

## Sound Learning Overview

Why audiobooks?

*Becoming a Nation of Readers*, an important study released by the Commission on Reading in 1985, includes this essential finding: “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.” In 2007, Drs. David Rose and Bridget Dalton reported in their study *Learning through Listening in the Digital World*, that “both learning to listen and listening to learn are critical to literacy in the 21st Century as new technologies rebalance what it means to be literate and to learn.”

What educational tool provides reading aloud for 21<sup>st</sup>-century children and teens? Audiobooks!

- Audiobooks build and enhance vital literacy skills such as fluency, vocabulary, language acquisition, pronunciation, phonemic awareness, and comprehension—skills that often boost reading scores.
- Listening together as a family offers opportunities for shared literary experiences and a springboard for conversation about the titles.
- Audiobooks develop critical thinking and active listening skills, integral components of the Common Core academic standards.
- Listening allows students to enjoy a good book while they're multi-tasking: mowing the lawn, practicing sports, cleaning their rooms, relaxing on the beach—even playing video games with the game sound muted.
- Readers with learning disabilities and English Language Learners who listen to audiobooks demonstrate increased literacy skills and reading ability.
- Listening to professionally-narrated audiobooks battles the “word gap,” augmenting the quantity of spoken, sophisticated vocabulary that research shows increases academic achievement.
- Audiobooks boost auditory stamina and focus, foundational skills for media literacy.
- Avid readers appreciate adding more books into their busy lives through listening, and often revisit a title as an audiobook, deepening their understanding of the work.
- Audiobooks allow listeners to stretch their horizons and tackle complex texts. A young person’s listening skills are typically a minimum of two years above their reading skills.
- Listening to literature clarifies the language and syntax found in classic literature, provides authentic accents and dialects, and introduces listeners to new genres such as drama and poetry.

- Research indicates that some students lose two months or more of reading progress made during the school year in a single summer. Audiobooks are the ideal antidote!

Available in formats that allow young people to plug into literature on every type of electronic device, audiobooks are perfect for on-the-go enjoyment. Reading for pleasure, which includes offering students the chance to select their own material, is an important part of any literacy experience so be sure to allow your students the opportunity to choose audiobooks themselves. The public library is a terrific resource for free audios to download or to enjoy on CD.

Locate the best in audiobooks by using these resources:

- The Audies, awarded annually by the Audio Publishers Association to over 25 audiobook categories, including several specifically targeting children and teens.  
<http://www.audiopub.org/audies-gala.asp>
- The American Library Association's annual audiobook award and lists for children and teens:
  - The Odyssey Award, given annually to the producer of the best audiobook produced for children and/or young adults, available in English in the United States.  
<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/odysseyaward>
  - Notable Children's Recordings, an annual list of recordings that includes many high quality fiction and non-fiction audiobooks for young people through age 14.  
<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/ncr>
  - Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults, an annual list of noteworthy recordings in a variety of genres that have substantial appeal to teens.  
<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/amazing-audiobooks-young-adults-2014>
- Two resources for summer listening:
  - SYNC, a program that shares free audiobook downloads for teens aged 13 and up during the summer. Pairing one contemporary and one classic title each week, SYNC is sponsored by *AudioFile Magazine* and is delivered through the OverDrive Media Console. <http://www.audiobooksync.com/>
  - Audiobooks on the Go, a list of suggested audiobooks for summer listening from *AudioFile Magazine*. <http://www.audiobookrex.com/kids-on-the-go/>