

**Fall 2009 Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly
Learning Activity – Elementary Level**

Listen and Wonder: Is It a Chicken or a Boy?

OVERVIEW

Overview

In this activity, students perform a basic primary source analysis of a 1941 sound recording of a six-year-old mimic imitating different sounds. Intended for use in an inclusive environment, students consider all of the boy’s sound impressions to guess when and where he lived and discuss what his life might have been like. Lastly, the class develops a list of familiar sounds and performs a “soundtrack” to their own lives.

Objectives

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:

- Perform a basic analysis of a primary source
- Speculate about the life of a child in the past based on a primary source
- Identify sounds that represent their lives today
- Work collaboratively to create a “soundtrack” of these familiar sounds

Time Required

One class period

Recommended Grade Range

1-3

Topic/s

Culture, Folklife

Subject

Social Studies, Language Arts (Listening and Speaking)

Standards

McREL 4th Edition Standards & Benchmarks

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

Arts and Communication: Role of Culture

Standard 4. Understands ways in which the human experience is transmitted and reflected in the arts and communication.

Grades K-4 History

Standard 1. Understands family life now and in the past, and family life in various place long ago.

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking

Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

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PREPARATION

Materials

- Download the following audio file to the presentation computer:

Imitations of Animals

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/toddbib:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(5122a1\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/toddbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(5122a1)))

- Prepare the following document for display with an overhead or another projection method:

Primary Source Analysis Tool

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf

- Review the following document for additional questions you may use to facilitate discussion:

Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Sound Recordings

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Sound_Recordings.pdf

- (Optional) For students with hearing impairments, auditory processing difficulties (APD), Autism, and/or others who may need visual cues to accompany the sound recording, consider using the following template to create cards with text and images for each of the six imitated sounds in the sound recording. Add a clip-art image to each card, for example, and cut along the dotted lines to create a total of six cards per student:

Picturing Sounds Cards: Template (see attached)

- Ensure speakers are connected to the presentation computer that will project clearly throughout the room.

Note: Invite students who have hearing impairments to sit near the device's speakers. They can also use assistive technologies such as hearing aids and assistive listening.

Resources

Before guiding students through the activity, teachers can familiarize themselves with the history behind the sound recording by reviewing the following Library of Congress Web site resources:

“Imitations,” *America's Library*, The Library of Congress

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/sh/humor/imitat_1

Voices from the Dust Bowl: The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Worker Collection

“About the Collection,” <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshhtml/tsabout.html>

“The Migrant Experience,” <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshhtml/tsme.html>

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PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the sound recording by telling the class:
 - ***I'm going to play a sound recording for you.***
 - ***I want you to close your eyes and listen very carefully.***

2. Play the sound recording for the class and replay it at least once.
 - Pause the recording between each sound when replaying it to break apart the steps. This will give students time to process what they hear before moving to the next sound, which can help students who have poor auditory memory.
 - For students with hearing impairments and others who may need visual cues, present them with each of the *Picturing Sounds Cards* in order as the corresponding sounds play aloud.

3. Display the *Primary Source Analysis Tool* with an overhead or another projection method. Facilitate a discussion about what students heard using select questions from the *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Sound Recordings*, such as:
 - ***What did you hear first? Then what did you hear?***
 - ***Can you imitate any of these sounds?***
 - ***If you heard any voices, what do you think was said?***
 - ***What else did you notice about this recording?***Model for students how to respond to the questions first, and write their observations (i.e., the details they heard) in the "Observe" column.

Note: Asking volunteer students to respond to the questions and recording observations together as a class provides peer modeling opportunities.

4. After writing down all of the details students can recall about the recording, explain to them:
 - ***I'm going to play the recording again so we can check to see if we remembered all of the sounds. Listen carefully!***

5. Play the sound recording once more. Afterwards, check off the different sounds (i.e., frog, freight train, chicken, turkey, dog, mockingbird) the class listed under the "Observe" column.

6. Facilitate a discussion about students' understandings of and questions about the recording. Refer to the "Observe" column list as needed to prompt students' recall of what they heard. Use select questions from the *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Sound Recordings*, such as:
 - ***Which of these sounds have you heard before? Which are new to you?***
 - ***What or who do you think made these different sounds? For example, was the sound of the freight train really made by a freight train? Why or why not?***
 - ***Why do you think someone wanted to record these sounds?***
 - ***When do you think this recording was made?***
 - ***What questions do you have about this recording? What else do you want to know?***Model for students how to respond to the questions first. Write their understandings (i.e., what they think they know about this recording) in the "Reflect" column and their questions (i.e., what they want to know) in the "Question" column of the *Primary Source Analysis Tool*.

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PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

7. Share with students the story behind the recording:
- ***This recording was made in 1941, before many of your grandparents were even born. People had not yet invented computers or televisions. When they couldn't listen to radios or go to the movies, people of all ages would imitate animals or machines to entertain each other. This recording is of a six-year-old boy named Donald Leach who was very good at imitating animals. The sounds he imitated were probably ones he heard often.***

8. Ask the students:
- ***From these sounds, where would you guess Donald lived?***
 - ***How would you imagine Donald's everyday life based on these sounds?***
- Help students speculate about Donald's life using the sounds he mimicked as evidence. For example, Donald imitated mostly animals so is more likely he lived in the country or city? Donald imitated a chicken—maybe he had to feed chickens as one of his chores?

Note: Student pairs may be assigned instead of a large group discussion. Responses may be discussed only or written, depending on skill levels and time constraints.

9. After the class shares their ideas about Donald's life, ask students the following questions:
- ***What sounds do you hear every day?*** (list these sounds on the board)
 - ***Can you imitate these different sounds?***
 - ***What sounds do you hear now that Donald wouldn't have heard?***
 - ***What sounds do you imagine kids living 100 years from now will hear every day that kids today don't?*** (model an example, like a robot beeping)
10. Assign each of the sounds to a pair or small group of students to practice imitating. After the groups have practiced their assigned sounds, “conduct” the class in performing all of the sounds, at random or in order, to create a “soundtrack” to their own lives.

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS

--Students could perform their soundtrack and record it to create a primary source of their own.

--Students could be assigned to bring home their list of familiar sounds and perform their soundtrack for their parents and/or grandparents to find out how these sounds compare to ones familiar to older family members when they were children.

--Students could write a short story imagining a day in the life of six-year-old Donald Leach using at least two of the six sounds familiar to him for inspiration.

EVALUATION

- Active, thoughtful participation in class discussions
- Active engagement in creating a class soundtrack

The Library of Congress

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TOOL



OBSERVE

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REFLECT

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FURTHER INVESTIGATION

TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING SOUND RECORDINGS



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

Describe what you hear. - What do you notice first? - If you hear any voices, can you understand what is being sung or said? - Does it sound like an interview or a conversation? - Are there any background noises? - Does it sound like a studio recording, or just "off the street"? - If the recording is musical do you know the song, or do you recognize any instruments? - What other details can you hear?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

What was the purpose of this recording? - Who do you think recorded it? - Was it the same person who was being recorded? - Who would be interested in hearing this? - What was happening at the time it was recorded? - What kind of equipment was used for the recording? - Do you like what you hear? If it is musical, could you dance to it? - What can you learn from listening to this recording?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...
who? - what? - when? - where? - why? - how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning

Have students write a brief description of the recording in their own words.

Intermediate

Speculate about the purpose of the recording and what its creators expected the recording to accomplish. Do you think the recording achieved its creators' goals? Explain why you think so.

Advanced

Think about what you already know about this period in history. How does this recording support or contradict your current understanding of this period?

For more tips on using primary sources, go to

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>

PICTURING SOUNDS CARDS: TEMPLATE
ADD IMAGES. CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINES

FROG

FREIGHT TRAIN

CHICKEN

TURKEY

DOG

MOCKINGBIRD