Fall 12-13-2018

Embracing Audiobooks as an Effective Educational Tool

Stacy Waite
The College at Brockport, swai0429@brockport.edu

Embracing Audiobooks as an Effective Educational Tool

by

Stacy I. Waite

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education of

The College at Brockport, State University of New York,

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

December 13, 2018

Embracing Audiobooks as an Effective Educational Tool

by Stacy I. Waite

APPROVED BY

_____ _____

    Advisor   Date

_____ _____

    Reader   Date

_____ _____

    Reader   Date

_____ _____

    Chair, Thesis Committee   Date

Table of Contents

Abstract

The advancement of technology is changing the field of education and expanding the methods of delivering information. Smartboards, computers, and tablets are just a few of the tools that have claimed a space in modern-day classrooms. While these advantageous devices are welcomed by most, one such resource that literature enthusiasts seem to be especially hesitant to embrace are audiobooks. Almost three-fourths of Americans surveyed reported that they had read a book in the past year, but less than one-fifth had listened to an audiobook. Despite the convenient aspects such as mobility, ease of access, and entertainment provided, traditional readers still fail to accept audiobooks as respectable ways to enjoy literature. The benefits to emergent readers are remarkable, including increases in fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and confidence. If society continues to adopt an attitude of disdain towards narrated literature, students cannot experience the advantages that audiobooks have to offer.

Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement: There is well-documented research to support the benefits of audiobooks yet there is a hesitancy in both the social and educational community to embrace their use as a pedagogical tool.

Technology has shaped the 21st century in the ways we work, travel, and communicate. How we spend our leisure time has been altered by electronic gadgets in one way or another, from sports to video games and even how we read books. While the mechanics of reading printed text has not changed, the format in which we read books has. The shift of hardcover to paperback books was minor when compared to the shift of the text going from paper pages to glowing screens. Electronic books, or e-books, first debuted on the market in the 1990s and mimic the experience you get from a printed text but have extra features such as the ability to highlight words, add notes or change the font size and color (Larson, 2015). The additional benefit with many e-book tablets is the combination of adding narration at the reader's personal speed. This taps into a method of experiencing books that 25% of Americans find enjoyable – listening to audiobooks (Perrin, 2018). With the addition of digital literacy formats, how has that changed the way adults and children read?

In a survey conducted this year, 74% of adults reported they read a book in some format in the past 12 months. Almost a quarter of those under 50 reported that they listened to an audiobook (Perrin, 2018). One cannot discuss audiobooks in the company of literature enthusiasts without bringing up the controversy as to whether or not listening to a book is as meaningful or even as respectable as reading a print copy. There are a number of people in society who share the sentiment that listening to a book is not the same thing as reading it. A publisher in Boston sums up just how strong the opinions are in her circle; their contempt towards listening to books is

evident in the things they ask her: "Isn't that what children do, those who can't read? Why would an educated adult want to have a book read to them? It's so unsophisticated" (Atwan, 2016, p. 112).

This appears to be not only a shared opinion in society, but it carries over to the education system, affecting students who could benefit from the advantages of audiobooks. Millennials, who were born between 1980 and 2000, are more technologically advanced than any previous generation and have a learning style unique to their digital upbringing. Their immersion in high-tech communication and social media impacts the way they socialize, so we cannot ignore the impact it has on how they are educated as well. Survey data has shown a correlation between age and reading preferences – younger people listen to more audiobooks than older Americans (Perrin, 2018). As technology advances and attitudes change in society, we have to wonder if they will change at a fast-enough rate in the school system to keep up the digital literacy preferences of the next generation.

Teaching children to read is one of the milestones that parents and educators take on in children's formative years and English Language Arts (ELA) remains at the core of the curriculum through graduation. In addition to the basics of reading and writing, ELA encompasses a multitude of skills including grammar, spelling, literacy comprehension, language appreciation, and exposure to different genres of literature. Students come to school with varying degrees of abilities to master these skills, so educators must differentiate their lessons and modify their curriculums to meet those needs. Teachers play a large role in choosing the content, materials, and methods they will use to each year, assuring that they align with the Common Core State Standards introduced in 2010. One tool that could be implemented in the classroom to bridge the gaps is the use of audiobooks, a tool that is underappreciated and underused (Moore & Cahill, 2016).

Hearing a story out loud is not a new concept; in fact, it is quite the opposite. Storytelling started as oral traditions that went on for thousands of years; traveling storytellers were admired for their memories and abilities to entertain the masses. Aesop's Fables originated somewhere around 600 BC but were shared orally for centuries before being written down. The stories not only provided entertainment and lessons to be learned but opportunities for community-building and socializing. Drs. Bob Duke and Art Markman explain in an NPR podcast that one of the benefits of listening to someone tell a story is the way it affects the brain: "Listening to a human being speak is tapping into the part of the brain that activates emotion," (as cited by Lee, 2018). In a world where teenagers are reverting into isolated virtual realities, it is important to keep the emotional cortex alive and active.

The advantages of audiobooks go well beyond the social aspect of listening to other humans speak. Hearing a story read aloud demonstrates pitch, fluency, phrasing, and intonation. It exposes students to new vocabulary, provides phonemic awareness, and introduces new genres. In addition to literacy skills, the biggest advantage of audiobooks is the fact that they level the playing field of struggling readers, allowing them to listen to stories that might be above their independent reading levels (Serafini, 2009). This builds confidence and creates reading communities within classrooms where students can experience the same texts as their peers (Ripp, 2016).

Significance of the problem

In 1984, the Commission on Reading stated in a report that "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (Serafini, 2009). It is well known among parents and educators that reading plays a

significant role in academic success. Babies, toddlers, and preschoolers are read to years before they possess the skills required to decode the books in front of them. Unfortunately, there seems to be a social faux-pas that accompanies the practice once people obtain the skills to read independently (Redford, 2018). Author Melissa Dahl (2018) describes a common scene that occurs in many book clubs, "one poor unsuspecting woman mentioned that she had listened to that month's selection instead of reading it. That, the rest of the group decided together, is definitely cheating. Never mind that no one could exactly articulate how or why it was cheating; it just felt like it was." Reading to others seems to be acceptable only in cases where someone is disabled, elderly or ill. Listening to an audiobook without having one of those conditions is an embarrassing practice for some to admit to. The director of a publishing firm in Boston hesitates to declare herself an audiophile and even likens the activity to a drinking problem (Atwan, 2016). There is a lot of societal disapproval to compete against, so how can we expect a school community to embrace audiobooks as a suitable medium to deliver literature to students?

There is plenty of well-documented research to support the benefits of audiobooks (Larson, 2015; Serafini, 2009; Willingham, 2016) yet the general opinion of them in the public eye is still negative (Atwan, 2016; Redford, 2018; Willingham, 2016). The larger problem at hand is that this affects teachers, administrators, and community members who vote on public school budgets and help determine the materials that are used in schools. Because of this, students who could benefit from the use of audiobooks are missing out. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 32% of 8th graders are at a proficient or higher reading level, while 26% are performing below a basic level (2018). Students at this level at the end of 3rd grade were four times less likely to graduate. These numbers, while somewhat steady since gathering data in 1992, show that there

is still room for improvement. Students who are struggling in literacy should have access to any available tools and techniques that can help them bridge that gap.

One of the skills students must demonstrate on reading assessments is that of reading comprehension which is the combination of listening comprehension and decoding skills (Flynn, et al., 2016). To be a fully proficient reader, one must possess both skills – a decoded word has little to no value if it has no meaning within the context of a story. In order to increase comprehension and expand vocabulary, children need to be exposed to spoken language on a regular basis, both in and outside of the classroom. A study conducted by WestEd explained that a majority of language acquisition occurs at home and cannot be taught entirely in school (2016). Since factors differ in every student's home life, it is natural that there are large variances in where students are at on the scale of reading proficiency. The reasons range from poverty and education level to the primary languages spoken in the home. "Whatever the case," says Flynn, "too many students lack the necessary vocabulary to be successful readers because they are not getting sufficient exposure to sophisticated, spoken words at home or in school."

Purpose

The purpose of this project is 1) to explore the cognitive and comprehensive differences between reading formats for experiencing literature available to students, and 2) to raise awareness about the overlooked benefits of audiobooks. The two biggest barriers seem to be the bias against them as legitimate forms of reading and a lack of understanding of how they can be used effectively in the classroom. I will be reviewing research that examines the way our brains process the information based on which format it comes through. I will also be sharing the benefits of using audiobooks to supplement or pair with traditional forms of reading.

Rationale

The rate at which technology is changing seems to be increasing exponentially. Software applications and operating systems require updates on a regular basis, sometimes weekly, to stay competitive and relevant. Likewise, students entering middle and high school are accustomed to instant gratification and frequent updates of the online platforms they immerse themselves in. This means the teachers they're listening to must stay ahead of the curve and find innovative ways to engage them in a medium that is familiar and relevant. This doesn't mean that the classics of literature cannot be taught. In fact, it is imperative that they are, but rather than signing out a dusty old copy of *The Great Gatsby* from the library, students should have the option to listen to it narrated through their Beats on their iPhones.

There are many reasons why someone might choose to listen to a story instead of reading it in a hardcover or paperback book. Some people identify themselves as auditory learners for example and find that they can understand the text better when it is spoken in a voice they can relate to. Others, like myself, may not have the time to sit and read as a hobby so listening to audiobooks in the car is one way I am able to keep up with two-to-three novels a month. This has led to multiple debates in my household about whether or not I can claim to have "read" that many books and is where the idea for this thesis began. Fortunately, there are many experts in the area of literacy and neuroscience that would be in my corner, pointing out the benefits of audiobooks, especially when reading for efficient entertainment. Dr. Frank Serafini, a literacy education professor in Arizona, lists a number of advantages to listening to stories such as exposing readers to new vocabulary, different genres, demonstrations of fluency, and phonemic awareness. He also points out that new children's books are published every year and one of the only ways busy teachers can stay current on children's literature is to listen to them during their commutes

(Serafini, 2009). Daniel Willingham (2016), a cognitive scientist at the University of Virginia, is one of the leading experts on the subject and states, "For most books, for most purposes, listening and reading are more or less the same thing." And blogger Dana Lee (2018) agrees that "Reading a physical book and listening to the audiobook are two different paths that lead to the same destination."

Definition of terms

Audiobook – a dictated version of a text that is recorded digitally and listened to. Used interchangeably here with Books on Tape or Books on CD.

Audiophile – a person who is enthusiastic about hi-fidelity sound reproduction, used here to describe someone who loves to listen to books.

Bibliophile – a person who loves books.

Decoding – the process of translating print into speech or recognizing the patterns that make syllables words.

Edtech – abbreviation for Educational Technology which is any form of teaching and learning that makes use of technology

ELA – English Language Arts

E-books – a digital form of text on a screen, usually on a tablet such as a Kindle or Nook.

Millennials – people born between 1980 and 2000.

Prosody – Changes in pacing, pitch, and rhythm in speech.

Read (1) - Look at and comprehend the meaning of (written or printed matter) by interpreting the characters or symbols of which it is composed. (Oxford)

Read (2) - to receive or take in the sense of (letters, symbols, etc.) especially by sight or touch (Merriam-Webster)

Reading Comprehension – the process of constructing meaning from a book or story.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Bias in readers and non-readers

Audiobooks are not a new phenomenon and have been in use in the United States in one form or another since the 1930s. The Library of Congress first implemented "talking books" through their program to assist the blind (www.loc.gov). Some of the first recordings aside from the Bible and Patriotic documents were Edgar Allen Poe and Shakespeare. The intended audience soon expanded to include those with physical disabilities who could not hold books and has grown today to benefit people of all learning abilities and styles. With such a long history, sales of audiobooks just recently began to rise, but public opinion on whether or not they are socially acceptable as a scholarly way to spend one's time is still up for debate (Redford, 2018). There is overwhelming research to support the advantages of listening to books in addition to, or even in place of, reading print, so why is society still biased against the practice?

Awareness, availability, and acceptability are all reasons why one could assume that audiobooks are just as popular as print books. Consumers reported in one survey that the main reasons why they prefer audiobooks are 1.) the ability to multitask while reading and 2.) they can listen wherever they are (Richards, 2018). Fiscal success of e-books, both digital print and audio versions, seemed to correlate with the available service providers and popular literature of the time. In 2007 for example, there was a resurgence of e-books with the debut of the Amazon Kindle and iPod at the height of the Harry Potter craze (Gregory, 2008). Naturally, as people have felt more comfortable with using technology, primarily through the widespread use of smartphones, the use of audiobooks as a source of entertainment has increased. "Shifts in digital technology have broadened the pool of potential listeners to include anyone with a smartphone." (Cart, 2015). According to the Audio Publishers Association and Edison Research, sales of audiobooks

increased by 22% between 2016 and 2017 (Richards, 2018). While business seems to be booming, audiobooks still have a lot of catching up to do to compete with printed texts as the preferred reading format.

A decade ago, many people predicted the demise of brick-and-mortar bookstores as technology took a larger presence in our literary lives. While some stores faltered, giants such as Barnes and Noble stayed afloat by including tech and other accessories in its inventory. Their e-book, the Nook, has decreased in sales in recent years indicating trouble for the chain store, but there are enough bibliophiles who are loyal to physical print keeping them in business for now (Daniel, 2017). According to Market Mad House, a potential partnership with Amazon might be its only safe bet for the future. "Joining forces with Amazon would save Barnes & Noble by giving it the resources needed for survival. Jeff Bezos [Amazon CEO] would appreciate that because he loves books and has a soft spot for brick and mortar bookstores. He would also become an instant hero to hundreds of thousands of bibliophiles for "saving" a bookstore" (2017).

Whether bibliophiles shop at bookstores or not, people still read in one form or another long after they leave the classroom. According to a survey conducted by PEW Research Center in early 2018, almost 70% of American adults surveyed had read a print book in the previous year, but only 18% had listened to an audiobook (Perrin, 2018). Age, income, and education seem to be the biggest variables on the differences in who is listening versus who is reading print.

College graduates especially likely to read books in a variety of formats

% of U.S. adults who say they have _____ in the previous 12 months

	Read a book in any format	Read a print book	Read an e-book	Listened to an audiobook
U.S. adults	74%	67%	26%	18%
Men	73	64	24	19
Women	75	70	27	18
White	78	72	27	18
Black	71	66	23	18
Hispanic	61	53	19	20
18-29	84	75	34	23
30-49	74	67	31	22
50-64	71	65	20	15
65+	67	63	15	12
Less than high school	40	35	8	10
High school grad	66	59	17	16
Some college	75	69	25	15
College+	92	85	42	27
Below $30,000	62	54	17	16
$30,000-$49,999	74	66	26	18
$50,000-$74,999	87	82	27	20
$75,000+	86	78	38	23
Urban	75	66	29	21
Suburban	77	71	27	17
Rural	71	66	20	17

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Young adults under age 29 are the highest demographic of audiobook listeners at 23%, compared to only 12% of senior citizens (Perrin, 2018). This is an important factor which applies to education because the trend will only continue with incoming students. Educators must take that into account as they not only choose the content of their curriculum but how they plan to deliver it to today's learners. Millennials grew up watching technology expand and become part of their lives, but today's children are born into the digital age. A decade ago it would have been cute to

see a preschooler unlock a smartphone but now it is an expected milestone for toddlers. There is a very small learning curve when it comes to using such devices so today's students come with a knowledgeable base for navigating technology. If accessibility and preference for audiobooks continue along this trend, how will that affect reading material in the classroom? Teachers must be able to keep their students educated as well as engaged.

Socioeconomic conditions also play a role in people's reading preferences. The higher the income, the higher the percentage of people who reported listening to audiobooks (Perrin, 2018). Before online services became available, books on tape or cd cost considerably more than a paperback book. Today, the cost of a book is roughly the same as a single download on a service such as Audible.com, but people also need access to media to play the files. MP3 players, iPods, and smartphones are becoming increasingly popular, but ownership of such devices correlates respectively with the same demographics of those who listen to audiobooks.

The cost of a digital ELA curriculum is one of the many factors that teachers must consider when planning their content. Most literature comes with an array of options to purchase e-books and audiobooks to go along with the paperbacks or hardcover books. According to Moore and Cahill (2016), many textbook publishers often include audio versions of a portion and most public libraries offer an app called Overdrive that allows users to check out audiobooks for a period of time. Educators and students can tap into services such as Learning Ally, Voice Dream Readers or Bookshare that allows the reader to read while listening (Redford, 2018). Amazon has partnered with Audible.com to provide Whispersync, a similar program that allows the reader to buy both the audio and Kindle version and switch back and forth seamlessly without losing his or her place in the story. These services build upon decoding skills, fluency, word identification, and listening comprehension. Not all of the digital copies or pairing services are free, so teachers have to weigh
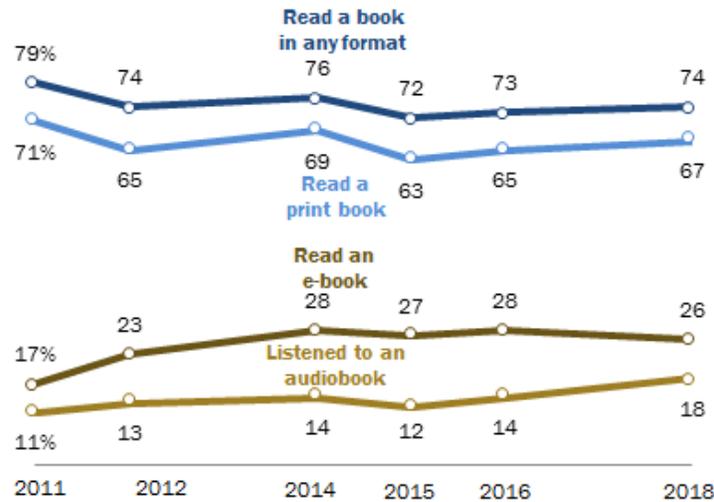
the costs and benefits. Determining the benefit is not the only hurdle when budgeting classroom supplies. Even if teachers are able to make a case and demonstrate the advantages of audiobooks, many school districts are struggling to meet simpler needs and are not likely to invest in additional technology. With the cost of illiteracy on our economy costing $300 billion, however, many believe it is worth the investment (literacyworldwide.org).

Level of education is where the PEW Research survey displays the largest discrepancy in who reads books, whether it is a print version or audio. There is a strong percentage of college-educated adults who listen to books at 27%, compared to only 10% of those who didn't finish high school. The range is even greater when books in any medium are compared. 92% of college graduates have read a book in any format in the past year while only 40% of those with less than a high school diploma have done so (Perrin, 2018). This is a clear confirmation of the impact education has on people throughout their lives. Decoding, building vocabulary, and improving listening comprehension are all literacy skills that are taught within the classroom, but it is also where students are exposed to new authors, a variety of genres, and fluency. Most importantly, the classroom is most likely where students are going to be introduced to the love of reading. Literacy professor, Dr. Serafini (2009) says, "There is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book."

Print books continue to be more popular than e-books or audiobooks

% of U.S. adults who say they have ____ in the previous 12 months

Read a book in any format
79% — 74 — 76 — 72 — 73 — 74

Read a print book
71% — 65 — 69 — 63 — 65 — 67

Read an e-book
17% — 23 — 28 — 27 — 28 — 26

Listened to an audiobook
11% — 13 — 14 — 12 — 14 — 18

2011   2012   2014   2015   2016   2018

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

I conducted a local survey of how people experience books within a Facebook group I am part of called "The Just One More Page Book Club" and got responses from college-educated women between the ages of 30 -45. Out of the 26 women who replied, 100% of them reported that they read at least one book in any format, 82% read an e-book, and 43% listened to an audiobook within the past year (Facebook.com, 2018). The results include higher percentages than the national PEW research study which is not surprising since those surveyed were already self-proclaimed readers and more inclined to use technology due to their membership in an online book club. Attendance at the monthly face-to-face meetings average about a dozen people and the group is usually interested in my perspective as one of the few audiophiles who attend in person, especially if there were questions about the pronunciation of a name. Another perk I've experienced occurs while listening to stories set in foreign lands. Group members will often enjoy hearing a

scene narrated in a unique vernacular, which Serafini (2009) points out is a huge benefit for students: "Listening to dialects, a powerful tool in differentiated instruction, enriches the enjoyment of literature by connecting the reader to the region itself."

Repeated in much of the research is the statement "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" taken from the Commission on Reading report, "Becoming a Nation of Readers" (Serafini, 2009). There is no doubt about the importance of reading aloud to children, but something happens along the way and it becomes less acceptable for adults to be read to. In her article "But is it reading?" Helene Atwan implies that there is a reason to be embarrassed of being an audiophile because of the stigma that it is unsophisticated (2016). Other self-proclaimed book nerds are shamed for it so often that they become defensive. A writer for the New Yorker wrote a blog titled "Listening to audiobooks is just as good as reading, if not better, so back the hell off!" (Watt, 2017).

Defining Reading

One of the reasons for the societal scoff at audiobooks is due to the idea that listening to a book is not really reading. Critics point out that unless a person's eyes are making contact with print, then reading isn't truly happening (Moore & Cahill, 2016). Merriam-Webster appears to support this idea and defines reading as receiving or taking in the sense of letters, symbols, etc. especially by sight or touch (2018). The publishers at Oxford agree and state that reading is looking at and comprehending the meaning of written or printed matter by interpreting the characters or symbols of which it is composed (2018). Some might say there is more to reading than meets the eye; Moore and Cahill (2016) point out the differences go well beyond the organs involved.

Daniel Willingham explains the correlation between reading a book in print and listening to an audiobook. He states that "an influential model of reading is the Simple View by Gough &

Tumner (as cited by Willingham, 2016), which claims that two fundamental processes contribute to reading: decoding and language processing." Reading words on a page requires your eyes and brain to decode the series of letters before the meaning of the word and sentence can be attained. Since the narrator of the story is doing the decoding for the listener, one could argue that half of the work is done already. The remaining step, language processing, is up to the listener. If the act of reading is considered "work," then opponents of audiobooks could claim that listening to a book is cheating since your brain is not being used to its full potential (Willingham, 2016). An article in School Library Research points out that brain activity occurs in much of the same way during the language-comprehension process whether the story is read or heard (Moore & Cahill, 2016). This supports Willingham's view that the mental process involved in reading or listening to a book for the purpose of understanding it is virtually the same from a cognitive psychological view (Dahl, 2016).

A differing model of reading is the Component Model as explained by Aaron et al. (cited by Moore & Cahill, 2016) and has a number of variables that determine success: cognitive, psychological and ecological. Cognitive components include the process of decoding and understanding the words; psychological components involve the reader's motivation and learning styles; and finally, the ecological components include environmental and cultural factors such as home and school surroundings. Under the Component Model of reading it is believed that without any of these variables working together, a person's reading abilities will be greatly affected. For example, if an adolescent has great decoding skills and considers himself an auditory learner, it is still possible that he might not benefit from listening to an audiobook if the dialect of the narrator is foreign or if he is listening in a distracting environment.

No matter which model people subscribe to, there is a valid need for students to invest the time into reading with their eyes in order to master the art. For younger students, decoding is a large part of learning to read and is a vital skill to practice during their formative years. According to Willingham (2016), much of the differences in reading aptitude among children is rooted in their decoding abilities. "To your brain, listening is less work than reading. And that is true, sort of – but it stops being true somewhere around 5th grade." Critics may say that listening to audiobooks is time wasted that could be spent on improving decoding skills, however, teachers spend very little instructions time dedicated to decoding at the upper elementary and secondary levels (Redford, 2018). As students get older and reach a certain level of proficiency, decoding becomes more fluent, so the need to read print for the pedagogical purposes aren't as great (Dahl, 2016).

The Purpose of Reading

People read for a variety of reasons including pleasure, to relax, or to gain knowledge on a subject. Why they are reading often determines what they are reading. A student may be assigned a classic book that he reads begrudgingly for school; a young adult may read a romance novel to escape reality; a professor may read a research journal to prepare for a lecture. For a majority of genres, there are choices on the format people can choose. Deciding to read a physical book over listening to the audio version can be based on many factors, including the purpose. For one reason, the format one chooses will result in a better experience if it is consumed in the way the author intended it (Dahl, 2016). Dr. Willingham (2016) explains that while comprehension in reading and listening both lend themselves well to reading for entertainment, audiobooks are not as suited for studying or doing research.

There are many benefits of listening to fictional stories ranging from the ability to multi-task, portability of the story, and high entertainment value from engaging narrators. Plays are also designed to be read aloud and performed, so reading to oneself on paper is not going to provide the reader with the experience the author envisioned. If the purpose of the reading assignment is to learn vocabulary or improve literacy skills, then it is important for people to see the words in print (Dell'antonia, 2012). As educators, our purpose in teaching literacy is to assist students to become independent readers who have a passion for books. Audiobooks can be used as a hook to garner interest in an exciting novel or a way to expose students to new genres despite being above their reading levels.   As a pedagogical tool, audiobooks can be used as a model for teaching fluency, tone, and pitch (Serafini, 2009). With the differences between listening and reading so minor, Willingham (2016) compares it to traveling – the same destination is reached but the narrator helps you get there. "No longer should we denounce or diminish the very thing that can make the biggest difference to some of our students" (Ripp, 2016).

Chapter Three: Application

One of our main goals as English teachers is to instill a passion for literature in each and every one of our students. The task of reading itself is not a skill that comes easy for everyone, so it is important to find ways to either improve those skills or find ways to introduce literature while sifting through the decoding barriers. Audiobooks are a resource that can assist in that venture by exposing students to books above their reading levels, modeling fluency and pitch, and building confidence in young readers (Serafini, 2009). Educators and parents alike recognize the importance of reading aloud to children, yet they can't seem to embrace the idea that audiobooks can fulfill that role in a socially acceptable and educationally sound manner.

Many teachers use a variety of instructional tools to teach a novel, which may include assigning reading for homework, silent reading time in class and reading aloud together. Sometimes students take turns during a Round Robin or Popcorn Reading activity while other times the teacher reads aloud to the class as students follow in their texts. Round Robin Reading is an activity that has been around for over one hundred years, however, research has shown that this has detrimental effects to both readers' anxiety as well as the listeners' comprehension (Finley, 2014). For readers who are unsure of their decoding abilities or have apprehension over public speaking, this is a guaranteed way to inspire a hatred for reading rather than a love for it. It also slows down the comprehension for other students while they listen to their classmate struggle over pronunciation and fluency. Included in this chapter are other successful methods that will allow students to build skills through oral reading such as choral reading, partner reading, echoed reading and shared reading (Finley, 2014).

There are ways to include whole-group reading without stigmatizing those who are struggling, but the most successful way is for the teacher to guide the reading. Edutopia contributor Todd Finley (2018) points out that the teacher is the expert in fluency and can model how a skilled reader should use inflection or proper pacing. Tierney McKee, an 8th-grade teacher at a private school in Rochester points out that there is an art to story-telling that takes just as much skill as decoding the text. Many teachers believe that they are great at reading text aloud however they can do more harm than good if they're incorrect. "If you don't read out loud with drama, with flavor with passion – if you don't do accents or dialects – if you don't get soft and breathy at the right spots, or pause at just the right moments, you are killing the story for them. And if you, an English teacher, kill enough stories for your students, then you are part of the literacy problem and not part of the solution" (T. McKee, personal communication, 11 Nov. 2018).

Despite his or her best intentions, it is possible that a teacher might recognize reading out loud is not his or her strength. If the class is also made up of struggling readers, this is where Audiobooks can help bring a story to life. In the article, "Audiobooks and Literacy: An Educator's Guide to Utilizing Audiobooks in the Classroom," Frank Serafini (2009) encourages teachers to play the first chapter as a hook to get students interested. The website Audible.com offers a sample of each book so people can hear the voice of the narrator before purchasing. Even without a subscription, educators can make use of this free service. In fact, there are a number of resources online that are available to educators to incorporate audio versions of just about any piece of literature, many of which will be included in this chapter.

In addition to a list of resources, I will include a series of example professional development opportunities that could introduce educators to the vast opportunities to blend audio with text available to them online. This chapter will also contain a unit lesson on ways to experience a story through different mediums. The class will be divided into three groups to read, listen and view the different versions of classics while answering the same discussion questions. Similar activities can be done with other books throughout the year, giving students the opportunity to rotate and initially experience the story via each of the three mediums. It is important to note that the stories chosen to be viewed should have a film version that closely resembles the written work it was based upon.

Watching the cinematic version is not a new idea to wrap up a literature unit, but rather than viewing it for entertainment or to compare the differences, students will be viewing it with a different lens. The Common Core State Standard RL 6.7 requires students to Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or

live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch (2010).

Just as there are different purposes of texts, there are different interpretations of them based on the medium by which they are received. A novel, news story, poem, or play will have the biggest impact when it is experienced the way the author intended it, and this is no truer than when it comes to speeches. The intentions behind spoken words ring truest when they have volume, tone, and enunciation to emphasize them. RI 7.7 asks students to Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words) (CCSS, 2010). For educators who are already fans of audiobooks, locating these services might be readily available, but for those who are not self-proclaimed audiophiles, here is a brief list of available services online:

Audiobook Services

- iTunes and Audible.com each have a 5-15-minute preview of each book. Teachers do not need an account to use the audio clip as a hook to get students interested. There are thousands of titles to choose from including a majority of books included in traditional New York State curriculums.

- Tales2go is a subscription service that can be purchased for a school district, building, library or individual basis. One option, for example, allows access from any devices within the building plus a license for each student for the year to listen from home. They also offer educators the opportunity to take part in paid studies about using audiobooks to guide reading levels, the most recent one aiding in measuring text complexity based on student responses.

- Librivox is a free public domain read by volunteers from around the world. In addition to the advantage of the cost is that it provides a variety of voices since the narrators are volunteers. The drawback is that they might not be as polished as professional narrators and actors. The other downside to Librivox is that the titles available are extremely limited.

- Learning Ally is a subscription service. School districts or buildings can purchase a license for a year with unlimited access to the library of 80,000 human-read books. Membership in Learning Ally serves as a qualifier for other tools such as Bookshare. Browsing the webpage for audiobook lists provides users with the grade and age range as well as the lexile.

- Bookshare is sponsored by the US government and provides free school accounts for students who have IEPs or other qualifying disabilities. Students can read ebooks on their own personal devices, customized to their preferences. Bookshare is designed for those with reading barriers or print deficits.

- Scholastic.com has a wide variety of curriculums that build on early literacy skills for K-5 such as BookFlix, LiteracyPro, and CoreClix. These are more expensive but can sometimes be included in a classroom budget.

- Voice Dream Readers is a service that puts students in the writer seat and experience audiobooks from the other side. It allows users to type their own text into the field and choose a voice to read it back. Through this program, students can hear their work read back to them which is an effective way to proofread and edit their writing.

Included below are three sections to use as guidelines and suggestions to raise awareness of the benefits of audiobooks and their implementation in our schools. These sections are comprised of two sample professional development series and two lesson plans.

Section 1) Sample Professional Development Full-Day Conference

This section is dedicated to a full-day professional development conference focused on the benefits and practical uses of audiobooks in the middle-school classroom. The advertisement and handout materials include a flyer, schedule of events, and session descriptions that attendees could choose from. Attendance at such an event would provide educators with the cognitive science supporting audiobooks as well as ways to implement them to meet a range of academic needs. Sessions include classroom management techniques of setting up centers, coordinating effective read-alouds and balancing time shared between text and digital literacy. Other sessions are comprised of the procedural details of what devices and online services teachers can choose from. The topics are designed for school personnel who are early in their teaching careers or long-time educators who are struggling to embrace technology in the classroom.

Swaite Educational Alliance Presents:

Education in the Age of Technology Digital Literacy
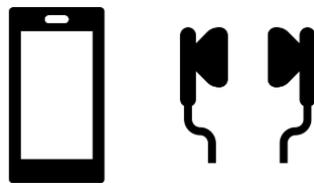
Join colleagues from the district at SW Middle School for a full day of learning opportunities March 3rd.

Stay informed in ways that you can incorporate EdTech into literature lessons. Choose from over eight sessions about ways to integrate Audiobooks into your classroom. Features Keynote speaker Daniel Willingham of the University of Virginia.

Registration now open at
www.stacywaite.com

SW Middle School Professional Development Day – Digital Literacy Schedule

7:30-8:00	Registration and Coffee - cafeteria
8:00-8:45	Welcome message and guest speaker - auditorium *Educating in the Age of Technology – Digital Literacy* *Dr. Daniel Willingham*

Concurrent Sessions (Choose 1) 9:00-9:40	#1 Library Choosing your Device: an overview of Available Technology Mrs. A.	#2 Gymnasium But Is it Really Reading? Comparing Reading to Listening Mr. B.
9:45-10:25	#3 Library Getting Students Engaged: Using Audiobooks as a Hook Miss C.	#4 Gymnasium Say Goodbye to Round Robin: Effective Group Reads Ms. D.
10:30-10:45	Break in the Library – Read aloud for Teachers (listen to a sneak peek of the new Dan Brown, Jodi Picoult or J.K. Rowling)	
10:50-11:30	#5 Library Setting up Successful Audiobook Centers Dr. E.	#6 Gymnasium The Best of Both Worlds: Pairing Audiobooks with E-Books Mrs. F
11:30-12:30	Lunch and Professional Networking in the Cafeteria (sit with someone at another school)	
12:35-1:15	#7 Library Effective Time Management: When to Unplug Mr. G.	#8 Gymnasium Bridging the Gap: Using Audiobooks for English Language Learners, Struggling Readers, and Students of all Abilities Mrs. H. and Miss K.
1:20-2:00	Closing: Exploring Audio Apps – Finding and Implementing Audiobook Services	

SW Middle School Professional Development Day – Digital Literacy
Session Descriptions

Welcome Message and Guest Speaker: Educating in the Age of Technology – Digital Literacy	
1. **Choosing your Device: An Overview of Available Technology**. *What technological tools should you use – Computers, iPads, iPhones, Kindles? When is it okay to ask students to use their own phones? Explore the options available at your school and the pros and cons of each.*	Notes
2. **But is it Really Reading? Comparing Reading to Listening.** *Are you struggling to embrace audiobooks as an acceptable form of "reading?" You're not alone – many adults feel the same way. Explore the cognitive differences between reading and listening to literature. You may be surprised to learn how alike they really are.*	
3. **Getting Students Engaged: Using Audiobooks as a Hook.** *Do you have reluctant readers in your classroom? Find out how to capture their attention by using Audiobooks as a teaser. Get a preview of free services that you can use to introduce the next literature unit, peak interest in a different genre or jumpstart summer reading.*	Notes

4. **Say Goodbye to Round Robin: Effective Group Reads.** *Everyone has different abilities when it comes to reading aloud. For some students, the anxiety of reading out loud in front of peers is painful. Learn some effective methods that narrators use to make audiobooks interesting. Use the talents of well-spoken readers to create a classroom version to share from year to year.*	
5. **Setting up Successful Audiobook Centers.** *How do you identify who's an independent listener and who would do best in groups? Learn how to set up your classroom with differentiated learning stations for students to listen to stories while reading along with the paper text or e-book. Takeaways include discussion questions and illustration activities to go along with classic books.*	Notes
6. **The Best of Both Worlds: Paring Audiobooks with E-Books.** *Some students prefer to focus on the narrator's voice, where others want to see the text. Discover services that pair the audio with text, so students can follow along and solidify their decoding skills.*	
7. **Effective Time Management: When to Unplug.** *We all need to find the balance in our lives between technology and nature, social media and true socialization. Learn*	Notes

when to use tech tools in the classroom and when to unplug.	
8. **Bridging the Gap: Using Audiobooks for English Language Learners, Struggling Readers, and Students of all Abilities.** *Exposure to spoken language, proper fluency, and extended vocabulary are all benefits that students can learn from, no matter their reading level.*	
Closing: Exploring Audio Apps: Finding and Implementing Audiobook Services	

Section 2) Sample Professional Development: Three-Part Workshop

This section is a professional development workshop spread over three days which focuses on ways to incorporate Common Core State Standards through digital literacy. Each of the three sessions focuses on a literature, informational text or speaking and listening standard and provides lessons and ideas to integrate them into a middle school English Language Arts classroom. While the full-day conference above might be mandatory and sponsored by an entire district, this series is designed for teachers who want to enhance their curriculums and would attend independently.

Continuing Education Workshop

Exploring Common Core Through Audiobooks - Three Session Series [Worth 3 Credits]

Choose one series to attend: (must attend all 3 dates in order to receive 3 CEU credits)

o   January 9, 16, & 23 from 3:00-4:00pm

o   February 6, 13, & 27 from 4:00-5:00pm

Experience the benefits of using audiobooks for instruction to improve literacy in your middle school classroom. Increase vocabulary, improve fluency, and build stronger readers as you learn ways to implement the Common Core State Standards with digital literacy. Each session includes takeaways, assessment tools and unit ideas for grades 6-8.

Session 1) Understanding Standard RL 6.7 "Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch." Give your students the multimedia tools to experience literature through

different mediums by assigning groups to either read a text or listen to the audio version. Students from each group pair up answer discussion questions and compare perspectives.

Session 2) Understanding Standard RI 7.7 "Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject." Learn about what goes into successful narration, practice pitch, and tone, and explore the power of the human voice. Includes lesson ideas to use with informational text, including a study of famous speeches and the persuasion behind spoken words.

Session 3) Understanding Standard SL 8.2 "Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats and evaluate the motives behind its presentation." Look at how the same message can come across in varied ways based on its format. Compare different voices in media and audio narration. Includes differentiation and ways to adjust instruction to reach struggling readers or English Language Learners.

Section 3) Lesson Plan Ideas

This section includes two lesson plans that could be adapted for use in any secondary English classroom with variations on the literature used. The first part 3A) is a larger unit to be used three times with three different books over the course of the semester or year. Students will experience each story in one of three ways – reading the text, listening to the audiobook or watching the movie version. They will meet with peers who used the other methods and compare responses. By the end of the unit, students should understand the ways our minds perceive a message by the way it is delivered. Included below is an optional lesson on learning preferences if

students find that they retain the information better through one method over another. This can lead to a discussion on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory and Learning Styles, however, studies completed as recently as this year are shedding light on the harm of labeling people as one style over another (Terada, 2018). Those who prefer to listen to an audiobook over reading the text are not necessarily auditory learners in other disciplines.

The second lesson included in this section is geared toward the power of the speaker or actor telling the story. Students will read informational texts on a factual subject that has been sensationalized in a movie. The focus will be on how we receive information and what we choose to believe based on the way the author, narrator, or actor told the story. This ties in strongly to the enhanced experience listeners often get when choosing an audiobook over reading the text to themselves.

3A) Lesson Plan Unit "Three Experiences to Literature"

Purpose: To allow students to experience a story through different mediums – reading, listening or viewing, then compare their experiences with peers who took part in one of the other mediums.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards:

RL 6.7 "Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch."

CCSS RL 8.7 "Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors."

For use with at least three books so that students can take part in each of the three roles. Each book will take about two or three weeks and rotation can take place back-to-back or spread out over the

school year. Grade level can vary based on the book chosen and time allotted for the unit but works best in middle school. The book used must have a film version that is a close match to the book. Some choices:

- *Holes* by Louis Sacher
- *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *Unbroken: a WWII Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand

Other choices ranging from early middle school to high school honors:

- *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery
- *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness
- *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by JK Rowling
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

Steps

1. Introduce a story that the whole class will be learning together over a two- or three-week period.

2. Break the class up into thirds and assign them to one of three categories – reader, listener or viewer (no matter what their questionnaire results were.) Explain that roles will switch for the next story.

3. Plan assignments at quarter stages. A majority of the reading/listening/viewing will be done as homework outside of class. Some class time can be devoted to it: 20-30 minutes once or

twice a week for them to independently read the textbook, listen to the audio or watch part of the movie.

   *Due to the differences in length, provide the movie group with alternative activities, such as illustrating a scene or writing a paragraph describing a character.

4. Have all students complete discussion questions that correspond with those chapters or section of the movie. (see attachment 3A.1)

5. In groups of three (reader, listener, and viewer,) have students compare their answers from the discussion questions.

6. Come together for a brief class discussion on some of the similarities. Did everyone enjoy the same scene? What were some different observations made from that chapter?

7. At the end of the unit, discuss similar experiences that people in the same group had. Are there responses that everyone had no matter what group they were in? Why were some reactions drastically different to the same plot? How can a narrator or director/actor change how you experience a story?

8. At the end of the year or when students have been in all three roles, ask them which experience they liked best.

9. After the unit, an optional activity is to have students take the Learning Style Questionnaire (see attachment 3A.2) This can be used for a number of disciplines but explain that it might be interesting to see how different mediums of instruction correlate with self-identified learning styles. Note: it is important not to go into depth about learning styles prior to the literature experiences so as not to sway students towards one method over another.

Attachment 3A.1

Name _____   **Date** _____

Three Experiences Discussion Questions

I am currently a (circle one):   **reader**   **listener**   **viewer**

Story: _Unbroken: A WWII Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption_
Book written by: Laura Hillenbrand **Movie Directed by:** Angelina Jolie
Part I

1. Who is the "Pete" in your life? Who has pressed you hard, but has ultimately shaped who you are today?
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Describe the reaction to Louie's near-win at the Olympic trials in Torrence. He was inaccurately announced the winner, but the town didn't seem to care that he had actually come in second. Why?
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. How do you think Louie's experiences as a child and as a runner in the Olympics would help shape him for what was ahead of him?
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Name one advantage you have by the way you're experiencing this story (reader, listener, viewer:)
_____
_____

Name one disadvantage:
_____
_____

Attachment 3A.2

Name _____   Date _____

Learning Style Questionnaire

The modality (learning channel preference) questionnaire reproduced here is by O'Brien (1985). To complete, read each sentence carefully and consider if it applies to you. On the line in front of each statement, indicate how often the sentence applies to you, according to the chart below. Please respond to all questions.

1	2	3
Never applies to me.	Sometimes applies to me.	Often applies to me.

SECTION ONE:

1. _____I enjoy doodling and even my notes have lots of pictures and arrows in them.
2. _____I remember something better if I write it down.
3. _____I get lost or am late if someone tells me how to get to a new place, and I don't write down the directions.
4. _____When trying to remember someone's telephone number or something new like that, it helps me to get a picture of it in my mind.
5. _____If I am taking a test, I can "see" the textbook page and where the answer is located.
6. _____It helps me to look at the person while listening; it keeps me focused.
7. _____Using flashcards helps me to retain material for tests.
8. _____It's hard for me to understand what a person is saying when there are people talking or music playing.
9. _____It's hard for me to understand a joke when someone tells me.
10. _____It is better for me to get work done in a quiet place.

Total_____

SECTION TWO:

1. _____ My written work doesn't look neat to me. My papers have crossed-out words and erasures.
2. _____ It helps to use my finger as a pointer when reading to keep my place.
3. _____ Papers with very small print, blotchy dittos or poor copies are tough on me.
4. _____ I understand how to do something if someone tells me, rather than having to read the same thing to myself.
5. _____ I remember things that I hear, rather than things that I see or read.
6. _____ Writing is tiring. I press down too hard with my pen or pencil.
7. _____ My eyes get tired fast, even though the eye doctor says that my eyes are ok.
8. _____ When I read, I mix up words that look alike, such as "them" and "then," "bad" and "dad."
9. _____ It's hard for me to read other people's handwriting.
10. _____ If I had the choice to learn new information through a lecture or textbook, I would choose to hear it rather than read it.

Total_____

SECTION THREE:

1. _____ I don't like to read directions; I'd rather just start doing.
2. _____ I learn best when I am shown how to do something, and I have the opportunity to do it.
3. _____ Studying at a desk is not for me.
4. _____ I tend to solve problems through a more trial-and-error approach, rather than from a step-by-step method.
5. _____ Before I follow directions, it helps me to see someone else do it first.
6. _____ I find myself needing frequent breaks while studying.
7. _____ I am not skilled in giving verbal explanations or directions.
8. _____ I do not become easily lost, even in strange surroundings.
9. _____ I think better when I have the freedom to move around.
10. _____ When I can't think of a specific word, I'll use my hands a lot and call something a "what-cha-ma-call-it" or a "thing-a-ma-jig."

Total_____

SCORING:
Now, add up the scores for each of the three sections and record below. The maximum score in any section is 30 and the minimum score is 10. Note the preference next to each section.

Section One score: _____(Visual)
Section Two score: _____(Auditory)
Section Three score: _____(Kinesthetic)

EVALUATING THE LEARNING STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The modality type with the highest score indicates your preferred learning channel. The higher the score, the stronger the preference.   If you have relatively high scores in two or more sections, you probably have more than one strength. If the scores in the sections are roughly equal, you probably do not have a preferred learning channel; you are a multi-sensory learner.

(O'Brien, 1990)

3B) Mini-Lesson: "Bias based on film"

Purpose: To allow students to read a passage that they may already have formed an opinion on and share their responses. Builds upon ways that directors/actors can alter our response to stories.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards:

RI 7.7 "Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject."

RL 8.7 "Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors."

Steps:

1. Have students pair up with a partner who has a similar experience with the multi-media version (both have seen it; both have heard of it; both are unfamiliar.)

2. If very few students have seen the film version, show about 10 minutes of it in class.

3. Provide students with informational text about a topic that has been sensationalized in a movie such as Titanic or Pearl Harbor.

4. Allow them to read a section silently for an agreed upon amount of time or to a certain stopping point, then use the Say Something strategy.

5. Share honest responses. Was the factual information surprising? Frustrating? What you expected? Fill out the worksheet (attachment 3B.1)

6. Discuss the differences and possible reasons behind the disparities. Who stands to benefit? Would your opinions been different if you read the informational text before seeing the dramatized movie?

 (Himmele, 2014)

Attachment 3B.1

Name _____   **Date** _____

Bias Based on a Movie

Choose one to complete this sentence: Before today

- o   I had seen the Titanic movie.

- o   I had heard of the movie Titanic but had never seen it.

- o   I was unfamiliar with the Titanic movie.

Read *"Titanic: Voices from the Disaster"* and answer the following questions with your partner.

1. What surprised you the most about the text you read?

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. Which version do you think is a more accurate depiction of the true events? Why?

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. Who stands to benefit more from their work – the author of the text or the director of the movie? Why?

    _____

    _____

    _____

Attendance at events such as the Full-Day Conference could provide teachers with factual information about which electronic devices to use, ideas for ways to incorporate audiobooks, and a list of services that provide them online. Preparation for lessons would not take additional time beyond the initial coordination to get started, whether setting up audio centers, introducing the next book with a sample, or planning for a read-aloud session performed by a famous narrator. The benefits of using audiobooks as a delivery method would be evident through increased engagement, improved confidence in fluency, pitch and phonetic awareness. Vocabulary and word recognition skills would improve as well, as should student desire to enjoy more stories.

Chapter Four: Conclusion and Recommendations

The highest priority in any English teacher's heart is to impart a love of reading in his or her students. The biggest barriers to that are often student's inability to read complex texts which can lead to a resistance to reading at all. When audiobooks are used the right way, people of all ages can experience literature at just about any complexity level, introducing them to books that they would have never chosen independently. For those who have not been raised with a joy of reading, the idea of being a reader might not be a role that comes naturally. Sometimes exposure to new genres or relevant stories is the spark that a student might need. "Audiobooks may be the thing that makes a child a reader," (Ripp, 2016).

According to a PEW research study conducted this year, 74% of educated adults have read a book in one format or another, a statistic that might seem daunting to future generations with the competition of technology and social media (Perrin, 2018). Rather than compete with technology, people should be embracing its abilities as a delivery system for literature. Unlike previous formats of bulky books-on-tape or books-on-CD, audiobooks are more mobile and accessible than ever

before. Smartphone users are only a headphone-cord away from New York Times bestsellers at a fraction of the cost than a hardcover book. Despite the convenience and mobility of audiobooks, many people in society are still hesitant to boast about the titles they have listened to. Reading a text or even an e-book still appears to be the mainstreamed approach to consuming literature. In the same survey of reading habits, only 18% reported having listened to an audiobook compared to 67% who read one in print.

Today's educators should dismiss the social hesitancy to accept audiobooks because the benefits to students are overwhelmingly positive. In an article about enhancing students' reading lives, Kyle Redford (2018) says, "Casually dismissing a reading platform that can build a student's knowledge bank, appreciation of story, vocabulary, reading comprehension and verbal fluency seems unwise" (p. 1). Educators see additional advantages of engaging non-readers, increasing literacy confidence, and building critical thinking skills (Ripp, 2016). Teachers have also reported improved listening proficiency and comprehension skills among students, especially when used to aid in the understanding of complex works such as Shakespeare (Moore & Cahill, 2016; Willingham, 2016). Skeptics who may disagree with audiobooks as legitimate reading material cannot argue with reports from cognitive scientists who state that reading and listening to a book are more or less the same thing as far as the brain is concerned (Willingham, 2016).

One of the biggest shifts in education reform came about in 2010 with the Common Core State Standards. Its founders recognized the need for students to understand and apply technological understanding across disciplines. Students are asked to analyze multimedia versions of texts and experience and compare different mediums of literature. Many of the ELA standards place emphasis on listening comprehension, which exposure to audiobooks can also aid in.

Students who use English as a second language or those with disabilities are not the only ones who might seek the advantages of listening to proper fluency, prose, and pitch.

While many educators entering the field may be familiar with digital literacy resources online, they should still seek out professional development in the methodology of using such tools. Attending workshops and conferences such as the ones mentioned above would provide both new and tenured teachers with the most effective ways to reach their students. Sharing these experiences with peers, parents and their community can also help in breaking down the social indignity that seems to accompany listening as a practice. Ultimately the next generation of children will benefit because each class is comprised of children with varying abilities and preferences and you never know just how captivating a story can be until it is told in just the right way.

References

Atwan, H. (2016, Nov. 21) But is it reading? *Publishers Weekly, Soapbox.* Retrieved from
https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/columns-and-blogs/soapbox/article/72077-why-i-love-audiobooks-a-print-publisher-s-confession.html

Cart, M. (2015, June 1). Carte Blanche Hear Hear! *Booklist Online.* Retrieved from
https://www.booklistonline.com/Carte-Blanche-Hear-Hear-Michael-Cart/pid=8228072?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

Dahl, M. (2016). *To your brain, listening to a book is pretty much the same as reading it*. The Cut.
https://www.thecut.com/2016/08/listening-to-a-book-instead-of-reading-isnt-cheating.html

Daniel (2017, June 27). How and why is Barnes & Noble surviving? *Market Madhouse*. Retrieved from
https://marketmadhouse.com/barnes-noble-surviving/

Dell'Antonia, K. (2012, Sept. 7). When audio books do and don't count for school. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/07/when-audio-books-do-and-dont-count-for-school/

Duke, B. & Markman, A. (2017, Nov 16). Two guys on your head: Reading vs. listening. *NPR* [Audio podcast] Retrieved from http://www.kut.org/post/why-reading-audiobooks-isnt-shortcut-listening-vs-reading-and-your-brain

Finley, T. (2014, Dec. 1). 11 Alternatives to "round robin" (and "popcorn") reading. *Edutopia.* Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/blog/alternatives-to-round-robin-reading-todd-finley

Flynn, K., Matlen, B., Atienza, S. & Schneider, S. (2016). How listening drives improvement in vocabulary and reading comprehension: A study of promise using Tales2go. *WestEd.* Retrieved from http://www.readingrockets.org/pdfs/2016WestEdStudy.pdf

Gregory, C. (2008). But I want a real book: An investigation undergraduates' usage of attitudes toward electronic books. *Reference & User Services Quarterly 47*(3). 266-271.

Himmele, P. (2014). Total literacy techniques. Appendix. [Yuzu]. Retrieved
https://reader.yuzu.com/#/books/9781416618966/cfi/6/30!/4/162/2/2@0:0

Larson, L.C. (2015). E-books and audiobooks: Extending the digital experience. *The Reading Teacher 69*(2). 169-177.

Lee, D. (2018, July 10). *Audiobooks vs reading: The rules are, there are no rules*. Retrieved from
https://bookriot.com/2018/07/10/audiobooks-vs-reading/

Library of Congress (n.d.). *The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Impaired.*
https://www.loc.gov/nls/about/organization/history/#four

Moore, J. & Cahill, M. (2016). Audiobooks: Legitimate reading material for adolescents? *School Library Research*, *19.* 1-4.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.* Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/

O'Brien, L. (1985, 1990) *The learning channel preference checklist, LCPC: A quick, up-to-date, reliable indicator of learning style preference for students in grades 5-13.* Research for Better Schools.

Perrin, A. (2018, Mar. 8). Nearly one-in-five Americans now listen to audiobooks. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank

Read. (2018). In *Merriam-Webster online*. Retrieved from
https://www.merriam- webster.com/dictionary/read

Read. (2018). *In Oxford Living Dictionaries.* Retrieved
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/read

Redford, Kyle. (2018). Want to enrich students' reading lives? Don't dismiss audiobooks.
Education Week Teacher. Retrieved from
https://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2018/03/07/want-to-enrich-students-reading-lives-dont.html

Richards, J. (2018). Another banner year of robust growth for the audiobook industry. *Audio Publishers Association.*

Ripp, P. (2016, Jan. 7). Why audiobooks in the classroom? *Pernille Ripp.* Retrieved from
https://pernillesripp.com/2016/01/07/

Serafini, F. (2009). Audiobooks and literacy: An educator's guide to utilizing audiobooks in the classroom. *RHI: Reaching Reluctant Readers, 1*(1), 90-91.

Waite, S. (2018, Oct. 8). In the past 12 months, in what format have you experienced books? *Just Another Page Book Club - Facebook.* [Microblog]. Retrieved from
https://www.facebook.com/groups/169140473166148/

Watt, A. (2017, Oct. 5). "Listening to audiobooks is just as good as reading, if not better, so back the hell off!" *The New Yorker, Daily Shouts*. Retrieved from
https://www.newyorker.com/humor/daily-shouts/listening-to-audiobooks-is-just-as-good-as-reading-if-not-better-so-back-the-hell-off

Willingham, D. (2016, July 24). Is listening to an audio book cheating? *Daniel Willingham- Science and Education*. Retrieved from http://www.danielwillingham.com/daniel-willingham-science-and-education-blog/is-listening-to-an-audio-book-cheating