks are duplicated to make your “live” production easier.

- 1 Old- Time Radio**
- 2 Theme Music**
- 3 Town**
- 4 Theme Music**
- 5 Tavern Ambiance**
- 6 Theme Music**
- 7 Birds #1**
- 8 Theme Music**
- 9 Birds #2**
- 10 Theme Music**
- 11 Town**
- 12 Theme Music**
- 13 Theme Music**
- 14 Theme Music**
- 15 Theme Music**
- 16 Theme Music**

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

Sound Effects

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

Footsteps - 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 in the general store 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. For sloshing footsteps place several crumpled and shredded newspapers in a large wash pan (Brown paper restroom towels are better because they don't have any ink to stain the hands). Add water until you get a good “squishy” or “sloshy” sound. Simulate walking by using the palm of the hand for footsteps. For footsteps 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.

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.

Newspaper - Use a real newspaper and makes lots of noise when turning the pages.

Pouring cider - Pour water from a pitcher into a large glass.

Printing Press - Colonial printing presses made very little noise but this is radio and you want to create a more dramatic sound. See if you can find a night stand or small table with a large wooden drawer that can be pulled in and out. You could also use an old wooden window frame with the glass removed or two pieces of 2"x 4" that can be slid back and forth against each other. Use your imagination and be creative.

Ink Pouring - Pour a heavy syrup like molasses or 30 weight duty motor oil into a metal pan.

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 or into a metal tray for a cash register.

Fire - 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 a campfire, grass fire, or house fire. 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.

Loom - See if you can find a real loom, a table top version will work with the microphone is held close. The most distinctive sound of a loom is the "clack" as the harness goes up and then down. You can use two pieces of wood "clacked" together to make this effect. Leave a second or two of silence between "clacks."

Keys - Tie several old-style keys together and dangle them near a mic.

Sliding Cell Door - Slide two pieces of wood together (put a small cross-piece on one so that the other will hit it at the end of the slide indicating the close) or find a wooden box with a sliding lid or drawer that can be opened close to the mic. For a more metallic sound try sliding two cookie sheets together.

Cloth - Untie a dish cloth close to the mic to simulate the sound of a cloth basket of food.

Gavel - Use a real gavel and hit it against a piece of hardwood such as maple or walnut or use a regular hammer on a piece of hardwood.

**PRINTING PRESS
LARGE PAPER**

FOOTSTEPS (2 Cues)

POURING OF INK

FOOTSTEPS

PRINTING PRESS

DOOR W/ BELL(Open & Close)

FOOTSTEPS (Several)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Several)

DOOR W/ BELL(Open & Close)

FOOTSTEPS

NEWSPAPER

Wait for Cue!

COINS

NEWSPAPER

FOOTSTEPS (2 Cues)

POURING NEWSPAPER

Wait for Cue!

NEWSPAPER



FOOTSTEPS (Gravel) QUICK STEPS (Gravel) NEWSPAPERS



FOOTSTEPS (Gravel) NEWSPAPERS (Crumpled) FOOTSTEPS (2 Cues)(Gravel) FIRE

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (2 Cues)(Gravel)



LOOM
2 KNOCKS ON DOOR
(2nd knock after loom stops)

FOOTSTEPS
DOOR (Opens only)

FOOTSTEPS

Wait for Cue!

GOLD COINS
FOOTSTEPS
DOOR (Slamming)

PRINTING PRESS
PAPER
DOOR W/ BELL (Open & Close)
QUICK STEPS

Wait for Cue!

DOOR W/ BELL (Opens)
FOOTSTEPS (Several)

SCUFFLE (w/ Grunts & Groans)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Several)
DOOR CLOSES

DOOR (Opens) w/ KEYS
FOOTSTEPS

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS
DOOR (Closes) w/ KEYS
FOOTSTEPS

FOOTSTEPS (2 Sets)
CELL DOOR (Slides)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (2 Cues)
CLOTH
POURING

**GAVEL
PAPER**

Wait for Cue!

**GAVEL
FOOTSTEPS (Slow)**

Wait for Cue!

GAVEL

FOOTSTEPS (Slow)

Wait for Cue!

GAVEL (2 Cues)

**CUE CARDS
THE MORNINGSTAR OF LIBERTY
JOHN PETER ZENGER**

“Morningstar of Liberty”

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1

FADE-IN OLD TIME RADIO

Announcer #1: Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the Raven Radio Theater and our presentation, “The Morningstar of Liberty.” Today’s play was written by Joe McHugh and is brought to you by (name of teacher’s class) at (name of school).

Announcer #2: One of our most cherished rights as a free people is freedom of the press. But such a right was not always so. No, it had to be fought for as you will hear now in the true story of John and Anna Zenger and how a corrupt Colonial Governor sought to destroy their small newspaper and everything it stood for.

Announcer #1: So now, sit back, listen carefully and let your imagination be your guide as we present, “The Morningstar of Liberty.”

2

FADE-IN THEME MUSIC

Narrator: John Peter Zenger was born in Germany in 1697 and came to New York when he was 13 years old. He went to work as an indentured servant for the only printer in the colony, a man by the name of William Bradford. An indentured servant was a man, or woman, who had to work for somebody, without pay, for a certain number of years to cover the cost of his passage to America. For Zenger, that was to be for over ten years. Eventually, he married a woman named Anna and, after paying off his debt to Bradford, he set up his own print shop on Smith Street near Maiden Lane.

At the time, the Governor of New York was William Cosby. He’d been recently appointed Governor by King George II of England. Even by the standards of the day, where members of the aristocracy often wielded power with scant regard for the interests of ordinary people, Governor Cosby was a tyrant. Soon after arriving in New York, he began replacing honest judges with others who would do his bidding without question. He appointed friends and business associates to high-paying government jobs and pressured the Assembly to vote him large sums of money.

Narrator: This flagrant abuse of power was bitterly resented by the people of the colony, especially by three prominent lawyers, James Alexander, William Smith, and the former chief justice of the New York Supreme Court, Lewis Morris, who had been one of those forcibly removed from office by Cosby. They knew better than most of their fellow citizens the legal skulduggery Cosby was using to enrich himself at the people's expense.

3

FADE-OUT THEME MUSIC
FADE-IN TOWN

operation of printing press and handling of large pieces of paper

Zenger: Get me some more ink, Hans. The ink balls are dry.

Hans: Right away, Father.

steps move away and stop - stop printing press

Zenger: You best help your brother, Nicholas, and make sure he does not spill any.

Nicholas: Yes, Father.

**steps move away and stop followed by
pouring of ink into tray**

Anna: We're almost out of paper, John. We'll need money to buy more.

**steps return and stop
resume sound of press**

Zenger: (with effort working the press) I will go and see Reverend Hatcher about the money he owes us for the religious tracks I printed for him, Anna. He said he would pay us today.

door opens and closes with bell
(TOWN SOUNDS LOUDER WHEN DOOR IS OPEN)
several steps approach and stop

Alexander: Master Zenger, my name is James Alexander and this is my friend, William Smith.

Smith: A pleasure to meet you, sir.

Zenger: I have heard of you both and am honored by your visit. This is my wife, Anna, and my two sons, Hans and Nicholas.

Anna: Good afternoon.

Alexander: Sir, we are here on the behalf of the citizens of New York to make you a proposition. But first I must ask you a question. For what reason did you leave the employ of William Bradford, the printer?

Zenger: It is a private matter, sir, between Mr. Bradford and myself.

Anna: My husband covered the election for the Gazette, Mr. Alexander.

Zenger: (voice of gentle rebuke) Anna, please.

Anna: And why shouldn't I tell these good men what happened? My husband is a truthful man. He discovered how the Governor had used his sheriff to frighten people into voting for the candidates he wanted and how they stuffed the ballot boxes. But Mr. Bradford would not publish my husband's articles. When John objected, Mr. Bradford dismissed him.

Smith: It was rumored he had refused to publish your article. Mr. Bradford has the monopoly for the government's printing and he will do nothing which will anger the Governor and cost him this lucrative contract.

Alexander: The people have suffered for too long under this corrupt Governor. Something must be done.

Zenger: But what has this to do with me, sirs?

Smith: We wish you to start a newspaper, Master Zenger, that will tell the truth to the people about what is going on in our colony. A newspaper with the courage to speak out forcibly against injustice and the abuse of power. We judge you, sir, to be the man for the task.

Zenger: (taken aback) But. . .ah. . . who would write for such a newspaper?

Alexander: We will, Mr. Zenger. My friends and I will submit articles, editorials, and letters to the editor that will uncover the underhanded dealings of Governor Cosby and his cronies. But given our positions in society, sir, our identities will need to be kept secret. On this you must give us your solemn promise.

Anna: This talk of a newspaper is all very grand, gentlemen, but starting one is expensive. Where shall we find the money? Besides working all day here in the printing shop, my poor husband must play the organ at the church in the evenings, and on Sundays, just so we have enough to live on.

Alexander: I appreciate your concern, madam, but let me assure you we have the backing of several wealthy merchants here in the city. They are fully prepared to underwrite whatever costs are involved in getting a weekly newspaper published and they will provide a salary for your husband.

Smith: We thought of a name for the newspaper. “The New York Weekly Journal,” — simple and to the point.

Alexander: Of course, the paper will also cover foreign news, ship arrivals and departures, that sort of thing. But I must warn you, sir, any publication which openly criticizes the government will incur the wrath of the governor and his sheriff. He is not a man who takes kindly to being ridiculed. There may be grave consequences.

Zenger: I came to this country because I want for my family a good life. I don’t want trouble, but in the taverns and the shops, I have heard much talk about this governor and his wicked ways. He is a dishonest man. He only wishes to make himself rich. I must talk to my wife about this “newspaper.” Come back tomorrow and I will give you my answer.

Alexander: Only your name will be on the newspaper, Mr. Zenger, but, know this, we will stand behind you no matter what happens.

steps move away followed by door opening with bell and closing

Nicholas: Will you start your own newspaper, Papa?

Hans: Yes, Papa, will you?

Zenger: We shall see, children, we shall see.

4	FADE-OUT TOWN FADE-IN THEME MUSIC
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Narrator: It was not an easy decision the Zengers wrestled with that evening. Back then, any criticism of the government was considered a serious crime. Others who had taken such a reckless path in England or in the Colonies had been severely punished. But in both the humble printer and his wife there was a quiet strength and enduring belief in justice which, in the end, led them to take the fateful step. On November 5, 1733, the first issue of the New York Weekly Journal hit the cobblestone streets of New York. The reaction to the new publication by the colonists was overwhelming.

Narrator: Compared to the dry boredom of the reports in the government sponsored, "Gazette," the Journal was a breath of fresh air, full of stinging wit and engaging prose. Within a very short time, the stripling newspaper had attracted an abundance of subscribers. In the homes, shops, and taverns of the colony, the articles and letters printed in the Journal were the constant topic of conversation.

5

FADE-OUT THEME MUSIC

FADE-IN TAVERN AMBIANCE

Everyone: (fade-in walla of tavern crowd)

Ned: Hey, boy. Is that the Weekly Journal you've got there?

Boy: It is, sir. Do you want a copy?

Ned: Aye. Bring one over here, lad.

steps approach and stop followed by handling of newspaper

John: I'll take one too, boy. Here's your money.

heavy coin thrown on table

more handling of newspaper

boy's steps move away followed by woman's steps approach and stop

Molly: And who needs their tankards filled?

Edgar: Here's mine, good woman.

pouring of beer and handling of newspaper

Ned: Look here, gentlemen. It says in the Journal that ancient teachings reveal that the letters of the alphabet have certain 'properties.'

Molly: What kind of properties, Ned?

Ned: Properties, woman! Good luck, or bad luck, depending on which letter you use.

Edgar: Ach! That's nonsense. Letters be what they be and nothing more.

Molly: What else does it say, Ned?