



Example Radio Play: The Mystery Of Spooky Hill



Introduction & Production Notes

This short example of a radio play is designed to demonstrate how students can plan, write and produce their own radio play. Radio plays are a fantastic way to develop creative writing skills and explore alternative ways in which to use your School Radio system. The stages in producing a radio play are:

- Decide on an overall concept for your play or scene. Consider the scenario you wish to use and the story that you want to convey. You should also think about the length of the play, how many characters you will have and what additional material (such as sound effects -FX you will need).

Unlike a video project or a live play, the setting for a radio play can be anything you wish as you will not need any sets or props to stage your play. You may need a few sound effects to help establish scenes and key events in your play but creating these sound effects just adds to the fun.

This freedom allows you to consider settings for your play that would be difficult to achieve in other mediums. For example, Sci-Fi is traditionally a difficult setting for video and stage projects due to the cost and complexity of creating scenes and props. On the other hand, if you want to set your radio play on an inter-galactic spaceship then all you need is to tell the listener that the characters are on a space ship and maybe record a few futuristic sound effects!

- Listen to some radio plays. Whether it is an episode of the 'Archers (Radio 4)' or Orsen Wells historic 'War Of The Worlds' broadcast, it is worth listening to some radio drama to get a feel for the different techniques used and just how much you can achieve with a little thought.

- Write a draft script. Writing a radio script is a little different to writing a story as usually; the characters will convey the majority of the story and set the scene in the mind of the listeners. A narrator can be used at the beginning of a scene but would not normally be used during the scenes themselves so if you want your listeners to visualise the scene and what is going on then you will need to include descriptions in the dialogue. That said, one of the strong points of radio plays is that the listener is left to build a picture of the scene in their own mind so try to avoid describing things in too much detail. Stage direction can also support the actors by providing more detail to enrich their character development.

When writing your script, include notes about how the cast should perform the play and also descriptions of any sound effects that you want to use. Try reading your script aloud to check that it flows well and that the duration of play is as you expect.

- Assemble the cast for your play. Try to cast actors that will suit the parts and make sure that everyone is comfortable with the parts that they will play. You may wish to adjust the script once the cast members start to read the parts, don't be afraid to re-write some of the script if you feel it is necessary.
- Your script should also include details of the sound effects that you need for your play. There are several websites that offer free sound effects for non-commercial use so a quick search on Google should get results but also consider recording your own sound effects as you can then get the exact effects that you want and it is a lot of fun. Try to think creatively about how to source the sounds you want to record.
- Record your play. The ideal solution is for each actor in a scene to have their own microphone which ideally should be on a stand which will allow them to stand while performing. It will not always be possible so it is fine to work with what you have. The sound effects should be loaded onto your Myriad system and then assigned to Instant Carts to allow you to trigger them simple when required. It is a good idea for someone to be responsible for triggering sound effects. Also, don't be afraid of having short periods of silence! Usually a 'no no' in radio, silence in a radio play can help to build suspense and give the listener time to digest and reflect on events in the play.

Remember that you can record your play in short segments and then use the 'Pad' tool in Myriad to compile them into your finished play. Also keep in mind that you can always edit the audio so if you make a mistake, just leave a small 'silent pause' and then start the dialogue again, there is no need to start an entire scene again.

- Review your play and make sure that you are happy with the results. You can re-record any aspects you are not happy with. When you are happy with the end results, it is ready to broadcast.

N.B. If you write the script yourself and record your own music and sound effects then you can publish your play online for anyone to download. If you use someone else's script or include music or sound effects provided by another source, you would normally only be able to publish the play with the 3rd party copyright holders permission.

Example Play: The Mystery Of Spooky Hill

This short example script for a radio play is designed to demonstrate how you could put together a radio play with only a handful of actors and sound effects. The scene included has been written specifically for this example and is not taken from a complete play. Please feel free to use any of the ideas, script or sound effects from this example in your own productions.

Why not ask your students to write additional scenes to complete the play?

Cast List:

Narrator – male or female

Jack – male

Mary – female

Higgins – male or female – slow deep voice

Count Von Leaf – male – European accent

Countess Von Leaf – female European accent

Sound Effects

Spooky music (15 seconds)

Receding Footsteps (start loudly and get quiet)

Knocking on a door

Creaky door

Wolf howl

Note: Example sound FX can be downloaded with this document or why not create your own versions.

Scene 1 – Spook Hill

(Intro music)

[Narrator] It is a dark and stormy night on Spook Hill. The moon hides behind dark, foreboding clouds and the wind whips the treetops. Somewhere deep in the ancient forest that surrounds Spooky Hill, *(wolf howl FX)* an animal, maybe a wolf, howls into the night and the cry is answered almost immediately by another *(wolf howl FX)*.

The clouds momentarily part and the moonlight reveals two small figures emerging from the ancient forest and hurrying up the long, winding path towards the imposing building that sits on the crest of Spooky Hill.

Spooky Hall is really more of a castle than a Hall with high, dark stone walls, ornate glass windows and a huge, imposing dark oak door that looks like it could keep an arm at bay. Despite numerous windows, the Hall appears to be in total darkness with not one welcoming light signally that anyone is home.

As the two children approach the entrance to Spooky Hall they pause, looking apprehensively at the huge wooden door and the dark, uninviting building behind it. They start to talk in hushed, hurried tones, gesturing to the Hall and the forest below before eventually appearing to come to an agreement. They start forward once more.

(wolf howl fx)

[Mary] There it is again Jack. I tell you I think it is a wolf. We have to stop here and see if anyone is in, we really don't have any choice.

[Jack] I know Mary but look at this place. Looks like the castle from every spooky TV show I have ever seen. Look, it has a mote, a drawbridge and even gargoyles. I tell you, this place gives me the creeps and I think we should continue on the path. Maybe there will be another house or a village or something?

[Mary] Don't be silly Jack, it is just an old building and we can see for miles on this hill, there is nowhere else to go, it looks like it is going to rain any second and don't forget the wolves!

[Jack] I bet there isn't anyone in anyway. Look, there are no lights on. Who would sit in darkness on a night like this?

[Mary] We still need to try. Without our tent we will get soaked and who knows what other wild animals might be lurking in the forest.

[Jack] – *Says quietly so Mary doesn't hear* – Or monsters

[Mary] What did you say.

[Jack] Oh, nothing Mary.

[Mary] You aren't letting your imagination get the betting of you again are you? Just remember the trouble you caused when you were certain that pirates were digging for treasure at the end of the street, Dad had to spend ages on the phone apologising to the telephone company!

[Jack] Well I admit I was wrong about things that time but don't you think it is a little fishy us ending up here what with the phone breaking, the signposts pointing in the wrong direction and that giant black dog running of with our tent pole?

[Mary] You are being silly, it is just a series of unfortunate coincidences and we are lucky the path led to this place at all.

[Jack] I suppose you might be right but I would rather we look for somewhere else all the same.

[Mary] Well you can do what you like but I am going to knock on this door and see if there is anyone here who can help use.....are you coming?

(Short pause)

(Wolf howl fx – quietly)

[Jack] Hold on Mary, I am coming.

(Receding footsteps)

(Short pause)

(Door Knock FX)

(Short pause)

(Door Knock FX)

[Jack] Come on Mary there is no one in, we best get back to the forest path and see if we can find another house.

(Door creak sound FX)

[Mary] No, hold on Jack, its opening.

(Door creak sound FX)

(Short pause)

[Higgins] Yeeees

[Mary] Oh.....oh.....Hello.....I am sorry to bother you but my brother and I am in a little bit of a pickle..... *(quietly)* Close your mouth Jack.

[Higgins] Yeeees

[Mary] We were supposed to be camping in the forest but the sign posts all pointed in different directions, I dropped my phone in a puddle and a big dog ran away with our tent pole. We were just wondering whether we could use your phone to call our mum?

[Higgins] Weeell, we don't have a telephone at Spooky Hall but I suppose that it would be OK for you to come in for a few minutes, I think it is about to rain.

[Mary] Thank you sir.

[Jack] Y...y...yes, thank you.

[Higgins] Quite..... Well welcome to Spooky Hall, my name is Higgins. It is getting late, time for me to wake the Master and Mistress anyway. Please wait here and I will inform them of your arrival.

[Narrator] Jack and Mary find themselves in a long, high ceilinged hallway with a huge, sweeping staircase that splits in two and leads off to the left and the right. Ancient looking paintings and tapestries line the walls and two large suits of armour guard the base of the stairwell. The hallway is

well lit by rows of candles running the length of the room and a giant candelabra hanging over the stairs.

The windows are all covered in thick, black curtains that stop all the light from escaping the room and no doubt stop any daylight just as effectively.

The children watched as the huge figure of Higgins slowly ascended the staircase and disappears through a wooden door to the left.

[Jack] Still so sure this was a good idea?

[Mary] You are being silly Jack, I am sure there is nothing to be alarmed about.

[Jack] Alarmed, didn't you hear him, he is going to 'wake the Master and Mistress', it is only 8 o'clock in the evening!

[Mary] Maybe they like to go to bed early?

[Jack] Or maybe they like to live in a spooky castle, sleep all day and make sure that the curtains keep out the sunlight. You know what I am talking about?

[Mary] You are being silly Jack, there is no such thing a Vamp..

(New voice interrupts Mary)

[Count Von Leaf] Velcome my friends, velcome to Spooky Hall. I am Count Von Leaf. Higgins tells me that you managed to get lost in the forest and something about a big black dog? Vell no matter, you are here now and tonight you vill be an honoured addition to our dining table.

[Jack] *(urgent whisper)* We need to get out of here right now.

[Mary] *(urgent whisper)* For once I agree with you but the door is shut tight and I don't think we could open it.

[Count Von Leaf]Vhat are you two vhispering about.

[Mary] *(Surprised shout/scream)* What, oh nothing, how did you get down here so fast, you were at the top of the stairs a second ago?

(Another new voice)

[Countess Von Leaf] Darling, you should have told me we had guests, I would have changed into something special.

[Count Von Leaf] You look ravishing as ever my dear; we do indeed have two young guests although I do not know their names.

[Mary] Oh sorry, my name is Mary Slater and this is my brother Jack. We were lost in the forest and a big black dog stole our tent pole. It looks like there is going to be a tremendous storm and we thought we would have to spend the night up a tree or something until we spotted your house. I was hoping to use your telephone to call our mum but....

[Count Von Leaf] – Nonsense, you will stay the night in Spooky Hall as our guests, as I said, my name is Count Von Leaf and this is my beautiful bride, the Countess Von Leaf. We don't often get visitors to Spooky Hall so it will certainly make a change from our usual night time activities.

[Countess Von Leaf] Yes welcome to our humble home. You will stay here tonight and Higgins can take care of you in the morning. Have you children eaten yet, I am dying for a bite myself but will wait until dinner time. *(Loudly)*Higgins

[Higgins] Yeeees my lady.

[Countess Von Leaf] Oh good, please show our guests to their rooms and prepare two extra places at the table.

[Higgins] Very good my lady.

[Countess Von Leaf] Oh and Higgins, where is my little Fluffy tonight.

[Higgins] I believe that he was out in the forest earlier but returned a while ago and I believe that he is in the dining room.

[Count Von Leaf] Good, then it is all settled, Higgins will see you to your room and we will join you for dinner in a short while.

[Narrator] With that, Count and Countess Von Leaf abruptly turned and ascended the staircase. Higgins shuffles over to collect the stunned children and indicates that they should follow him through an ornate doorway at the end of the hall. Mary and Jack stand still for a second but realising they had little choice, turned to follow the giant butler.

They pass through the door into another big room which was dominated by a large dining table already set with four places as if Higgins had known they would be coming all along. Below the table, the children's eyes are drawn to a huge black dog that was happily chewing on a smooth wooden tent pole.

The children turn to each other. This is going to be a very interesting evening!

(Spooky Music)

Note: Aside from the use of a Narrator, all descriptions, background information and character exploration must be expressed in the dialogue. This means that the dialogue is often more detailed than would be necessary in a traditional play.

Sound FX - Provided by www.freesfx.co.uk

The Sound FX's downloaded with this example play were provided by www.freesfx.co.uk which is a website that offers a large range of free sound FX.

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