

# Teaching Writing with Radio

*This article makes a case for using radio as a framework to teach writing in school. Teachers with no radio experience can help their students draw on “real world” radio standards to write strong, specific, and effective pieces, and then use everyday technology to share students’ stories with the world.*

**A**s English teachers, we search for ways to make classroom writing relevant and “real world.” For example, we publish student work online or in classroom anthologies to carry students’ words beyond the boundaries of the classroom. We also draw the demands of the “real world” into the classroom when we use an actual college essay prompt in a unit for high school seniors, or employ the rules and roles of the courtroom to support an argument writing assignment. In these ways, we attempt to raise the stakes for student writing (Bruning and Horn; Cohen and Riel; Rule).

In this article, we want to make a case for using radio as a framework for the teaching of writing. Using this framework draws the real world into the classroom and—with the use of smartphones and Web-based tools—sends students’ voices out into the real world. Over the past 15 years, the first author, Sarah, has taught high school classes dedicated to radio and has incorporated writing for radio into regular English classes. The second author, Jones, has taught hundreds of radio production workshops as leader of Generation PRX, a national network of youth radio producers connected via the Public Radio Exchange (PRX.org). In these roles, we have come to believe that radio is uniquely suited to the teaching of writing, especially for students who may struggle to understand the relevance of school writing assignments. Further, as smartphones and social media become part of our everyday lives, we have found that teachers do not need a school radio

station, dedicated recording equipment, or specialized skills to use radio to teach good writing.

## Making the Case for Teaching Writing with Radio

### Radio Requires Strong, Specific Writing

Radio demands good writing in ways that other media do not. When radio audiences tune in to listen to a story, they have no pictures to look at and no written text to track. So when students write for radio, they must create specific, concrete images to paint a picture, strong verbs to communicate action, and clear structure for audiences to follow. In addition, because they are speaking their ideas aloud, they must attend more carefully to whether their words actually make sense. We have found that when students prepare to record their written work, they quickly identify words that don’t fit or sentences that don’t cohere. They move away from what can be perceived as the stilted or lifeless language of English papers, and toward a more authentic voice of their own.

Consider some of the fundamental rules of writing for radio, as drawn from the manifestos of professional radio producers at places such as Transom.org (Davis) or Grassrootsdc.org (Grassroots DC).

1. Your story must be good enough to get on the air.
2. Your story must be worth telling. How might hearing this story enhance people’s

understanding of human nature or the world?

3. Be specific. Concrete images and detailed examples must communicate your moods and themes.
4. Don't waste words.
5. Use strong verbs.
6. No clichés, in story or language.
7. Write for the ear, not the eye. Use natural language and make clear transitions so your audience can follow you.

These principles hold true for almost any kind of writing. However, we have found that such principles take on added authority because they come from the “real world.” In addition, when students write for radio, they become responsible

**Radio provides the freedom of not being seen.**

to the real world—not just to their teacher. As one of Sarah's students commented in an end-of-class reflection, “[The work] is not just for the

teacher. It's like you want it to be good, because you're talking to people on the other side. They don't know you, so you want to make sure they understand what you're trying to say, the way you want to say it.”

### Writing for Radio Encourages Persistence

Creating work that satisfies the principles of good radio writing requires many revisions and sustained attention to choices in language and structure. While students often only make cursory revisions to written assignments (Fitzgerald; Flower and Hayes; Sommers), our experience is that students who write for radio tend to persist in revisions. This persistence may arise from the knowledge that their work has a life beyond the page, will be recorded in their own voice, and will be broadcast to an audience beyond their school walls.

### Radio Wants a Voice, Not a Face

While our radio students seem aware of the public nature of the writing process, they also take comfort in the anonymity afforded by the medium. As an eleventh grader pointed out, “Working with radio encourages you to express yourself more because there is no pressure of people recognizing you by your face.” Radio provides the freedom of not being seen. For middle school and high school students in

particular, this can be a relief (Lawler and Nixon; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli).

### The Lure of Technology

Just a few years ago, students needed specialized equipment to make recordings that met professional standards. But now, if some of your students have smartphones and are willing to download a free app, your class can record and easily disseminate work of good sound quality. (See the sidebar for a brief guide to recording and sharing student work and a list of free apps for editing or adding music to radio production.) Because it incorporates cell phones and social media, the writing for radio unit has built-in appeal. In addition, using these everyday tools and technologies in the classroom serves the important purpose of drawing on some of students' “real world” preferences, practices, and expertise.

### A Sample “Writing for Radio” Unit

Writing for radio can accommodate a number of genres typically taught in English class, and now emphasized in the Common Core State Standards, including the personal narrative (writing about significant personal experiences or memories); biographical portraits of people or places that are somehow significant; and a range of argument writing. For the purposes of this article, we will focus on the teaching of the personal narrative, because we have found it to be an accessible entry point for students, who can use their lives as material for narratives and thus take on the self-motivating role of expert (Pajares, Johnson, and Usher).

### Sample Assignment: “Audio Gift”

Ideally, all writing assignments come with built-in stakes and audience, but in practice, as we attempt to meet the day-to-day demands of the classroom, those elements sometimes fall by the wayside. Below is a version of one of Sarah's assignments, designed to encourage “stories worth telling” to real-world audiences. The assignment asks students to re-create a memory of a meaningful moment they shared with someone important to them (see Figure 1). Sarah has often implemented this assignment in January and February, which can seem like long, cold months to get through for students (and

**FIGURE 1.** “Audio Gift” Assignment for Unit on Writing for Radio

**Project Audio Gift**

**Content:** A gift of a **memory:** An “audio gift” is a description of your memory of a significant moment involving someone important in your life. You can share this memory with that person (or someone close to that person), and also with a larger radio audience. Your narrative describing this moment should follow the principles of writing for radio.

**Format:** 2-minute piece (300–350 words) recorded by you. Optional to add sound or music.

**Grading Rubric**

<b>Not Yet</b>							<b>Ready for Broadcast</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	

**For full credit, and to be eligible for broadcast, your final produced piece must include:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Strong choice of moment to describe.** Moment is particularly revealing of emotions or ideas. The narrative is compelling or surprising, and will move us toward laughter or tears.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Strong, concrete imagery.** This includes strong action verbs, concrete descriptions of the person in your memory, the place (setting), the actions in your memory, and the sounds of your memory.

\_\_\_\_\_ **No wasted words.** Every word does work. Also, any forms of the following words are almost never allowed:

- |                 |  |                          |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| <i>there is</i> | <i>started/starting to</i>             | <i>beginning to</i>      |
| <i>becoming</i> | <i>lots of</i>                         | <i>a lot</i>             |
| <i>very</i>     | <i>suddenly</i>                        | <i>to my surprise</i>    |
| <i>shows</i>    | <i>an angry/happy/any kind of look</i> | <i>emotions, feeling</i> |
- ... and no clichés

\_\_\_\_\_ **Clear reading.** Your reading is natural, well-enunciated, energetic, emotive, and varied in pitch and tone.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Clear recording.** Audio must be clear, without hiss or echo.

teachers). She has vaguely pegged the assignment to Valentine’s Day, so that students can give their recorded memory—an “Audio Gift”—to the person they care about on that day.

This kind of assignment works well because students can choose from a range of meaningful memories, but at the same time, they must restrict that memory to a significant moment in time, which will demand attention to the kind of specific details that make good radio, as well as good narrative writing (Hillocks). In addition, the assignment calls for a fairly short narrative, so students have to choose words that do a lot of work in telling their story. In the past, students have shared memories of a special night out with Mom, playing pinball at Chuck E. Cheese, an afternoon learning to swim with an uncle, and a morning with a crossing guard who knew how to make everything OK.

Next we will provide several sample lessons from the Audio Gift unit. Each lesson was designed to support development skills and practices

of narrative writing. While this unit was designed for high school juniors and seniors in a large urban public school, we believe the lessons are flexible enough to work for a range of ages and settings. More than that, we hope these lessons demonstrate that principles from the broadcast world can be a foundation upon which to build effective and accessible exercises for you and your students. With that in mind, we have framed each Audio Gift lesson as a response to a particular principle of writing for radio.

**Principle 1: Good Enough to Air**

**Lesson 1: Reflecting on What Makes a Story “Good”**

PRX.org hosts a large catalogue of youth-produced pieces for listening. You may want to listen to a number of these pieces yourself so you can choose pieces that represent different kinds or qualities of writing and voicing.

As a whole-class activity, have students listen to and compare the relative strength or quality of 6–10 youth-produced radio narratives. As a rule, you—or a lucky student gunning for extra credit—will have to transcribe versions of the pieces that students listen to. Without transcriptions, students are less likely to perceive the radio pieces as texts worth attending to. They’ll also need transcriptions to refer to details and authorial choices, and generally make the kinds of close readings you want them to make.

Listening to a number of pieces will help students gain a sense of narrative tropes and structure. Then students can take up the always-useful strategy of comparison to “rank” the stories they hear: Which story is the strongest? Why? Then, perhaps in small groups, have students debate and attempt to persuade one another to agree about the rank of each piece (Johannessen). Students generally enjoy the argumentative aspect of this exercise, and the nature of the debate can lead students to construct general criteria to support their assertions about the qualities necessary for an excellent radio narrative.

You may have to help students become acclimated to making critiques that go beyond the general and unjustified (“I just liked it”) or the trivial (“The speaker mumbled on that word”). Have them compare first lines, verbs, emotional impact, as well as speaker’s animation or the appropriateness of accompanying music or sound. You can use the rules of writing for radio as a guide for other specific sets of elements on which students can focus.

When students “share out” their conclusions with the whole class, you can help guide or re-craft their comments into language that aligns with the writing objectives of your class and/or the principles for good radio writing. For example, students often comment that a good radio piece “really helps you see what is happening.” You can lead a discussion about how the author helped the audience visualize the action, and then help students connect their observations with “real world” radio principle #3: “Be specific. Concrete images and detailed examples must communicate your moods and themes.” Reframing in this way can help make visible and reinforce the parallels between the students’ recognition of good writing and the principles used in real broadcast.

## Principle 2: A Story Worth Telling

### Lesson 2: Using General Principles to Evaluate Specific Ideas

Students can then move to choosing a topic for their personal narratives that will work on the air. In professional radio, producers “pitch” potential stories to their editors by highlighting the most unusual, revealing, or compelling event or angle on a story. In the classroom, students can make a modified version of the professional pitch. Have students generate three to six possible ideas for their story, each of which should attempt to meet the demands of the radio principles and the particular assignment—in this case, the Audio Gift. You can support students in meeting these demands with a “pitch form” such as the one in Figure 2, where you design questions that help instantiate radio principles such as specificity and significance.

To give you a sense of how these story pitches can turn out, take a look at two ideas for the Audio Gift assignment in Table 1. These pitches come from Elizabeth Pliego, a radio student who participated in one of Sarah’s classes and later posted her work to PRX.org.

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**FIGURE 2.** A “Pitch Sheet” That Prompts Students to Generate Significant Events and Concrete Details

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#### Pitch Sheet

1. Identify the most important moment of this memory:
  
2. Identify when and where you were in the most important moment of this memory:
  
3. Describe a concrete detail (description of sight, sound, taste, smell, or touch) to help share this memory with your audience:
  
4. Defend why you believe this story is worth telling. How might hearing this story enhance people’s understanding of human nature or the world?
  
5. Possible title for narrative:

**TABLE 1.** Two Examples of “Pitches” from a Student in a Radio Class

Both the student and peer reviewers judged Pitch #1 as more likely than Pitch #2 to fulfill the criteria for strong radio narrative. The underlined parts of the sentences in the pitch sheet represent sentence stems that Elizabeth used to help her articulate some of the themes of her story ideas.

Prompts to help you make your pitch	Elizabeth's Pitch #1	Elizabeth's Pitch #2
1. Describe the most important moment of your memory:	When I looked at her when she came through the door and realized how she looked so beat.	When my mom told me not to worry (about how I was doing in school). She said she would help me and always be there for me.
2. Identify when and where you were in this important moment:	I was getting ready to go out on a Saturday and my aunt was coming home from work.	I was in our house on a Friday night.
3. Describe a concrete detail (description of sight, sound, taste, smell, or touch) to help share this memory with your audience:	Her eyes were like bloodshot and red and she just was all bent over.	The TV was playing and my mom was cooking chicken.
4. Defend why you believe this story is worth telling. How might hearing this story enhance people's understanding of human nature or the world?	<u>When people are done listening to this story, I want them to feel how hard immigrants are working just to make a few dollars to send home to their families.</u>	<u>This story helps show people that the world is a place where you can be forgiven.</u>
5. Possible title for your narrative:	“To My Tia from Mexico Who Crossed the Border”	“Thank You, Mom”

When formulating her pitches, Elizabeth struggled with the final question on the “pitch sheet”: “Why is this story worth telling?” This question is difficult, in part because it requires students to reflect on insights and themes offered by their stories. For the same reason, it is a great question that can be applied to almost any text you assign, radio or no radio. This kind of question pushes students to articulate their ideas about theme and authorial perspective.

To support students in this reflection, you can provide them with sentence stems (Graff) such as these:

- “This story helps show that the world is a place where \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “When people are done listening to this story, I want them to feel \_\_\_\_\_.”

Such sentence stems may further support students in constructing thematic inferences.

In class, Elizabeth, her peers, and her teacher evaluated the strength of the ideas, images, and themes of each pitch in terms of the principles of good writing for radio. In Elizabeth's case, all

agreed that her first pitch seemed more likely to meet the criteria for a good radio narrative. First, the pitch included a more specific set of sensory images; second, students felt it was less clichéd than Elizabeth's story about her mother; third, the students believed the story would create a more powerful emotional impact. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Elizabeth felt more passionate about representing this particular memory.

### Principle 3: Be Specific

#### Lesson 3: Using Concrete Details to Construct a Narrative

Have students flesh out a chosen idea into full narrative, requiring that they include at least 15 (or whatever challenging number you desire) sensory images that allow an audience to see, hear, taste, smell, or touch the experience just as the narrator did. Then, have students highlight what they believe to be concrete details. Doing this leads students to assess the extent to which they have fulfilled the assignment, and it allows you to assess your students' understanding of concrete imagery.

## A SHORT GUIDE TO RECORDING AND SHARING AUDIO WORK

### Equipment

Thanks to cell phones, recording and editing equipment is both accessible and affordable. Some free options for recording via smartphone include:

- Record to voice memo (*not* broadcast quality)
- Free iPhone Tascam PCM recorder, detailed in this post at <http://transom.org/?p=37801>
- Free smartphone Hokusai Audio Editor app, which allows you to record and edit multiple tracks; this one could work well for students who were interested in adding music to their stories.

### Recording

Once you or your students have decided how they are going to record, students can begin to voice their essays. Students should have their scripts ready and can rehearse with a partner so that they become comfortable reading in a conversational (rather than stilted or mechanical) way. You can help them with technical aspects of recording with the following information, adapted from Transom.Org (Allison):

- Record in a quiet room, especially one with carpets or other sound absorbers. Look out for rooms with computers, refrigerators, or heaters running—the microphone will pick up the hum of electricity.
- Make sure recorder has adequate recording space. For a smartphone, 200 MB will get you about 20 minutes of recording time.
- Make sure your recorder is charged.

### Editing

If students want to edit or add multiple tracks for music, sound effects, or other voices, there are a number of free audio editing tools available online (a list is available at <http://mashable.com/2013/07/27/editor-audio-free>). As a start, we recommend the following:

- Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>)—Allows you to record and edit on multiple tracks, as well as cut, copy, and mix sounds together. The program is available for Windows, Mac, and GNU/Linux systems.
- MP3 Cutter (<http://www.mp3cutter.org>)—Doesn't allow multiple track editing, but is an option for simply shortening audio files into individual snippets.

### Broadcasting

Once students have completed work, there are many avenues for connecting their radio stories to an audience.

- **PRX.org**—Public Radio Exchange (PRX.org) is an online platform for sharing independent radio content with public radio stations across the country. Generation PRX ([generation.prx.org](http://generation.prx.org)) is a project of PRX to connect and support young people making radio. You can join PRX, make a “class group” for your students, and upload up to two hours of audio for free. Once uploaded, work can be licensed and broadcast by public radio stations, as well as commented on by other site visitors.
- **Soundcloud**—A free online platform for sharing audio, Soundcloud allows users to easily share sound with blogs and social networks.
- **School website**—Can host audio using embeddable audio players available through PRX and Soundcloud.
- **Facebook/Twitter**—Students can use these and other social media sites to post links to their pieces.
- **Radio stations!** Producers of your local public or community radio stations may be interested in airing students' work or posting the stories on their websites. They may also be interested in coming to visit your classes or in hosting a field trip at their stations.

Figure 3 is an excerpt of Elizabeth's first draft of a full narrative Audio Gift, where she underlined all the language she believed to be concrete and specific.

As you can see from Elizabeth's excerpt, students may not grasp the distinction between generic and specific imagery in their initial drafts. For example, Elizabeth understood that “hot dry desert” was a concrete image, but she also highlighted the phrase “strong woman,” which is not so concrete;

that is, you cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch the concept “strong,” whereas you can see or touch “hot desert,” “the color of blood,” or “a couple of dollars.” If you find that your students have a similarly fuzzy understanding of concrete, detailed imagery, you may want to develop more exercises to hone their descriptive skills. See the sidebar for an example of an additional exercise designed to help students in this area.

**FIGURE 3.** Excerpt of Student's First Draft of Radio Narrative

When you made the drive it was for more than five hours in the hot dry desert with no water or food. A white Honda van you traveled in carried more than thirteen immigrants that were all hampered on top of each other. As tiny as you are Tia, the driver, or as we call them in Spanish, *el coyote*, decided to squeeze you in the front seat down in the bottom part of the van so that another two people were able to fit in the front seat on top of you.

I'd see your face getting thinner and turn into the color of snow that was caused by your lack of sleep. You'd barely have enough time to eat. The struggles of your throbbing back and premature awakenings for work, just to earn a couple of dollars to lug back home to your family, have made me realize what a strong woman you are. You work hard from sunshine to the darkest color of the night. When you come home, your eyes look like they are ready to burst from exhaustion and your eyeballs have now turned into the color of blood.

**Principles 4, 5, and 6: Don't Waste Words, Use Strong Verbs, and No Clichés**

Lessons 4, 5, and 6: Culling and Revising for Effect

You can remind your students that radio listeners will simply tune a student out if they get bored, so students need to ensure that every word they choose contributes to the overall effects of their narrative. There are many lessons you can use here to support students' revisions. Here are a few possibilities.

*Culling*

Prepare for this lesson by looking through students' first drafts to find a few examples of sentences that seem overly wordy and need tightening, such as any of Elizabeth's sentences above. In a whole-class discussion, present those sentences to your students and ask them to discuss their interpretation of the moods or effects the author may have intended that sentence to create. Then, ask students to find one word that could be removed from the sentence without diminishing those moods or effects.

Challenge small groups of students to edit as many words as possible from a selected sentence while preserving that sentence's effects (see Table 2). Then present the sentences that each group edited, and have the class discuss which sentence works best. You can support your students' interpretive skills here by pushing them to identify how different words work to create meaning.

*Strong Verbs*

Similarly, students may find (or you can point out to them) that adverbs often make room for weak verbs. For example, you can "run quickly" *or* you can "dash" or "sprint." In radio, the verbs do the work. Present a few student sentences in which the verbs are not particularly strong (you can also give examples of strong verbs). Then, have students identify all the verbs in their stories. As a whole group, practice testing out different verbs to see which create the strongest or most appropriate effects (see Table 3).

**TABLE 2.** Three Drafts of a Sentence Edited by Elizabeth

ELIZABETH'S DRAFT 1	ELIZABETH'S DRAFT 2	ELIZABETH'S DRAFT 3
"When you come home, your eyes look like they are ready to burst from exhaustion and your eyeballs have now turned into the color of blood."	"When you come home, your eyeballs are bursting from exhaustion and are turning into the color of blood."	"When you drag yourself home, your eyes are the color of blood."

**TABLE 3.** Elizabeth Culled "Extra" Words and Experimented with Different Verbs

DRAFT 1	DRAFT 2	DRAFT 3
"As tiny as you are, Tia, the driver, or as we call them in Spanish, <i>el coyote</i> , decided to <u>put</u> you in the front seat down in the bottom part of the van so that another two people were able to <u>fit</u> in the front seat on top of you."	"As tiny as you are, Tia, the driver, or as we call them, <i>el coyote</i> , decided to <u>squeeze</u> you in the bottom part of the van and more people <u>sat</u> on top of you."	"As tiny as you are, Tia, the driver, or as we call them, <i>el coyote</i> , decided to <u>bury</u> you under the front seat so that another two people could <u>squat</u> on top of you."

**WORKSHEET SUPPORTING CONSTRUCTION OF CONCRETE IMAGERY**

This worksheet was designed to help students distinguish between generic and specific concrete sensory imagery. All the phrases or sentences below were drawn from student drafts in one of Sarah's radio classes; you will probably want to lift sentences from your students' work.

Students worked in groups or pairs to decide whether each line contained generic, clichéd, or concrete imagery, and then worked to revise the generic lines with details that allowed an audience to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell along with the writer.

Be aware that there may be some argument as to whether a particular phrase leans toward the generic, clichéd, or specific. That's OK. The goal here is to help students explore the nature and effects of the language they choose, and to write with an awareness of potential audience responses.

**Getting from GENERIC TO CONCRETE IMAGERY:**

a bumper sticker → a blue bumper sticker → a blue bumper sticker that says, "If You Can Read This, You're Too Close!"

DECIDE whether the following sentences are generic, clichéd, or concrete. Label them as such. Then revise the generic images so they are concrete and specific.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. The cold wind almost glinted in the air. _____                          | 8. "Te quiero mucho, m'ija." Your words were rusty and rain-like. _____ |
| 2. A bunch of jerks approach me . . . _____                                | 9. Your voice sounds like a choir of angels. _____                      |
| 3. I remember it like it was yesterday. _____                              | 10. It sent chills up my spine. _____                                   |
| 4. At that moment I realized . . . _____                                   | 11. What more could I have asked for? _____                             |
| 5. I heard a screech of excitement. _____                                  | 12. She put her hand up to her chin. _____                              |
| 6. I thought about broken windows, dirty clothes, and angry parents. _____ | 13. The atmosphere is filled with tension. _____                        |
| 7. Time seemed to freeze. _____  |   |

**Principle 7: Write for the Ear****Lesson 7: Learning to Speak (and Listen) to Your Audience**

When preparing a radio story, the word *voice* assumes a literal as well as a literary meaning. To bring radio work to life, students must practice speaking their story aloud. As students are revising their drafts, return to a few of the stories that students listened to at the beginning of the unit. Have students develop criteria for good voicing, just as they developed criteria for the qualities of a strong story. In our experience, students enjoy the critical nature of these listening sessions, and generally attend to important elements of radio voicing, including the following:

- Pacing—is the story narrated too slowly or too quickly?
- Pauses—do they come in appropriate places?
- Clarity—can you understand what's being said?
- Tone—is the reading stiff or overly formal? Does the narrator's tone of voice match the emotional tone of the narrative?
- Emphasis—does the narrator stress the right words?

Then, have students practice reading their drafts aloud to a small group, and have them listen to their draft as read by another student, if possible. This process, we have found, helps students identify stilted language and confusing syntax. In addition, students can help each other identify where the speaker needs to slow down, shift tone, or take a breath. Student writers should then annotate their narratives to remind themselves how they want to deliver their narratives when it comes time to record.

To get a sense of how both the writing and voicing exercises played out for Elizabeth, see the sidebar for her final draft, which includes her annotations for emphasizing important words and pausing for effect. Listen to Elizabeth's final recorded radio piece at PRX.org (<http://www.prx.org/pieces/19064-to-my-aunt-who-crossed-the-border>).

**Conclusion**

What we've outlined here constitutes the ground floor of teaching writing for radio, with more emphasis on writing and less emphasis on radio. For those interested in pursuing radio production more fully, you can visit the sites listed above; all are good



### A FINAL RADIO NARRATIVE


Below is Elizabeth's final narrative, written in conventional radio script format. The words in bold are those that Elizabeth marked to remind herself to emphasize them. The ellipses are used to remind her to pause between sentences, and the occasional words in parenthesis offer other reminders about her voicing.

After being posted online, Elizabeth's story was downloaded and broadcast on public radio stations in New York City, Florida, and other cities. Elizabeth's fellow students engaged the same process of writing for radio, and many of them also saw their work move from classroom to online and on the air.

THE JOB WAS 12 HOURS A DAY AND SIX DOLLARS AN HOUR... YOU **BARELY** HAD TIME TO **EAT**... YOUR BACK **THROBS** FROM PACKAGING FOOD AT 105TH AND CICERO FROM **MID-MORNING TO MID-NIGHT**... YOU DO THIS TO EARN A COUPLE OF DOLLARS TO MAIL BACK TO YOUR FAMILY. WHEN YOU COME HOME, YOUR EYES ARE THE **COLOR OF BLOOD**.

"TIA, *QUE TIENE?* WHAT'S WRONG?" I ASK YOU... YOU THEN REPLY, "NOTHING. I JUST MISS MY KIDS," AND YOU BOW YOUR HEAD AND FLOW TEARS... YOU LEFT MY COUSINS IVAN, WITH HIS BABY GAP TEETH, AND MILTON, (smile in your voice) WHO HAD THE PLUMPY CHEEKS OF A SIX YEAR OLD... (pause) "*LOS EXTRANO TANTO*. I MISS MY KIDS; I CAN'T **STAND** THE PAIN OF MISSING THEM ANYMORE..." I CAN'T **IMAGINE** THE PAIN OF A MOTHER WHO HAS LEFT HER KIDS TO WORK IN A DIFFERENT COUNTRY... I KNOW YOU WISH TO FLY MY COUSINS IN, BUT IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE** TO PASS THEM INTO THE U.S. THE SAME WAY YOU CAME ACROSS.

THIS IS WHY, TIA, IF I COULD GIVE YOU **ANYTHING** IN THE **WORLD**, I WOULD GIVE YOU A CITIZEN'S CERTIFICATION GRANT FOR MY COUSINS... THEY COULD FLY INTO CHICAGO ON LA MEXICANA AIRLINES WITH RECLINABLE SEATS IN FIRST CLASS, **SIPPING** ON THEIR **ORANGE JUICE**, AND **MUNCHING** ON SOME **PEANUTS**... AT THE **LANDING** AS YOU'D WAIT FOR YOUR HUG, THEY'D **RUSH** TO THE WARMTH OF THE MOTHER AND YOU'D **WIPE** THE TEARS OFF THEIR **BABY CHEEKS**... YOU'D THEN KNOW THAT YOU WOULD NEVER AGAIN SEPARATE FROM MY COUSINS (pause)... NEVER AGAIN WILL YOU BE SEPARATED BY **HOURS**, OR **DAYS**, OR **DOLLARS**.

resources for learning more about radio. You can also use Generation PRX, a network for connecting teachers and makers of radio, a resource hub for those who have questions about student-made radio, and a gateway to the Public Radio Exchange (PRX.org). By using resources like these, and designing lessons based on those resources, we hope you will be able to expand the ways you build bridges between the "real world" and the classroom, and help your students carry their voices beyond the classroom door. 

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**Sarah Levine** (sarahlevine2013@u.northwestern.edu), a former high school English and radio teacher, is an assistant professor of reading and language at National Louis University in Chicago. **Jones Franzel** (jones@prx.org) has worked as a youth radio educator and producer since 2003.