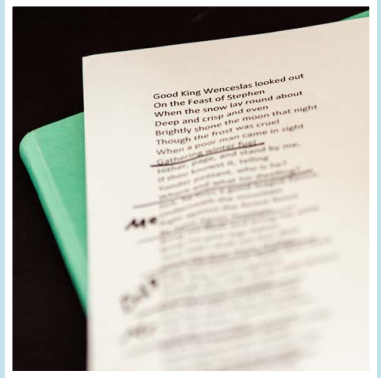


Write Your Own Radio Play



The Dark is Rising script

A Guide for kids and families with tips from the makers of *The Dark Is Rising* audio drama. Be inspired by listening to *The Dark Is Rising* and write your own radio play at home over Christmas or in your classroom in the days leading up to your Christmas break!

Listen to The Dark is Rising HERE ►

What is a radio play?

Long before televisions, cinemas or even books, people told stories through word of mouth. Gathered around a campfire, or standing on a soapbox in the town square, storytellers would use the power of their words and the magic of storytelling to entertain audiences.



When BBC Radio was created in 1922, it continued the tradition of oral storytelling by broadcasting radio plays. Using actors to voice characters and some simple sound effects, radio plays soon became very popular. The first play written for BBC Radio was called *A Comedy of Danger* by Richard Hughes. It was set in a coal mine in the dark so the characters, like the audience, could only hear what was going on. It is an atmospheric setting where through sound, the audience were transported into the world of the characters.



There is something very exciting about listening to a play live on the radio at the same time as people all around the country. It is a shared experience.

Lots of radio plays are new stories being heard for the first time, but others are adaptations. This means the story was originally a book or film that has been changed to be suitable for radio. We decided to turn a book, ***The Dark is Rising*** by Susan Cooper, into a radio play because we knew the descriptive language and exciting story would make a thrilling audio experience.

How do you write your own radio play?

When writing a radio play there is nowhere you can't go in the story and there is nothing you can't do. You can take your audience's imagination anywhere!

First, decide whether you want to make up your own story or adapt a book.

Some tips if you are adapting a book

- Choose your favourite scene and write down all the dialogue you can see (anything in speech marks).
- Look at the speech you've written down: does the story still make sense without all the text in the book? If not, you might need to add bits of narration or extra dialogue so all the information is there for the audience.
- Most of all, enjoy writing your play!

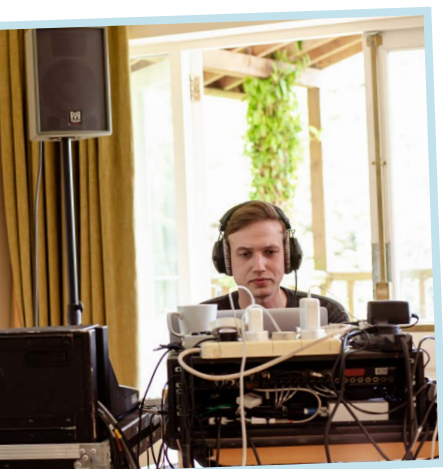
Some tips if you are making up your own story

Using your ears and REALLY listening: **EXERCISE**

Close your eyes and think about yesterday morning. What can you hear, in this memory?

If you are in your kitchen, perhaps the sounds of a kettle boiling and butter being spread on a piece of toast. Do you hear a radio in the background, a car outside your window? Any birds, or a dog barking outside?

When you write your radio play, you can use background sounds like these to create an atmosphere that will help the listener's imagination create the world you want them to see.



A tip is to choose a setting with a distinct sound environment and use those sounds to underscore the story (e.g. a train carriage, a busy cafe or a school playground).

But first,

- What do you want to write about? Think about what matters to you or what you get excited about.
- Think about the beginning, middle and end of your story. What will grab the audience in the beginning; don't take too long to get started into the main action of the story.
- Many radio plays use a narrator to set the tone of the story and the action is in dialogue.

Try to keep your first script short (around 2 pages) so you have time to record it all. This will create roughly a 2-minute long radio play.

- The script should be laid out as the character's name, followed by their speech like this:

MAGGIE: How's your big brother. Max then, Will?

WILL: Oh, fine thank you. Grown his hair long.

- Directions and sound effects (SFX) should be written in capital letters:

SFX: CRACKLE AND SPIT OF THE BIG HEARTH FIRE

From the Professionals:

"I've read *The Dark Is Rising* probably fifteen times over the past thirty years, but it was only when I began adapting it for radio that I began really to hear it as a novel, to understand how carefully it *listens*, how complex its soundscape is on the page. It's absolutely brimful of sounds, much more so – I think – than most novels; Susan is a deeply aural writer, we might say. There is the chant at the novel's core, of course ('When the Dark comes rising, six shall hold it back...'); an incantation, a charm against harm — and, in its way, a plot for all five of the novels in the series. There's the music that sings and hums and rings throughout the book, coming out of radios, out of Paul's flute and Will's voice... And then there are the sounds, so many of them, from the blacksmith's hammer striking the anvil, to the whooping of Herne and the howling of the Yell Hounds when the Wild Hunt is launched, to the cracking of the ice on the Thames when the cold is at its fiercest. So as you listen to our adaptation, and as you read the novel itself, I'd say: listen even more carefully than you would normally – hear the action in your mind's ear, as well as seeing it in your mind's eye!"



-Rob Macfarlane, Co-Adapter of *The Dark is Rising*

Adding Foley (Sound Effects)

One of the most fun parts of making a radio play is adding the sound effects, which are called foley. Foley artists use a variety of objects to recreate everyday sounds. For example, if a character walks through the snow in the play, the foley artist might record the sound of them squashing a bag of flour, to get a similar sound effect.

- What sounds can you identify in your story? Read through the script and list them all. Then get to work finding fun and interesting ways to recreate them.



You might also want to include music in your radio play. If you play an instrument, then you could create your own original songs. You could also use pieces of music that already exist and suit the mood of your play. Instrumental music (music without lyrics) works best for playing in the background when characters are speaking.

From the Professionals:

"I have found it fun to create the sound of crackling fire by crunching bubble wrap, for example, or sliding paper along a table to make the sound of skiing."

-Noah Alexander, Will in *The Dark is Rising*

Tips for Recording

It's time to record your radio play! You don't need fancy recording equipment - the microphone on your (or your parent's) phone will work great.

You need to find a very quiet place to record so outside noises don't interfere with the recording. A DIY recording booth might be a bedroom closet with lots of clothes, or even a den made of duvets!

If you enjoy a technical task, there are lots of free apps on smart phones or online that you can ask an adult to help you download. These will let you edit your audio together with music and sound effects.

If you want to share your radio play straight away however, why not stage a live reading for friends and family? Set up a little stage area, get some actors involved and print out the scripts. You can read your play out as a live performance.

How to share your work!

If you've recorded a radio play, feel free to share it with friends and family. We'd love to hear it too! You can tag us on social media:

Instagram:@complicitetheatre

Facebook:@TheatredeComplicite

Make sure you get permission from anyone involved in the play before you share it, and credit them in your post.

From the Professionals:

"It's a really complex task to bring a novel to life on the radio. We typically record everything separately too. The first half of one scene might be recorded a week earlier than the second half depending on the actors' availabilities. Narration was recorded 2 months after the cast. Sound effects, more abstract sounds and music are added once all the performers have been recorded. And finally we add Foley - footsteps, clothing sounds, sounds of items - as the very last layer to bring it all to life."

- Gareth Fry, Sound Designer for *The Dark is Rising*





Complicité

Studio 15, Jolt Studios, 27 St. Aldate
Street, Gloucester, GL1 1RP

Studio 19, Toynbee Studios, 28
Commercial Street, London E1 6AB

t +44 (0)20 7485 7700
www.complicite.org

Complicité is supported by



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Designed by: Kerry Churcher

Produced by Complicité Creative Engagement

*Images captured during research and development
sessions for The Dark is Rising © Camilla Adams*