Finding your Voice!

Teacher’s guide and handouts

Introduction:

This lesson helps students to develop a critical ear attuned to the components of an effective read. Students will listen to Youth Radio commentaries, and then run their own mock recording session and critique.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify an effective “voicing” of a script.
- Students will be able to execute an effective / appropriate “voicing” of a script -- as judged by their peers and teachers

Estimated Duration:

30-60 minutes (depends on length of discussion)

Ages:

13+ (may need to be adjusted for younger students) -- see important notes section below

Materials:

- Audio player
- Example Youth Radio commentaries on .mp3 or streaming
- Two Youth Radio commentary scripts
- Pencil or pen
- Voicing Activity Handout

Important Notes:

- “Tracking” is the term we use in radio to describe the process of recording narration for a story. The voicing activity below models a real tracking session between a producer and presenter, with two main differences.
  - Here the students will read the entire script without the producer’s interruption. In a real tracking session, the presenter would do multiple takes of discrete sections.
  - Presenters would ideally have written their own script so the language would be in their own words
Directions for Activity (students and/or teacher):

PART 1: Listening Session and Sharing

Hand out the two Youth Radio commentary scripts of Joshua Clayton’s KQED Perspective: “There Are No Children in Oakland” and Bianca Brooks’ Living on Earth commentary: “Rethinking Fast Fashion” (see handouts #1, #2).

Instruct students that while they are listening to each audio essay, they should be writing down as many adjectives as they can think of to describe the presenter’s voice and tone.

Play audio #1: “There Are No Children in Oakland”

Then have students share their descriptions with a classmate.

Repeat listening exercise using a commentary showcasing a different voicing style.

Play audio #2: “Rethinking Fast Fashion”

Once the students have had a moment to discuss, bring the class back together and ask students to share their descriptors, which the teacher writes on the board.

Here’s a sample list of some vocal qualities you can use to start:

- informative
- calm
- melancholy
- disappointed
- authoritative

PART 2: The Voice Competition and Discussion

Ask four students to be volunteers in a classroom voicing competition. Each volunteer will select two lines from Joshua or Bianca’s commentary. Volunteers will line up in the front of the class to perform their segment. Before they start, have the rest of the class close their eyes, so they are just listening to the sounds, like they would hear it on the radio. After all of the readers perform, ask the students to vote on their favorite.

Teacher opens up for discussion: what made the winning read the most compelling?

Possible questions:
- What was different between the reads?
- What words stood out to you?

Optional: repeat voicing exercise with another group of students.
**STEP 3: Practice Tracking Session**

Divide class into pairs and hand out “tracking” handout (see handout #3). Each student picks one of the two commentaries to practice, and trade off being reader and producer, giving constructive feedback.

**Tips for producer:**
--Pay attention to pacing, pronunciation, emphasis, tone, volume, energy and phrasing
--If your partner sounds stiff: ask him or her to try these techniques:
  ● recite the story as if you’re telling it to a friend
  ● turn over the script and do it from memory
  ● make eye contact with you
  ● stand up and see if that position gives the read more energy
  ● watch for “upspeak,” the term used to describe when your voice goes like it does at the end of a question
  ● slow down at proper nouns

Worksheet: SEE ATTACHED (What’s the difference between read 1/ read 3)
I grew up in the west. They call it the Lower Bottoms.

Everybody in my neighborhood would always tell me, “This is where you’re from.” “12th street is your home.” And lately, that mentality started feeling like a jail. I feel trapped. Like my entire universe is just one block long.

I know I can progress and do other things in life, but it’s like a mind game I play with myself. Because whenever something starts feeling like it’s going downhill, I run straight back to 12th Street. I run straight back to what I know, because it makes the bad feel normal. Even though I don’t have a job, it doesn’t bother me as much when I’m on my block, because there, we are all struggling to be happy.

In my neighborhood, there are people hating each other from like five blocks away, two blocks away, even down the same street. I hear gun shots almost every day. I’ve seen killings, robberies, car thefts, house invasions. But whatever happens on 12th Street, stays on 12th Street.

I could literally watch a house get burned down from beginning to end, but I would never snitch. It’s really hard to explain why, because I know that a lot of problems could be prevented. But calling the cops on one guy won’t stop him. He makes one phone call from jail and I end up on a hit list.

Young people are behind a lot of the violence where I live, but who are their role models? I haven’t met a kid yet whose said, “My dad sat me down and guided me through life.” I’ve just never heard that.

My little cousin looks up to me, and that makes me uncomfortable because I don’t want to mess up his dreams. But the best thing for him, and for me, and Oakland too, would be for me to take that challenge, and to be a mentor to him.

I’m trying to remember that I have a voice and the power to change the future, on account of the fact that we all make the future. The question is, are we going to instill good in the next generation or bad?
I love fashion. I've always loved it. I celebrate fashion week like it's a holiday. But earlier this year I realized the true cost of my trendy clothes when I met a group of women I've been stealing from my whole life.

As part of an exchange program I traveled 8,000 from Oakland, California to Dhaka, Bangladesh. On a tour of Dhaka, I visited a factory that was making clothes for some of my favorite brands. The sound of whooshing looms and the chemical smell of dye filled the air. But it was watching a young girl sewing a pair of jeans that made me feel sick.

Before I'd seen the factory, I was so flattered when my new Bangladeshi friends complimented my new name brand button down. They were proud that the name on the shirt said ‘Made in Bangladesh.’ But after, all I wanted to do was to wrap my traditional Bangladeshi shaw around me to cover the shame I felt.

Since I got back from Bangladesh, I haven't purchased any sweatshop clothes, because there's a hidden cost in cheap clothing. It involves someone's livelihood, education and life.
Voicing Activity

Instructions:
1) Partner up. Choose one partner to be the reader and one partner to be the producer.
2) The reader will pick one paragraph from either commentary (Fashion or Oakland), and read it three times.
3) During each read-through, the producer should take notes below (in the space provided) on things they hear that are good or bad.
4) After each read-through, the producer will give the reader helpful feedback about their voicing, so that their read improves.
5) Switch partners.
6) Complete the evaluation section at the bottom of the page.

* Producers: you might want to use the checklist below to help give feedback!

Producer to fill out:

In these boxes, take notes on what you hear!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First read-through</th>
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<th>Second read-through</th>
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<th>Third read-through</th>
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Producer tips / checklist:
- Did the reader go too fast or too slow?
- Did the reader sound like they meant what they read?
- Should the reader pause anywhere?

Evaluation:
In one paragraph, explain how your partner’s voicing changed from Read 1 to Read 3. Use the back of the page if necessary.