

Learning Guide



ICKY: A Radio Musical

We hope you enjoyed listening to the original radio musical collaboratively written and performed by *The Children's Hour*. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen

Reflect on your thinking before and after listening to this episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

Teamwork Takes Flight: Activity

CASEL Relationship Skills; SHAPE America PE Standard 4

Music Tells the Story: Activity

MU:Re7-Re9; MA:Re7-Re8; MA:Cr3; CCSS:SL.1

Understanding Sound Effects: Activity

MA:Re7, MA:Re8; MU:Re7, MU:Re8; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1-12.2

Telling Stories with Sound: Activity

MA:Cr1-Cr3, MA:Re7-Re8; MU:Cr1-Cr2; TH:Cr1-Cr2

Song Lyrics Analysis: Activity

MU:Re8, MU:Re7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1-12.2, RL.1-12.4 ; CASEL – Social Awareness

Create a Mini Radio Play

*MA:Cr1-Cr3; TH:Cr1-Cr3; MU:Cr1-Cr3;
CCSS W.3; CCSS SL.1*

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

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<https://www.childrenshour.org/icky-a-radio-musical/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Write down your response to the question below. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

- **What makes someone a hero?**

2. After listening!

Write down your response to the following question. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

- **After listening to ICKY, what does being a hero mean to you now—and did your answer change from before you heard the story?**



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

pandemic

A disease outbreak that spreads across many countries or around the world.

resilient

Able to recover, adapt, or keep going after something difficult happens.



Vocabulary

transcend

To go beyond a limit or ordinary experience.

collective

Done or shared by a group of people working together.

equality

The idea that everyone deserves the same rights, opportunities, and respect.

injustice

A situation in which people are treated unfairly or denied what is right.



Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of problems can kids help solve?
2. How can imagination help us deal with something scary or difficult?
3. What does the Sickly Icky represent? Is it only a sickness, or could it represent other things too?
4. The superheroes eventually realize that they are stronger together. What examples of teamwork do you hear in the story?
5. The story says, "Sometimes you have to show up and really be involved when you witness injustice." What do you think that means?
6. Is being brave the same thing as not being afraid?
7. Can someone be a hero while still making mistakes?
8. What does it mean to "show up" for another person?
9. Several characters initially believe they aren't powerful enough to help. Why can believing "I'm just one person" sometimes keep us from taking action?
10. What changed between the beginning of the pandemic and today?
11. Imagine you are responsible for helping your school respond to a future crisis. What would you recommend?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing Prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Write about a character who doesn't think they are brave or special but eventually discovers that they can make a difference.
2. Imagine the Sicky Icky comes back with a new plan. What happens next? How do the superheroes respond?
3. Write a diary entry from the perspective of Wild, Invisibility, Sam, Joy, Giggle, or another character.
4. Write a story in which a group of characters must combine their different talents to solve a problem that none of them could solve alone.

Informational/Expository Prompts

1. Explain what the pandemic was and how it changed everyday life for children and families.
2. How Does a Radio Musical Work? Explain how music, voices, sound effects, and narration can tell a story without pictures.
3. How to Make a Radio Musical: Using ICKY as inspiration, explain the steps involved in creating a radio musical from an idea to a finished recording.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Is It Better to Work Alone or Together? Use examples from ICKY and your own experiences to argue which approach is more effective.
2. Should Kids Be Expected to Solve Big Problems? In the story, students are told that it is up to their generation to find solutions. Do you agree or disagree?
3. What makes someone a hero? What are their most important traits?
4. What do you think the Sicky Icky represents beyond an actual illness?

Extension: Create your own metaphorical “monster” for a problem in the world.



Teamwork Takes Flight

Sometimes a challenge is difficult—or even impossible—to complete alone. When people combine their ideas, skills, and strengths, they can accomplish things that one person cannot.

Try this challenge first alone, then as part of a group.

Materials

- 1-4 balloons

The Challenge

Keep one balloon in the air for as long as possible without catching or holding it. Then increase the challenge by adding more balloons.

Try It Alone

- What happened?
- How long were you able to keep the balloon aloft?
- How many balloons could you keep aloft at once?



Try It Together

Repeat the same balloon challenge, but this time do it as a group. Try doing it with different group sizes.

Discuss

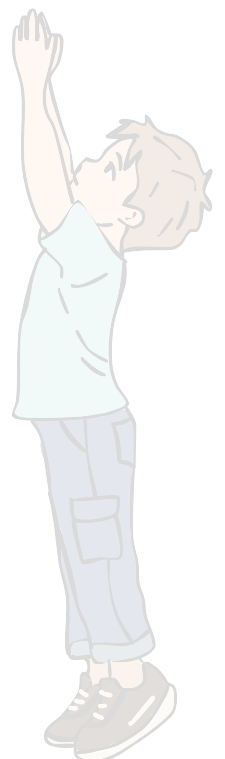
- What happened?
- Was the challenge easier or harder alone?
- What group size was the most successful?
- What changed when you worked together?
- What did different people contribute?
- Did someone have a skill or idea that helped the group?
- What did your group do better together than you could do alone?

Complete the Sentence

Working together helped us because...

One thing I contributed to my group was...

One thing someone else contributed was...





Music Tells the Story

Music and sound effects can have a powerful effect on your viewing experience. In these activities, you will learn how music can communicate meaning without words.

Emotion Through Music

Listen to each music example. What do you feel or imagine?

1. [Listen to song 1](#)
2. [Listen to song 2](#)
3. [Listen to song 3](#)

Browse the huge collection of no copyright music on [Pixabay](#).

Soundtrack a Scene

Play each of the following movie clips **without sound**.

- [Singin' in the Rain](#)

What kind of music belongs in this scene?

- ☐ Happy ☐ Mysterious ☐ Scary ☐ Peaceful ☐ Exciting

What would the music sound like?

- ☐ Fast ☐ Slow ☐ Loud ☐ Quiet ☐ High ☐ Low

- [Dumbo visits his locked-up mom from Dumbo](#)

What kind of music belongs in this scene?

- ☐ Happy ☐ Mysterious ☐ Scary ☐ Peaceful ☐ Exciting

What would the music sound like?

- ☐ Fast ☐ Slow ☐ Loud ☐ Quiet ☐ High ☐ Low

- [Preparation scene from Chicken Run](#)

What kind of music belongs in this scene?

- ☐ Happy ☐ Mysterious ☐ Scary ☐ Peaceful ☐ Exciting

What would the music sound like?

- ☐ Fast ☐ Slow ☐ Loud ☐ Quiet ☐ High ☐ Low

Then, play the clips again with the sound.

- *Does the sound match what you expected?*
- *How does sound change how you experience the scene?*

Create an Alternative Soundtrack

Play [the car sinking scene from Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho](#)

Hitchcock chose to include the sound effects of the car bubbling as it sank into the water.

- [Choose a different sound/music](#) for this scene. Why does it fit the scene?
- *How does the music change what you think is happening?*



Understanding Sound Effects

What Is a Sound Effect?

A **sound effect** (SFX) is a sound other than speech or music that helps tell a story. Sound effects can show what is happening, create a setting, make us laugh, or help us feel an emotion.

Sound Effect Detective

Listen to [ICKY: A Radio Musical](#) or [another radio play](#). Pay close attention to all the sounds you hear.

Make a list of as many sound effects as you can identify.

Sound effect I heard	What was happening?	What type of sound was it? background music / action sound / other (describe)



Understanding Sound Effects

Sound Effects Have a Job

Choose three of your favorite sound effects from the story.

SFX #1: _____

- What was happening when you heard this sound? _____

- How did the sound help you understand what was happening? _____

- How did it add emotion, humor, or excitement to the scene? _____

- What would the scene be like **without** this sound? _____

SFX #2: _____

- What was happening when you heard this sound? _____

- How did the sound help you understand what was happening? _____

- How did it add emotion, humor, or excitement to the scene? _____

- What would the scene be like without this sound? _____

SFX #3: _____

- What was happening when you heard this sound? _____

- How did the sound help you understand what was happening? _____

- How did it add emotion, humor, or excitement to the scene? _____

- What would the scene be like without this sound? _____



Telling Stories with Sound

Watch

- [Telling Stories with Sound: The Golden Age of Radio Drama](#)
Sound and sound effects can help bring stories to life. Discover how sound designers came up with those cool, creepy sound effects and learn some tips for how to record your own sound effects at home in this 10-minute video from the Kennedy Center.
- [Telling Stories with Sound: Ben Burtt & the Sounds of Star Wars](#)
Learn how Ben Burtt comes up with the sounds that complement the amazing things we see on screen.

Guess the Sound

Play the following sounds. Use your imagination to describe what you think is happening.

- [Sound 1](#)
- [Sound 2](#)
- [Sound 3](#)
- [Sound 4](#)
- [Sound 5](#)

Discuss

How do you think each of these sounds was made? Try recreating them!

Sound Effects Challenge

Gather a variety of materials, or just use your body and what you see in front of you to create sounds for:

- A superhero flying
- A portal opening
- Someone being dragged
- A superhero transforming
- A magical cure
- A giant superpower battle





Song Lyrics Analysis

A **reprise** is when a song or musical idea returns later in a story, often with changes.

Listen to “HERO ANTHEM” and “HERO ANTHEM: Reprise” and follow along with the lyrics. Then, answer the questions on the following page.

HERO ANTHEM

*Everyone wants a hero. But they think I'm small
And everyone wants the answer. But they won't listen at all.
And I keep praying for something that will cushion the fall.
And all that we needed to see was with our glasses off.
And all that we needed to be was with our glasses on.
Will anyone come and save us? From who we are
and I don't wanna be different, but it's written in the stars
and there's no cape or gamma ray,
no bat or superman that can save you from yourself if you can't.*

Chorus

*Who me? Don't you see that a superhero's not inside of me?
Who me? Can't you see? I don't want that responsibility
Who me? Won't you see that a superhero's not inside of me?*

*No. Go where I want, nobody knows.
Can't find me right under your nose
I'm not a hero and I'd much rather go
In the opposite direction when it comes to blows.
Keeping to myself is better for my health.
Staying out of trouble has served me well.
Learn how to hide but not how to show up.
Why does life as a hero gotta be so rough?*

HERO ANTHEM: Reprise (Scene 6)

Chorus

*Who me? Don't you see that a Superhero lives inside of me?
Who me? Can't you see the Superhero living inside of me?
Who me? Won't you see that a Superhero lives inside of me oh... Oooo ooooo ooooo*

Section C

*Show Up! for my people when you need me, call.
A phonebooth is for Super Friends after all.
All heroes don't wear capes, but some wear masks just to keep us safe.
Learned how to make the best of a bad situation by making people laugh.
Learned how to love when times get tough, everyday superheroes look just like us.*



Song Lyrics Analysis

Listen & Read

Listen to “HERO ANTHEM” and “HERO ANTHEM: Reprise” and follow along with the lyrics.

Reflect

1. Who Is the Hero?

- Who is singing the song? _____
- What does the character believe about being a superhero? _____

2. What Makes a Hero?

Look at the lyrics in Section C.

Circle or highlight words and phrases that describe what a hero does.

Then complete:

A hero is someone who _____

3. Heroes Don't Always Wear Capes

The song says: “All heroes don't wear capes...” What do you think this means? _____

Name one everyday hero you know or have heard about. _____

What makes this person a hero? _____

Music & Mood

What mood does “Hero Anthem” create?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Funny |
| ☐ Powerful | ☐ Serious |
| ☐ Hopeful | ☐ Other: _____ |
| ☐ Excited | |

What do you hear in the music that creates this mood?

What mood does “HERO ANTHEM: Reprise” create?

- | |
|-----------------------------------|
| ☐ Happy |
| ☐ Powerful |
| ☐ Hopeful |
| ☐ Excited |

What do you hear in the music that creates this mood?

The Message

What is the main message of “Hero Anthem”?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Anyone can be a hero. | ☐ Being a hero means helping others. |
| ☐ Heroes must have superpowers. | ☐ Other: _____ |
| ☐ Heroes never face problems. | |

Explain your answer: _____



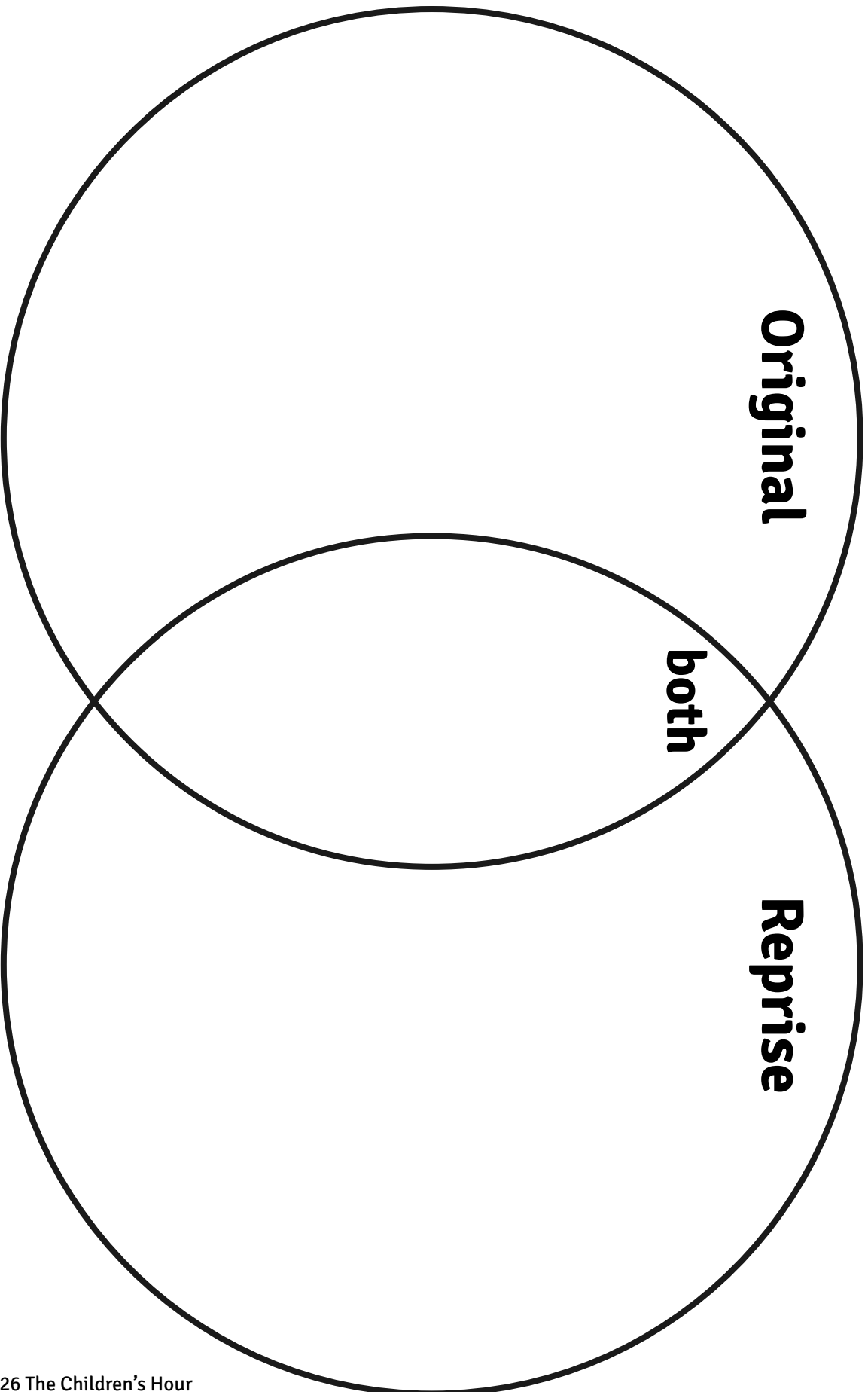
Song Lyrics Analysis

The Reprise

A **reprise** is when a song or musical idea returns later in a story, often with changes.

Compare the original “Hero Anthem” with the Reprise. Consider the lyrics, character, situation, and mood.

Why do you think the song returns?





Create a Mini Radio Play

Read about how *The Children's Hour* produced *ICKY: A Radio Musical* on our [episode page](#). Then, try your hand at creating a 2–5 minute radio play with a narrator, characters, dialogue, music, and sound effects. You should include:

- **A problem** — What challenge are the characters facing? _____

- **A villain or obstacle** — What stands in their way? _____

Character Name	Their superpower or special ability (What can each character contribute?)

- **A song** — Write and perform a short original song. (See [The Children's Hour, "Kid Pan Alley" episode](#) and [accompanying Learning Guide](#) for some guidance on songwriting.)

- **Sound effects** — Create the world through sound. (Use "Music Tells the Story", "Understanding Sound Effects", and "Telling Stories with Sound" activities in this Learning Guide to help you.)

- **A solution** — How do the characters overcome the problem? _____

- **A message** — What do you want your audience to think about afterward? _____



Additional Resources

[Musical Theater in America](#)

Learn about musical theater using examples from Broadway, the history, structure, and elements of musical theater, musical theater's role in social commentary, its legacy, and how you too can create a musical.

[The Spreading of a Virus: A Simulation!](#)

A hands-on science and math lesson for middle grades and up.

[Resources & Science Activities](#)

An extensive collection from The Kids Research Institute.

Videos

[How to See Germs Spread Experiment](#)

Mark Rober uses Glo Germ powder to demonstrate how easily germs spread and why we get sick.

[What is Radio Drama? A History of Audio Storytelling for Classrooms](#)

[Telling Stories with Sound: The Golden Age of Radio Drama](#)

Sound and sound effects can help bring stories to life. Discover how sound designers came up with those cool, creepy sound effects and learn some tips for how to record your own sound effects at home in this 10-minute video from the Kennedy Center.

[Theater of the Mind Radio Drama](#)

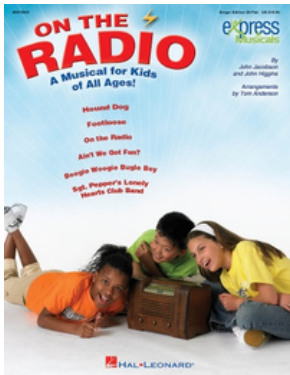
A collection of live, televised 1940s-style radio drama from PBS.

[Telling Stories with Sound: Ben Burtt & the Sounds of Star Wars](#)

Learn how Ben Burtt comes up with the sounds that complement the amazing things we see on screen.



Book List

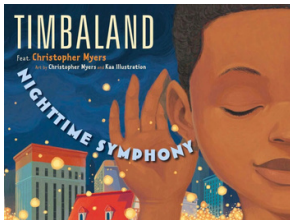


On the Radio: A Musical for Kids of All Ages!

by John Jacobson & John Higgins, arrangements by Tom Anderson

This Express musical features 6 “top hits” with short set-up scenes for up to 25 speaking parts that combine into a show that will appeal to kids and adults alike while requiring minimal rehearsal time! The Teacher Edition includes fully accompanied songs, choreography, and narration.

ages 9-14

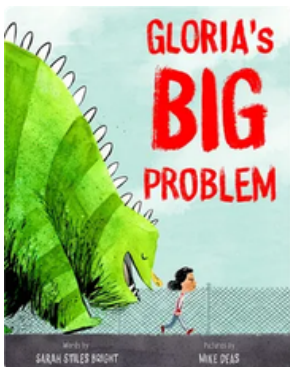


Nighttime Symphony

by Timbaland, feat. Christopher Myers, illustrated by Christopher Meyers & Kaa Illustration

The scary sounds of a thunderstorm at bedtime – raindrops tapping on windows, howling wind and water rushing in the streets – turn into a comforting lullaby. Vivid illustrations enhance a tender story with an important lesson about the things we let frighten us.

ages 4-8



Gloria's Big Problem

by Sarah Stiles Bright, illustrated by Mike Deas

Gloria's worries keep her from being able to do the things she loves most, like singing. This book teaches readers that the fears we don't face will only grow, and that we really have the power to confront what frightens us. Available on [Epic!](#)

ages 6-10



The Great Radio Rainbow Challenge: What Shall We Do Today? Feb. 13th

by P.D. Cain

This audiobook, [available from Audible](#), follows Imani, Tommy, and Maya as they celebrate World Radio Day and turn an ordinary day into an imaginative and educational day.

ages 4-9