

## Research & Articles on the Benefits of Audiobooks for Young People

There is significant research available on the benefits of audiobooks for young people. Below is a lengthy annotated bibliography of articles and other resources lauding the effects of audiobooks on children.

Note: A big “Thank You” goes to Liz Noland for her months of work compiling the below list.

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**Anderson, Richard C., et al. *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Center for the Study of Reading, National Academy of Education, and National Institute of Education. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1985. ERIC. Web.**

- Available online through ERIC: <http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED253865>

This seminal report presents leading experts' interpretations of knowledge on reading and teaching reading at the time. The report's discussions of the importance of reading aloud to children (p. 23) and listening comprehension (p. 30) in the chapter “Emerging Literacy” (among others) are frequently cited in other articles about audiobooks and children's literacy.

**Baskin, Barbara H., and Karen Harris. “Heard any good books lately? The case for audiobooks in the secondary classroom.” *Journal of Reading* 38.5 (1995): 372-76. Print.**

- Available in PDF format through the APA: [http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Baskin\\_JOR1995.pdf](http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Baskin_JOR1995.pdf)

After a brief overview of the rise of audiobooks, the authors discuss the advantages and values that audiobooks can add in secondary classrooms. Some examples given are books that take place in unusual locales or have characters with unfamiliar accents or dialects; books that can be enhanced for unwilling readers through dramatic readings; poetry; humor; and authors with especially complex sentence constructions. The article also discusses production choices—narrator, abridgement—that should be considered when choosing an audiobook for classroom use. Finally, the authors discuss a wide range of special learners who can benefit from audiobook listening, including students with learning disabilities, ESL students, and physically impaired students; they also mention that audiobooks could be especially enjoyed by avid but busy teen readers who have other demands on their time and wish to continue their “literary encounters” at times when they can't be holding a book.

“Heard any good books lately?” by Barbara H. Baskin and Karen Harris was originally published in the *Journal of Reading* (vol. 38, no. 5, Feb. 1995). Copyright © 1995 by the International Reading Association.

**Beers, Kylene. “Listen While You Read: Struggling Readers and Audiobooks.” *School Library Journal* 44.4 (1998): 30-35. Web.**

- Available online through Audio Bookshelf: <http://www.audiobookshelf.com/listen.html>

This article describes results that Beers observed firsthand or heard about directly from teachers, students, and librarians, from encouraging young readers to listen to audiobooks. She describes classrooms that successfully use listening centers, quotes students articulating how audiobooks changed their attitudes toward reading for the better, and shows how using audiobooks contributed to student success in specific instances.

**Bomar, Linda. "iPods as Reading Tools." *Principal* 85.5 (2006): 52-53. Web.**

- Available online through NAESP: [www.naesp.org/resources/2/Principal/2006/M-Jp52.pdf](http://www.naesp.org/resources/2/Principal/2006/M-Jp52.pdf)

The author, a Resource Specialist teacher in a middle school, discusses how her use of audiobooks grew from traditional listening centers, to encouraging her struggling readers to check out iPods from the library for independent reading time, to using an entire classroom set of iPods to introduce new literature in her classes. She also discusses some of the technological practicalities of using digital audiobooks in a school (classroom and library) setting.

**Burkey, Mary. "Long-Form Listening." *Book Links* 18.6 (2009): 26-27. Print.**

- Available in PDF format through the APA:  
[http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Burkey\\_BookLinks2009.pdf](http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Burkey_BookLinks2009.pdf)

The author argues for the advantage of audiobooks in "long-form" listening, as opposed to the short-form texts favored in many classrooms today, because reading and listening for long periods of time is a valuable skill in today's fast-paced world. To encourage this, the author shares her strategies for teaching listening skills and giving students a variety of listening options (on the computer, on a CD player, in one of the library's chairs, etc.), to help them learn ways to development their own listening skills for the future.

Permission to reprint "Long-Form Listening" by Mary Burkey (vol. 18, no. 6, July 2009) granted by *Book Links*, published by the American Library Association. For more information, visit [www.booklistonline.com](http://www.booklistonline.com).

**Cardillo, Arnie, et al. "Tuning in to Audiobooks: Why Should Kids Listen?" *Children and Libraries* 5.3 (2007): 42-46. Print.**

- Available in PDF format through the APA:  
[http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Cardillo\\_CAL2007.pdf](http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Cardillo_CAL2007.pdf)

This article is a summary of a panel presentation given at the 2006 ALA Annual Conference by Tim Ditlow, Arnie Cardillo, Bruce Coville, Ellen Myrick, and Teri Lesesne. It discusses different narration choices, including readalong, single voice, and full cast, and in the section on readalong audiobooks, Cardillo talks about how picture book readalongs can help with reading development and what factors must be taken into account so that these audiobooks are effective in helping young children learn to read. After the examination of types of narration, the article discusses how audiobooks can assist educators: offering more time for busy children to read, serving as models of verbal fluency, and motivating/providing assistance for reluctant/struggling readers.

Originally published in *Children and Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*, Vol. 5, no. 3, Winter 2007. Used by permission of the American Library Association.

**Casbergue, Renee Michelet, and Karen H. Harris. "Listening and literacy: audiobooks in the reading program." *Reading Horizons* 37 (1996): 48-59. Print.**

- Available in PDF format through the APA:  
[http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Casbergue\\_ReadingHorizons1996.pdf](http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Casbergue_ReadingHorizons1996.pdf)

This article, written when publication of audiobooks for young readers was first on the rise, discusses questions related to audiobooks and literacy, and in the course of this the authors do a nice literature review of research up to this date related to listening and literacy. They discuss the benefits of listening to literature at a young age, including understanding narrative structures, increasing vocabularies, and expanding cultural knowledge; they also discuss how audiobooks can benefit older children, by allowing them to listen to and consider books that might be too complex for them to decode and comprehend in the written form alone. The authors list potential audiences for audiobooks for young readers, and also selection considerations when choosing audiobooks.

Permission to reprint "Listening and literacy" by Renee Michelet Casbergue and Karen H. Harris (vol. 37, 1996) granted by *Reading Horizons*.

**Chen, Shu-Hsien L. "Improving Reading Skills through Audiobooks." *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 21.1 (2004): 22-25. Print.**

- Available in PDF format through the APA:  
[http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Chen\\_SLMAM2004.pdf](http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Chen_SLMAM2004.pdf)

Begins with a brief overview of the history of audiobooks and audiobook publishing for children, and then discusses some of the ways in which children have reading difficulties: insufficient reading strategies; text complexity; and lack of personal interest, prior knowledge, or background information. The article then discusses the benefits of audiobooks for young readers, including motivation, increased access to repetition, and active listening, among others. It also includes strategies for audiobook use generally, such as listening with accompanying text and by providing directing questions before and after listening to encourage critical thinking, and more specifically in school settings. Finally, the article discusses narration considerations and gives suggestions of how to find good audiobook recordings.

"Improving Reading Skills through Audiobooks," Shu-Hsien L. Chen. Copyright © 2004 by *School Library Media Activities Monthly*. Reproduced with permission of ABC-CLIO, LLC.

**Clark, Ruth Cox. "Audiobooks for Children: Is This Really Reading?" *Children and Libraries* 5.1 (2007): 49-50. Web.**

- Available online through PBworks:  
<http://interactivereadalouds.pbworks.com/f/Audiobooks+for+Children+-+Is+this+Really+Reading.pdf>

Prepared by the ALSC Research and Development Committee, this article discusses the value of audiobooks, including how listening helps many children achieve what really matters in reading—engaging critically and intellectually with the content of the book—and can also add to young readers' enjoyment of books. It offers suggestions for listening as a family, and practical advice on introducing audiobooks to new listeners or reluctant readers.

**Goldsmith, Francisca. "Earphone English." *School Library Journal* 48.5 (2002): 50-53. Web.**

- Available online through SLJ: <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA213882.html>

The author, the teen services coordinator at the Berkeley Public Library in California, discusses a very successful book club program she started in conjunction with the local high school for ESL students, sparked when she launched her library's teen audiobook collection and noticed that teen English language learners in the community were listening to books above the vocabulary and syntax levels they were comfortable reading in print books. The article has excellent insights into how audiobooks can benefit ESL readers, but it also includes great ideas for involving audiobooks in book clubs and other fun reading programs outside the classroom for young readers.

**Grover, Sharon, and Lizette Hannegan. "Hear and Now: Connecting Outstanding Audiobooks to Library and Classroom Instruction." *Teacher Librarian* 35.3 (2008): 17-21. Print.**

- Available in PDF format through the APA:  
[http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Grover\\_TeacherLibrarian2008.pdf](http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Grover_TeacherLibrarian2008.pdf)

The authors give an overview of some of the ways that audiobooks aid literacy, and then discuss in more detail how audiobooks can be integrated into classrooms and school libraries, and the best ways to build an audiobook collection and introduce audiobooks to students. The article also includes a list of some of the authors' favorite audiobooks for different grades.

Permission to reprint "Hear and Now: Connecting Outstanding Audiobooks to Library and Classroom Instruction" by Sharon Grover and Lizette Hannegan (vol. 35, issue 3, Feb. 2008, p17-21) granted by *Teacher Librarian* and E.L. Kurdyla Publishing LLC.

**Hipple, Ted. "Horizons: Audiobooks in the Classroom." *AudioFile* June (1996): n. pag. Web.**

- Available online through *AudioFile*: [http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article\\_archive/horizon.pdf](http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article_archive/horizon.pdf)

This article begins with several examples of teachers using audiobooks to enhance learning, and then goes on to discuss how and why audiobooks can work in the classroom, including simple listening-and-discussion, as motivators for starting an intimidating book, and to enhance the drama of stories or historical and scientific facts. The author advocates for widespread use of audiobooks across the school curriculum.

**Johnson, Denise. "Web watch -- Audiobooks: Ear-resistible!" *Reading Online* 6.8 (2003): n. pag. Web.**

- Available online through the IRA: [http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/elect\\_index.asp?HREF=webwatch/audiobooks/index.html](http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/elect_index.asp?HREF=webwatch/audiobooks/index.html)

The author discusses her love of audiobooks and lists the benefits of listening for all students (not just struggling, impaired, or ESL readers). She also examines some of the issues specific to students and individual audiobook productions when deciding what audiobooks to recommend or purchase.

**Locke, Deborah. "Heard Any Good Books Lately?" *Book Links* 11.2 (2001): 26-28. Web.**

- Available online through Audio Bookshelf: <http://www.audiobookshelf.com/heardany.html>

The author, a school librarian, discusses techniques she used to introduce students and teachers to audiobooks when they launched an audiobook collection at her school. She lists and describes some of the assignments that one teacher used in a unit where she immersed the students in audiobooks (which the teacher said was one of her most successful units ever), and then how other teachers began experimenting with integrating audiobooks after that teacher's success.

**Marchionda, Denise. "A Bridge to Literacy: Creating Lifelong Readers through Audiobooks." *AudioFile* 10.2 (2001): 19-21. Web.**

- Available online through AudioFile: [http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article\\_archive/BridgetoLiteracy\\_Optimized.pdf](http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article_archive/BridgetoLiteracy_Optimized.pdf)

This article discusses how audiobooks can be used to improve literacy from a very young age, beginning at the same time that parents read aloud to their child (but not supplanting that experience). As children become older, the author says that audiobooks can be used to model good reading out loud, helping them see how punctuation, enunciation, and emphasis can be used to improve a narrative experience. She also discusses how audiobooks can improve vocabulary, encourage active listening and critical thinking, aid in comprehension of stories set in unusual locations or including humorous writing, and generate excitement for reluctant readers. Throughout the article, the author includes quotes and anecdotes from teachers, authors, and students.

**Milani, Anna, Maria Luisa Lorusso, and Massimo Molteni. "The Effects of Audiobooks on the Psychosocial Adjustment of Pre-Adolescents and Adolescents with Dyslexia." *Dyslexia* 16.1 (2010): 87-97. Web.**

- Available online through Wiley: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/dys.397/abstract>

The objective of this research study was to understand what benefits the use of audiobooks could bring to teenagers with dyslexia. After 5 months of training, the experimental group (which used audiobooks) showed a significant improvement in reading accuracy, with reduced unease and emotional-behavioral disorders, as well as an improvement in school performance and a greater motivation and involvement in school activities. It is worth noting that most of the audiobooks used in this study were hand-recorded versions of students' textbooks.

**Moody, Kate. "Audio Tapes and Books: Perfect Partners." *School Library Journal* 35.6 (1989): 27-29. Print.**

- Available in PDF format through the APA: [http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Moody\\_SLJ1989.pdf](http://www.audiopub.org/resources/Moody_SLJ1989.pdf)

The author discusses a rise in reports that children are not listening as well as they used to, and says that audiobooks are one way to encourage growth in listening skills. She discusses the connection between

listening skills and academic success, and how readalong audiobooks used in conjunction with text are great partners for developing both listening and reading skills.

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**Simkins, John James. *Study in the use of audiobooks for reading in gifted students*. M.Ed. thesis. Wichita State U, 2009. SOAR. Web.**

- Available online through Wichita State University: <http://hdl.handle.net/10057/2435>

This master's thesis explores the question of whether using recorded texts in conjunction with written texts might improve gifted students' reading comprehension; however, the study was only able to show mixed benefits of audiobooks towards reading comprehension. In addition to presenting the results for the author's study, the thesis includes a literature review of studies and articles related to using audiobooks in education for a variety of reasons, including connections drawn to articles not specifically about audiobooks but discussing listening comprehension and reading.

**"10 Reasons Kids Learn With Audiobooks." *AudioFile* May (1998): n. pag. Web.**

- Available through *AudioFile*: [http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article\\_archive/10.Reasons.pdf](http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article_archive/10.Reasons.pdf)

Presents a quick and easy list of reasons why audiobooks can benefit children, including assisting with reading aloud at home, making good use of time in the car, leveling the playing field in school, vocabulary building, and more.

**Varley, Pamela. "As good as reading? Kids and the audiobook revolution." *Horn Book Magazine* 78.3 (2002): 251-262. Web.**

- Available online through the *Horn Book*:  
[http://www.hbook.com/magazine/articles/2002/may02\\_varley.asp](http://www.hbook.com/magazine/articles/2002/may02_varley.asp)

The author discusses the growth in children's audiobook publishing, and the increasing number of librarians and educators who are "speaking up to say that audiobooks are a misunderstood, underused, and under-valued resource." She discusses the role audiobooks could play in the lives of today's busy kids, and also the idea put forth by some audiobook supporters that listening is simply an alternative route to the main event of reading, which is not the mechanical act of reading words on a page, but rather the intellectual act of engaging with the content. Research into how the cognitive activities of reading and listening are different is explored. The author also considers the issues of control—over the physical reading process, and the reader's/listener's interpretation of the book—and then returns to discuss how all these issues might play into how we introduce reading and listening to children going forward.

**Vardell, Sylvia, et al. "Using Audiobooks to Build Student Success." AASL Biannual Conference, Pittsburgh. October 2005. Panel presentation.**

- Available online through ALA:  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/conferencesandevents/confarchive/pittsburgh/UsingAudiobooks.pdf>

This Association of American School Libraries conference presentation by Sylvia M. Vardell, Cheryl Herman, Rose Brock, and Esme Raji Codell, discusses the characteristics of listening, the connection between listening and reading, and how audiobooks can help with developing important reading skills. It provides quotes from numerous other articles, and also relates audiobooks to information literacy standards for instruction in school libraries.

**Wellner, Molly. "How an audiobook library program influences book interactions of three ESL kindergarteners." MA capstone. Hamline U, 2010. Web.**

- Available online through Hamline University:  
<http://www.hamline.edu/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147491053>

This capstone study by a student getting her MA in ESL at Hamline's School of Education examines the influence a home/school audiobook program had on the home reading experiences and retell abilities of

three ESL kindergarteners. In addition to the observations and data collected by the author in her own study regarding the use of audiobooks by ESL kindergarten students, the capstone paper includes a useful literature review of several previous studies regarding use of audiobooks to support reading for English language learners (p. 22-24).

**Wilde, Susie, with Jeanette Larson. "Listen! It's Good for Kids." *AudioFile* April/May (2007): 23-25. Web.**

- Available online through AudioFile:  
[http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article\\_archive/ListengoodforkidsAM07.pdf](http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/article_archive/ListengoodforkidsAM07.pdf)

This article explains how listening to audiobooks can be beneficial for beginning and early readers, as well as older children and struggling readers. It includes a helpful chart with four categories of readers (Beginning, Independent, Young Adult, and Challenged), outlining specific benefits of listening and suggested audiobook titles for each group.

**Wolfson, Gene. "Using Audiobooks to Meet the Needs of Adolescent Readers." *American Secondary Education* 36.2 (2008): 105-14. Print.**

- Available online through LM\_NET: <http://lmnet.wikispaces.com/file/view/EJ809473.pdf>

This article discusses how audiobooks can be used to "level the playing field" for middle and high school students who are limited in their ability to participate in classroom activities and work because of their literacy needs. The author goes over some of the reasons for using audiobooks, such as to improve fluency, expand vocabulary, activate prior knowledge, develop comprehension, and increase motivation to interact with books. He summarizes several examples of audiobooks being successfully incorporated into middle and high school curriculums and programs. Finally, the article includes some guidelines for using audiobooks and practical implications for incorporating them into a school/classroom setting.

**Wysocki, Barbara. "Louder, Please: For Some Kids, the Best Way to Read Is to Turn up the Volume." *Curriculum Connections* 51.4 (2005): 10-14. Print.**

- Available online through Scholastic Red:  
[http://www.scholasticred.com/dodea/pdfs/SPED\\_PA\\_Audiobooks.pdf](http://www.scholasticred.com/dodea/pdfs/SPED_PA_Audiobooks.pdf)

This article includes helpful strategies for incorporating audiobooks at different ages, outlining the reasons and benefits for the activities for each age group: Preschool & Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6, Grades 7-8, and Grades 9-12. The author includes recommended audiobook titles for each age group as well.

**Yokota, Junko, and Miriam Martinez. "Authentic Listening Experiences." *Book Links* 13.3 (2004): 30. Web.**

- Available through ALA:  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/publishing/booklinks/resources/authenticlistening.cfm>

Describes how audiobook productions of multicultural books can assist with scaffolding to make comprehension attainable for the student, especially with a good narrator. Also suggests that teachers could use these audiobooks in the classroom if they are reading books that they aren't comfortable reading aloud because the language or rhythm of the text is unfamiliar to them.