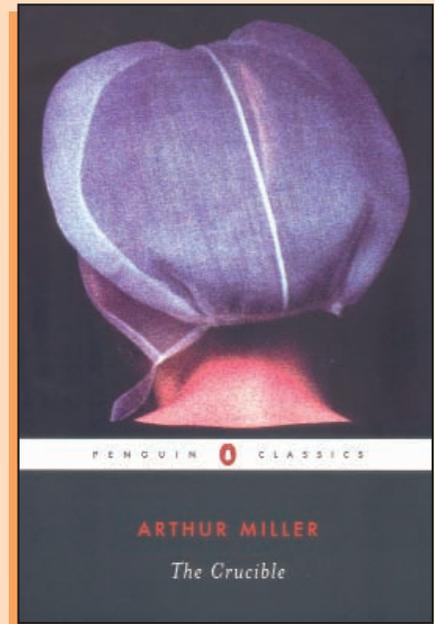
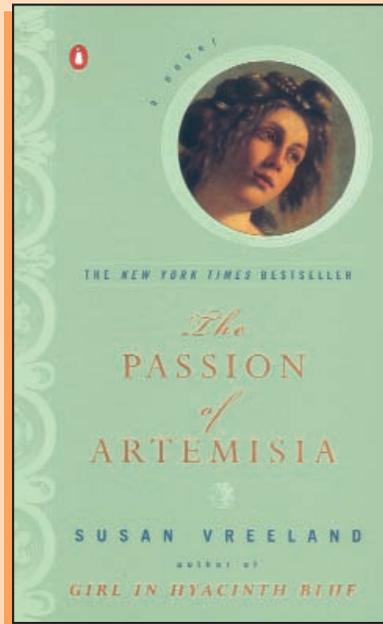
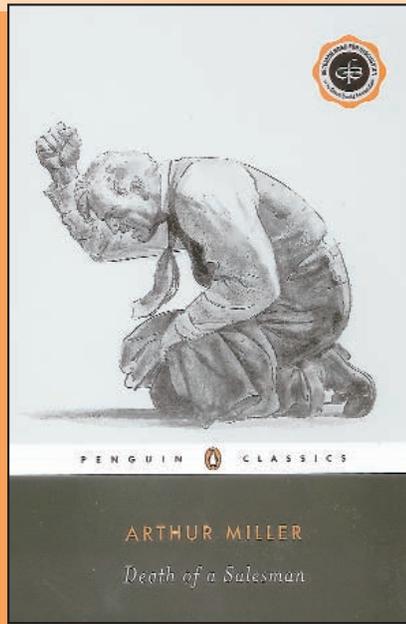




A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO USING AUDIO CASSETTES IN LITERATURE CLASSES

By ROSE REISSMAN



TEACHING TIPS FOR USING AUDIO CASSETTES IN LITERATURE CLASSES

As teachers, particularly language arts, literature, and writing specialists, we fear that “hearing” classics on cassettes will discourage young readers from savoring the written words of the world’s literature. As librarians, we often reluctantly stock up on these cassettes, feeling that in promoting their circulation and classroom use, we are going against our key missions: the development of lifelong literacy and an appreciation of literature.

Administrators, too, often mirror our concerns as to whether the use of audio cassettes does indeed assist students in developing reading comprehension skills needed for successful participation in today’s global society.

Fortunately, with the advent of Howard Gardner’s studies of multiple intelligences, teachers have begun to understand how using audio cassettes in the classroom can increase the circle of readers by engaging learners with auditory and spatial intelligence learning styles. Through the use of audio cassettes in literature classes, these students can use their own learning styles as a catalyst for in-depth study of masterworks. With the broad implementation of whole language literacy approaches, which encourage both the classroom teacher and the librarian to teach reading in a rich multisensory environment, librarians justifiably include audio cassettes as part of their 21st-century literacy mission. Collaboration by librarians and teachers in integrating audio cassette experiences into critical reading and writing instruction can measurably enhance these skills.

Indeed, audio cassette projects, radio broadcasting, and student community audio events can become integral parts of the reading, writing, and oral fluency portfolio assessment process. Through independent audio projects, students will also develop and enhance valuable personal and marketplace skills. In addition, teachers who wish to individualize instruction for gifted students as well as physically challenged students can use cassettes as tools for learning centers and individual student projects. The librarian running a neighborhood literacy project, the adult literacy teacher, and the school-based parent/child family literacy program can also use audio cassettes as initial starting points for developing multiple literacies (cultural, global, science, and mathematics) reading habits, and discussion skills.

GETTING STARTED

With the growing body of research in learning styles and multiple intelligences, teachers can confidently begin exploring audio sources. Public libraries have special cassette collections and catalogs. Audio cassettes are prominently featured in major bookstore chains, bookstore catalogs, and video mail catalogs.

Specific audio cassettes of classics can be used with the appropriate grades and courses. Since they can spark writing, contemporary non-fiction and issues-themed audio cassettes are appropriate for use with any secondary level reading, literature, or journalism class, as well as in discussion, critical thinking, proactive citizenship inquiries, personal development, and critical reading activities. Librarians and adult literacy teachers can make varied selections from the full range of fiction, nonfiction, and issue-themed cassettes as well develop individualized programs to meet the unique needs and space of adult students. Within any structured regents or state mandated course of study, as well as the necessary routinized high school equivalency and basic literacy courses, audio cassette experiences provide a multisensory experience.

MODEL AUDIO CASSETTE TEACHING STRATEGIES

STRATEGY ONE: STUDENTS EXPLORE THE ELEMENTS OF AN AUDIO PRODUCTION

BEFORE THE PLAYBACK OF TAPES

Teachers should listen to the complete tape prior to using it in the classroom, even if only a short excerpt will actually be played. To use the tapes as a motivation for close textual analysis, select a key excerpt from the text to be taught which is also part of the tape rendition.

Share copies of that excerpt (should be no more than two to three pages) with the students.

Ask them how an audio tape producer would record this text.

Have them consider the following aspects of audio production: sound effects (SFX), music, tonality/character voices (accented, throaty, deep) narrative voice selection (if in text), insertion of narrative voice over to move action along or explain elements not easily understood by the listener (if not in text), and necessary textual omissions of material not suitable for audio.

Give the students ten to 15 minutes to come up with ideas for potential audio text production. Request that they record their concepts. You may have students work individually or in cooperative teams for this or any of the suggested strategies. Give them time to share the concepts they have developed.

DURING THE PLAYBACK

Allow the students to listen to the actual recording of the text excerpt. While they are listening, have them compare and contrast the audio tape with their own preconceptions.

AFTER THE PLAYBACK

Have students discuss the ways in which the actual audio recording compares with their projected preconceptions.

Students may decide that their production treatments are superior to those of the commercial audio. Allow them time to collect their own sound effects and music, as well as cast the audio. Then have them record the audio.

Class produced audio productions can be shared with parents, parallel subject classes, friends, hospitalized teens, and seniors.

STRATEGY TWO: STUDENTS DEVELOP LISTENING SKILLS

BEFORE THE PLAYBACK

To use audio tapes to develop listening skills and promote appreciation of particular genres, have the students open their notebooks to a blank sheet. Tell them they will be listening to an excerpt (of 2-3 minutes duration) from a piece of literature (or non-fiction) they will be studying, and challenge them to transcribe the text from the recording.

Assure them that the excerpt will be played twice. Ask that they leave a blank space on their sheet where they will guess the genre of the text in the recording.

Have the students note the words, information, music, or sound effects that signal a particular genre, be it mystery, horror, adventure, or comedy.

DURING THE PLAYBACK

After the first play of the excerpt, have the students read their transcripts aloud. Then ask them what genre they feel the excerpt is from and what aspects of the production characterize that genre.

AFTER THE PLAYBACK

When the second play of the excerpt is completed, have the students share their transcriptions of the piece. Ask them what final decisions they have made about the genre of the work and in what ways, if any, the second play of the excerpt affected their judgment.

To provide students with the ability to measure their own listening skills, offer them regularly scheduled listening skills sessions, followed by regularly scheduled audio genre listening sessions. Have the students maintain a portfolio of their listening skills transcriptions, and genre predictions. After several exercises, have the students write and/or share their own self-evaluations of the ways in which their listening and genre skills have been enhanced.

STRATEGY THREE: STUDENTS DEVELOP A PREQUEL

(Particularly recommended for mystery and horror genre study)

BEFORE THE PLAYBACK

To develop sequencing, listening, and creative writing skills, tell students you will play an excerpt of 3-4 minutes from the middle section of a work they have not yet studied in class. Depending on the class's achievement level, grade, course, and past experiences in literature, you may also be able to use an obscure excerpt from the middle section of a work already studied. Use of a familiar work will give this strategy an additional edge and provide the students with an evaluative tool for measuring their own comprehension and recall of previously studied literary works.

Explain that as they listen to the excerpt, their job is to develop a logical prequel to the text.

DURING THE PLAYBACK

Walk around as the students are listening to the tape.

Play the tape once, then give the students 3-5 minutes to jot down or sketch out their ideas of what would be an appropriate prequel of the narrative. Then replay the excerpt so the students have an additional opportunity to further detail their prequel.

AFTER THE PLAYBACK

Once the excerpt has been replayed, ask the students to share their verbal or visual prequels. Have each student explain what elements of the excerpt lead to the prequel developed.

Then play the actual recorded prequel of the excerpt and give students a chance to compare and contrast their prequels with that of the actual text.

Students may want to develop their own audio tapes of their own stories including both the excerpt of the classic text and their invented prequel. They can become audio collaborators with the author of the taped work.

The diverse audio tape projects which were generated by the initial excerpt plus the different student prequels will form a concrete product demonstrating the infinite variety of stories that can evolve from a plot germ.

STRATEGY FOUR: STUDENTS COMPOSE STORYBOARDS TO UNDERSTAND PLOT

(Particularly recommended for challenged, adult literacy, ESL, and visual learners.)

BEFORE THE PLAYBACK

To engage students to apply their multiple intelligences, diverse learning styles, and pluralistic experiences to a given text, provide students with blank storyboard sheets and markers.

Tell the students that they are to fill in the panels with words and images that convey the narrative being told on the video tape. You may want to model the storyboarding process by reading the students a brief selection from a familiar text.

DURING THE PLAYBACK

Encourage students to work in small, informal teams and "let themselves go" as they listen to the audio tape excerpt, which should be no more than 3-5 minutes work. Have students note the difficult words or symbols, if any, within the excerpt.

AFTER THE PLAYBACK

Give the students a chance to first visually display their varied storyboards. Then ask what was the image or combination of images and words which prompted their initial storyboard panels.

Ask the students to discuss the ways they interpreted the spoken word. Through the storyboard too, students reinforce their comprehension skills. You can use the storyboard to make more difficult works accessible for students with divergent learning styles and experiences than they might otherwise be prepared to tackle in print.

STRATEGY FIVE: STUDENTS TRANSFORM THE WORK TO A NEW GENRE

To involve students in critical thinking, reading, writing, and collaborative learning experiences, challenge them to listen to a 5-10 minute audio tape with the object of transforming it to another media format (i.e., television feature film, music video, opera) or a new genre sketch (i.e., from a mystery to a comedy, or drama to a chiller, a chiller to a comedy, etc.).

DURING THE PLAYBACK

Instruct the students to take notes on potential new formats during the initial tape play. Then give them a chance as a group to share and pool some of their original ideas. Replay the entire audio cassette for them.

AFTER THE PLAYBACK

Students should have at least two to three class periods to develop a new media format and/or genre switch for the audio tape piece reviewed.

Allow individual students or teams of students to share their media format and genre-switch choices. Give the presenters a chance to explain why the selected piece was suited for a particular media format or how it lent itself to a new genre.

Students can develop their media formats into full scale productions by printing their original genre text side-by-side with the new text of their genre switch.

EXTENDING THE STUDENTS LEARNING

PROJECTS, RESOURCES, AND EVENTS WHICH CAN BE DEVELOPED AS AN OUTGROWTH OF AUDIO TAPE USE

- Students can develop their own audio cassette versions of classics or favorite contemporary books. They can also write liner notes and develop model projects to go with these works which include some of the model suggested strategies.
 - A student radio marathon of student/classic author audio tape collaborative efforts can be run over the school P.A. systems or broadcast in a specific time period over a month festival.
 - An interactive multimedia exhibit featuring audio tape-inspired storyboards and written texts of classics can be held.
 - Students can use drawing and word processing software to develop animations of audio cassettes.
 - Students can review audio cassettes on a Radio Review show or write a Listener's Guide to classics of cassettes.
 - Students can post schedules of short stories for radio for class discussion and review.
 - Dual casting/point counterpoint radio readings or recordings can be made in which different auctorial concepts inform each audio tape of a single classic. Students and adults can discuss the works as part of a library literacy event.
 - Students and literacy program participants can collect sound effects, blank audio tapes, classics, and background music to begin their own audio tape production company.
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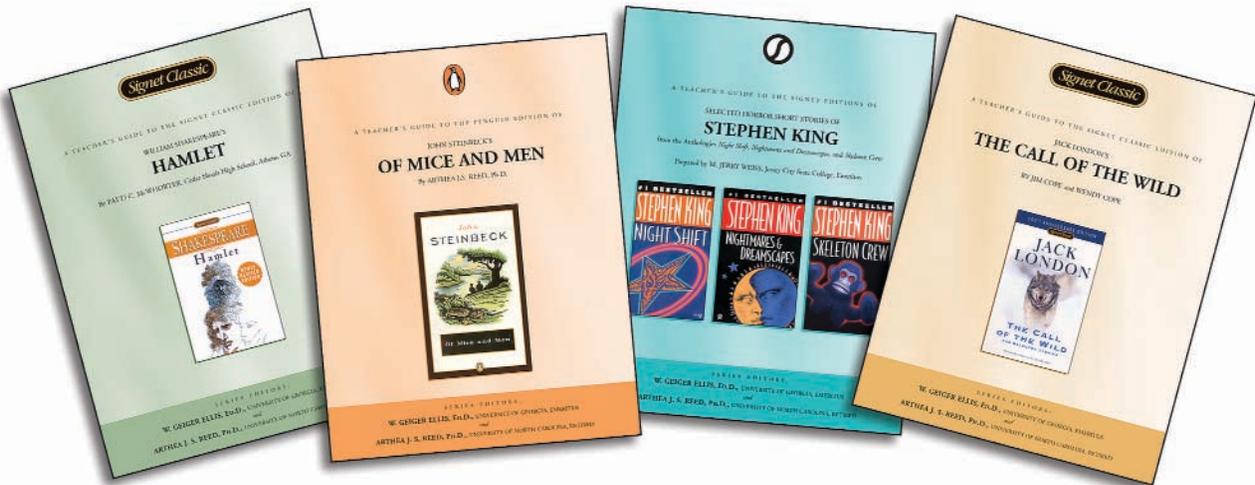
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