

# Pioneers and Legends of Radio

*Second course, First grading period, Week 7*

Individuals who saw radio's potential harnessed the airwaves and utilized the emerging technology to create broadcast radio. Talented individuals with personality, voice and vision became the first radio performers, announcers and disc jockeys.



## Enduring Understanding

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Creative individuals and emerging technology, including radio, have significantly shaped and continue to influence American culture.



## Essential Questions

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Who are the early pioneers and legends of radio? In what ways did radio's pioneers set precedents and lay the foundation for today's media programming?



## Objectives and Outcome

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- Students will be introduced to some of the pioneers of radio broadcasting.
- Through the study of individuals who contributed to the establishment of radio and radio programming, students will gain an understanding of American culture and influences on that culture.
- Students will understand how American culture is influenced by technological developments.
- Students will hone their research skills, exercise critical thinking and use their creativity to prepare an oral presentation.



## Suggested Time

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One week



## Resources and Materials

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Clips from several radio shows. The following sites have programs available:

- Museum of Broadcast Communication ([www.museum.tv](http://www.museum.tv))  
The A.C. Nielsen, Jr. Online Research Center and archives have 4,000 radio programs and oral histories of broadcast pioneers.
- The Big Broadcast with Ed Walker" ([www.wamu.org/programs/bb/](http://www.wamu.org/programs/bb/))  
Walker broadcasts programming from Radio's Golden Age ('30s to '50s). Check the schedule for the week's shows on WAMU.
- Radio Days: A Sound Bite History (<http://www.otr.com/>)  
A site to make discoveries, including "Capt. Midnight," "Terry & The Pirates" in mp3 format.
- Old Time Radio (<http://www.old-time.com/>)  
This site is a radio buff's paradise. If you have time, explore it.
- Radio Hall of Fame ([www.museum.tv/rhofsection.php](http://www.museum.tv/rhofsection.php))

The Museum of Television & Radio ([www.mtr.org/](http://www.mtr.org/))

“The Premiere of the Jack Benny Program” ([www.museum.tv/exhibitionssection.php?page=85](http://www.museum.tv/exhibitionssection.php?page=85))

“Jack Benny” ([www.museum.tv/rhofsection.php?page=168](http://www.museum.tv/rhofsection.php?page=168))

Radio Hall of Fame (<http://www.radiohof.org/>)

Radio Hall of Fame Inductees ([www.radiohof.org/inducteesaz.html](http://www.radiohof.org/inducteesaz.html))

Read the biographies and listen to audio clips of more than 115 inductees. America’s only Radio Hall of Fame honors the pioneers who have shaped the medium since its infancy as well as contemporary talent from today’s diverse programming formats. Inductees include executives, writers, producers, directors, and on-air personalities of all types, ranging from disc jockeys and musicians to sportscasters and newscasters.

“Talk On ...,” Lost & Found Sound, NPR, Dr. Roosevelt “Rick” Wright, Jr., talks on “Rise of Black Programming,” “The Pioneers of Black Radio,” and “Black Radio and the Community” ([www.npr.org/programs/lfsound/talkon/wright.html](http://www.npr.org/programs/lfsound/talkon/wright.html))

Legendary Pioneers of Black Radio (<http://www.museum.tv/educationsection.php?page=8>)

Professor Gilbert Williams leads this seminar inspired by his book *Legendary Pioneers of Black Radio*, with additional insight provided by pioneering black DJs from Chicago and Q&A with the audience (Length: 1:40; Air Date: 2/17/00)

Old Time Radio Moments of the Century ([www.old-time.com/mcleod/top100.html](http://www.old-time.com/mcleod/top100.html))

Hillard, Robert and Michael C. Keith, *The Broadcast Century and Beyond: A Biography of American Broadcasting*. Focal Press, 2005



## Procedure

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1. Select an Old Time Radio show to introduce students to some of the pioneers in radio programming. Teachers should use recordings or visit a Web site (See Resources and Materials) for this activity.

Write the following on the board or prepare as a handout:

Listen to an early radio show. From what you hear, provide the following information:

- Cite the names of main characters
- Select two of the characters and summarize their attributes, persona or philosophy of life.
- State the setting(s) of the episode
- Summarize the situation in the episode
- State the resolution or theme of the episode
- Are you familiar with the show or the characters from previous reading, listening or viewing? If yes, explain.

Teachers may wish to illustrate the adventure/drama category first. The Lone Ranger ([www.radiohof.org/adventuredrama/loneranger.html](http://www.radiohof.org/adventuredrama/loneranger.html)), which first aired in 1933, might be used. Play some of Rossini’s *William Tell Overture* first to see if it connotes The Lone Ranger and Tonto for any of your students. For many adolescents and adults from 1933-1958, those notes signaled the return of this hero of the West and his companion into their living rooms.

The entertainment category might be illustrated with The Jack Benny Show ([www.museum.tv/rhof-section.php?page=168](http://www.museum.tv/rhof-section.php?page=168)). Like The Lone Ranger, Jack Benny and his cast of characters made the transition from radio to television, becoming pioneers in programming in both media. If students have grandmothers who still insist that they are 39 years old or know good-hearted people whom they would classify as “stingy,” they can relate to the Jack Benny persona. Why is the “Rochester” character important? (His character is played by an African American and is not in the traditional subservient role.)

2. After students have shared their first impressions of the show, its characters and theme, be ready to discuss the significance of the show when it was broadcast and its place in radio history (See Radio Hall of Fame entries).

3. Discuss the meaning of “pioneer” and “legend.” What qualities does someone who is a pioneer possess? Who are pioneers of American history? Why are some individuals well known and others grouped as “the pioneers”? Why is it important for a society to remember its pioneers? Why is it helpful for those engaged in today’s media to know its pioneers?

4. Give students their research and presentation assignment. Teachers may wish to use “Guidelines for Research and Presentation, Radio Pioneers and Legends” which is provided. Teachers may wish to compile their own list of subjects (individuals, genre or other categories, and “firsts,”) to research. Below are two other approaches to providing the subjects to research:

- Teachers might have students visit the Radio Hall of Fame Web site; go to Radio Hall of Fame Inductees list to select a person, a program or type of programming to research. Categories on the site are Adventure/Drama, Comedy, Disk Jockey, Executives, Music, Music/Variety, News, News Talk, Pioneers, Producer/Director, Sportscasters, and Writers.
- Use the “African-American Radio Pioneers and Legends” handout included in this lesson to provide students with another alternative to the research segment of this assignment. Encourage students to go to several sources to get a more complete picture. The notation after each name is provided to give students a beginning point, but teachers may wish to delete this information to make the assignment more challenging.

5. Students will present their research as a “live broadcast” before “a studio audience,” the class and invited guests. Because of the fast pace required to complete this assignment, we have included “Suggested Outline for In-class Pioneers and Legends ‘Live’ Presentation,” which you may wish to provide students to help them in organizing their presentations. We emphasize that this is not the only, nor necessarily the best, organization for all topics.

This assignment will give students practice in conducting focused research, writing for the ear, using their on-air voices, and organizing a presentation that includes audio.

6. Teachers may wish to have students take notes on the presentations and give a quiz at the end of all presentations on the individuals and stations presented. Or you might have students write a reflection paper at the end of the presentations on the topic, “The Influence of Radio Pioneers and Legends on Me,” “The Impact of Radio Pioneers and Legends on American Culture,” or a topic of the student’s choice.



## Homework

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Conduct research and read material about their presentation topics.

Write a script for the oral presentation.

Select relevant audio clips and put them on a CD to play during the class presentation.



## Assessment

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Students will receive credit for conducting research and preparing a bibliography of sources.

Students will be evaluated on the quality, creativity and depth of their oral presentations.

Students may be asked to take a quiz and/or write reflection papers after all presentations have been given.

If you wish to offer students an extra credit opportunity, focus on Old Time Radio. Go to the Washington Post Newspaper In Education Web site ([www.washpost.com/nie](http://www.washpost.com/nie)) and download “D.C. Renaissance,” Volume 3, issue 7. On page 17 of the curriculum guide, photocopy “Radio – All the Rage” and give to students for information and activities.



## Academic Content Standards

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Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. (Standard 8, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts)



## Industry Standards and Expectations

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[Media archives] “preserve, present, and examine the records created through a radio microphone and a television camera lens — records that tell the stories of America, its history, its culture, and its people.” (Bruce DuMont, founder/president & CEO, The Museum of Broadcast Communications)

# African-American Radio Pioneers and Legends

The following individuals have been inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame or have received other recognition for contributing to the early years of radio broadcasting and providing successful programming on radio.

You are to conduct research in the following areas:

- The professional life of one of these individuals
- The way(s) the individual contributed to radio broadcasting
- Audience response to the individual's program/style
- The time period in which the individual lived, highlighting events, attitudes, and media technology in the U.S. at that time

Eddie Anderson — Rochester, The Jack Benny Program

Al Benson — Chicago radio pioneer

Jesse B. Blayton, Sr. — First African-American to own and operate a radio station

Martin Block — Disc jockey

Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. — Soul of Reason (WNBC) weekly radio program

Andrew Carter — Radio legend

Jack L. Cooper — Disc jockey

Willis H. Crosby — South Carolina radio legend

"Daddy-O With the Patty-O" at Triple-A — Announcer

Sam Evans — Chicago radio pioneer

Walkin' Talkin' Bill Hawkins — Disc jockey in Cleveland, Ohio

Jocko Henderson — Disc jockey

Herb Kent — Disc jockey

Tom Joyner — Tom Joyner Morning Show ("The Hardest Working Man in Radio" )

Jack the Rapper — Disc jockey, soap opera drama, NARA, Mello Yello'

Hal Jackson — Announcer

E. Rodney Jones — Announcer

Hattie McDaniel — Radio and film personality

Sly, of Sly and the Family Stone — disc jockey KSOL and KDIA

Ethel Waters —Radio, stage, screen and nightclubs

Norflee Whitit — Announcer

Georgie Woods — "The Guy with the Goods"

You might prefer to research the early radio stations listed below. What were their contributions to the development of radio? Which African-American radio personalities attracted listeners to tune in? In what way do they reflect changes in media after WWII, the role of segregation in America and the Civil Rights movement?

KDIA — Oakland, California

WDAS — Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

WERD — Atlanta, Georgia

WAAA — Winston-Salem, North Carolina

WDIA — Memphis, Tennessee

WVON — Chicago, Illinois

# Guidelines for Research and Presentation, Radio Pioneers and Legends

Individuals who saw radio's potential harnessed the airwaves and utilized the emerging technology to create broadcast radio. Individuals with personality, voice and vision became the first radio performers, announcers and disc jockeys.

*This assignment has two segments — research and presentation.*

## **Research**

1. Select an individual or radio station to research. Find out the following information:
  - The professional life of a radio pioneer or legend
  - The way(s) the individual/station contributed to radio broadcasting at the time and to future developments in radio
  - Audience response to the individual's program/station's programming
  - The time period in which the individual lived/station broadcast, highlighting events, attitudes and media technology in the U.S. at that time
2. You must use a minimum of five sources. Prepare an annotated bibliography.
3. Several of your sources should provide actualities to use in your oral presentation.

## **Presentation**

1. You will present your research in the form of a live "radio show before your studio audience." (Your class)
2. Your total presentation will be 8 to 10 minutes in length and include all areas of research (See bullets above).
3. You are to write a script, but it is not to be read to the class. You are to write for the ear and use your on-air voice in its presentation.
4. You must include at least four actualities. They should each be a minimum of 30 seconds in length. The actuality may be a portion of an archived radio show, an interview or documentary.
5. Use these actualities to illustrate different points. Actualities should total no more than three minutes of the total presentation.
6. You may re-enact portions of an original radio script.
7. A perspective on the time period – what was happening in the country or world at that time – may be presented through news, product advertisements, PSAs or any other way.

## Suggested Outline for In-class Pioneers and Legends “Live” Presentation

You have one week to select a radio pioneer, complete research, select actualities and write a script for a “before a studio audience” presentation. You have 8 to 10 minutes for the total presentation. To assist you, an outline is provided to illustrate how to meet all the required components of the presentation. Following this outline is not mandatory.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Actuality</b>
0:00-0:45	Opening teaser and/or statement	_____
0:45-1:59	Subject’s on-air character, content, action	_____
1:59-2:59	Subject’s attributes, persona, philosophy	_____
2:59-3:59	Setting/Time period/Situation in episodes; perhaps include an advertisement for products that reflect the time period	_____
3:59-4:59	Theme of shows/Mission of station	_____
4:59-5:59	The time period in which the individual lived/station broadcast, highlighting events, attitudes, and media technology in the U.S. at that time (if not included previously)	_____
5:59- 6:59	Show’s/person’s/station’s decline or continued popularity, perhaps subject’s transition into television and other media	_____
6:59-7:59	The way(s) the individual/station contributed to radio broadcasting at the time and to future developments in radio	_____
7:59-10:00	Person’s/Show’s impact on today’s media Closing, wrap-up	_____
	Last thought, punchy ending sentence Sock out/name	_____