

"Shakespeare and Star Wars": Lesson Plan Day 13 and 14
by Adam Watson (NBCT)

Academic Goal:

Understand when the purpose of writing changes, the form will change as well.
Explain what changes when the same source material is adapted in various media.
Perform a dramatic scene by following structural cues and inferring meaning.
Analyze the different strengths and weaknesses of different media, particularly in its impact on an audience.

Core Content Standards (for Reading Literature, 9th Grade): 9-10.RL.5, -7, -9

Core Content Standards (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading): CCRA.R.7

Handouts:

[WSSW Star Wars Radio Drama Cast List](#) (for teacher)

[WSSW Film vs Radio Drama vs Play](#) (for students)

Instructional Plan:

Day 13

1. Using the [WSSW Star Wars Radio Drama Cast List](#), determine the roles for the "reader's theater" version that will be performed later in class. As you did earlier on [Day 11](#), let differentiation drive your casting decisions. Note that there are only 20 roles, which either means some students will simply read along, or can help with elements such as sound effects (for example, when there is an explosion, all must go "boom!").

2. Have a short whole class discussion. In what ways is sound used in productions, particularly film? Students will likely say examples such as music, sound effects, and dialogue. Next, explain that in movies, they are lucky to even record an actor's dialogue live on set; incidental sounds like footsteps or a creaking door often must be added in post-production. A "foley artist" is a movie person who makes and records such sound effects. In twentieth century films, this was often done while the foley watched the film in a screening room; for example, as the actor on screen walked across gravel, a mike at the foley's feet would record their own in-sync steps in a small gravel tray and the sound would be added later in post-production. Of course, digital tools have begun to replace some of this analog work.

3. Have students consider the importance of sound effects in *Star Wars*. (Shout out to Ben Burtt!) What if the sounds were missing...or different? Play the "[Bad Foley](#)" YouTube clip of *Star Wars* (approximately 2 minutes long).

4. Next, set up some quick background on the *Star Wars Radio Drama*, first aired in 1981. Lucas sold the rights for \$1 to a California public radio station. Mark Hamill and Anthony Daniels reprised their roles from the film. John Madden was the director, who also later directed the Oscar Award-winning film *Shakespeare in Love*; we come full circle to WSSW!

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5. Play Episode 13 "Force and Counterforce" from the beginning to when Gold Five dies, approximately 14 minutes long. (In Brian Daley's [Star Wars: The National Public Radio Dramatization](#) book, this is pages 320-335, up to "Sound: He's cut off abruptly as his ship explodes.") Have students pay attention to how the radio drama is, and is not, like the movie or play.
6. You are now going to perform the rest of the episode! (Students will need access to pages 335-346 of Daley's book). Announce the cast list. Encourage students to get into their parts, even if they only whistle or roar. Perhaps play John Williams's "Battle of Yavin" low in the background . . .
7. If time, debrief the students with discussion. What are some differences between the radio drama, WSSW, and movie? How was performing today's radio drama different than performing the skits from Doescher's play?

Day 14

1. Assign students in groups (3-4 members in each). Hand out the [WSSW Film vs Radio Drama vs Play](#) sheet (one per group). Access to yesterday's pages would be helpful as well.
2. Model an example of analysis from earlier in the episode (before yesterday's reader's theater began): Motti and Tarkin's exchange about using the Death Star to make Tarkin second only to the Emperor, ending with the "Should I have your ship standing by?" (This is unique to the radio drama, and adds backstory and history to Tarkin's character.) Students should consider content as well as structure elements (such as sound effects, visuals, etc.) Advise students *not* to just say "it's in Shakespearean language" for the play. Each group should take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete their analysis.
3. Elect a spokesperson from each group. Have them share one story moment, the variances across the mediums, and their consensus decision on which media form is best and why. As a story moment is shared, tell students the remaining groups have to discuss a different one, so you get a variety of responses.

Suggested Extensions and/or Alterations :

The radio drama certainly has great moments throughout its thirteen episodes, but you might court danger trying to play it all; to put it mildly, it might be difficult to sustain an entire class's attention longer than the 14 minute excerpt I used above. However, if you use a workshop classroom model, students might go to a listening station to experience an episode of their choice while others watched YouTube clips of famous film scenes or reread a section of the play; by comparing these different examples, this could be used to plan a prewrite for their final timed writing.

Using free tools such as [Audacity](#) (or paid iOS apps like GarageBand), have students record a Shakespearean radio drama "episode" based on a scene from WSSW. They could use foley sound effects or edit them in during post-production. Play the finished scenes in class. (Note: this could easily take several instructional days.)

Post-Lesson Reflection:

As each group shared their consensus of which media form they liked best, I can't say I was surprised that nearly all picked the film. However, one group did say they were split between the film and the

play, because the play allowed for deeper characterization; you got to know them better in Doescher's version. Certainly a strength worth pointing out!

For the full unit overview, [click here](#).