

10 Reasons Kids Learn With Audiobooks

While many teachers have embraced audiobooks as one more way to approach learning, others are hesitant. In their zeal to ensure that all students can read fluently, some even view the audio experience as scholastic laziness. Listening to audiobooks offers a value on every level.

Audiobooks are so much a part of contemporary culture and so accessible for purchase or rental that each member of the educational community—librarians, parents, teachers and students—can easily participate.

But teachers and librarians say they need solid evidence to persuade academic holdouts, and even some parents, that audiobooks are a great addition to the school curriculum. Here's some of the best evidence.

1

Read to Me

Listening to audiobooks can substitute for the practice of oral reading in the home. The learning disabled child, for example, may very well have a parent who avoids reading aloud. In other homes, parents are simply too busy (or too exhausted) to read to their kids. In both these cases, the audio version of the parent/child reading experience supplements school reading with much-needed at-home enjoyment.

2

On the Road Again

Listening to school assignments is an excellent way to turn wasted time—such as road time—into valuable reading time. The shared experience of listening together is an excellent way to enhance parent/child relationships. Parents can also introduce kids to more sophisticated levels of literature through audio. Because children can understand books written at a higher level than they can actually read themselves, parents will often be astounded at their children's intellectual acuity and emotional insight.

3

Peers On Par

For less academically talented students, audiobooks can provide a level playing field with stronger readers. By experiencing books in an alternate form, these struggling print readers can participate equally in discussions of books they've enjoyed both in and outside the classroom. This experience can help prevent the schism that often develops between these two groups of students as they grow older.

4

Word Power

Audiobooks can help with vocabulary building. When listening to audiobooks, students encounter new words and words they know but don't use fluently. (Theoretically, this should also happen with TV, but it doesn't; commercial television uses a lexicon of about 5,000 words, the same number of words the average child knows when entering school.) When encountering words on audio, students will be assured of hearing them pronounced correctly and hearing them used in context. These lead to a more fluent understanding of words.

5

Music in the Words

Struggling readers often read from word to word. These students must work so hard to identify each word that they have difficulty carrying the meaning from one word to the next, to the end of the sentence, the paragraph, the page. The audio experience, especially when reading along with the text, can provide fluid phrasing and cadence, leading to a firmer grasp of meaning. Furthermore, special forms of literature that contain dialect or lots of dialogue are often made more meaningful to students through audio. Older students approaching early forms of literature, such as Shakespeare's works and others using poetic, more formal language, often find themselves lost in language they can't make sense of. For these students the audio experience can help them appreciate the drama in plays and the music in poetry.

6

See It and Hear It

Children who are having difficulty learning to read and students who are learning English as their second language (ESL students) benefit from the ability to "see it and hear it" at the same time. The simultaneous auditory and visual stimulation strengthens the messages to the brain. The narrator of an audio recording speaks in meaningful phrases with dramatic pauses and emphases, helping the young learner who follows the written story to organize the printed text. Further, the melody of the voice, along with vocal expressions, increases retention.

7

Contemporary Learning Styles

Many teachers observe that today's child is bright and intuitive, but—due to the multimedia provided by our culture—far less attuned to language than in years past. Using audiobooks in the classroom can help teachers meet the needs of today's students and their contemporary learning styles. Audiobooks can motivate students' interest in the school curriculum.

8

Social Needs

Middle-school students often become more focused on relationships than academics. When these students listen to audiobooks together in the classroom, or when they share audiobooks borrowed from the school library, they can meet their social needs without letting academics take a backseat.

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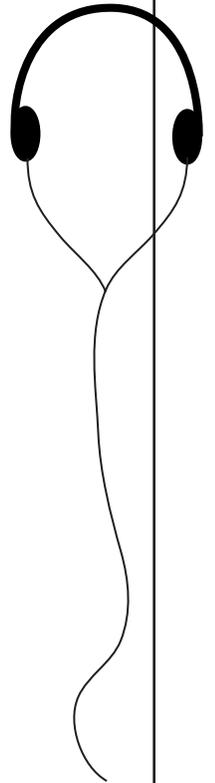
Author + Listener + Story

The audiobook experience stimulates an intimate relationship among the author, the listener and the story. This relationship resembles the sense of community established between the ancient storyteller and the audience. In a frenetic, mobile society, this sense of community is often lacking in the everyday life of today's child. By creating the community of story, audiobooks can help fill that void.

10

More Pleasure, More Possibilities

High school students may also devalue plain old reading. These same teenagers often find listening to books easier than reading a text, and, therefore, experience listening as more pleasurable, more possible, and ultimately more worthwhile than traditional reading. Satisfaction with the audio version of a book often leads students back to the printed version or to other works by the same author.



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