

SERIAL

"NEXT WEEK ON SERIAL"
THE PODCASTER AS PERSPECTIVE SHAPER

Presented by Jenny Mirauda
ETAWA State Conference 2017

Workshop Notes:

Teaching Serial

Suggested Lesson Schedule

Please keep in mind that this is not strictly a teaching and learning programme. It simply outlines a suggested timeframe for covering the episodes and the types of activities you could consider. This unit of work was originally assessed through the production of a panel discussion. Two weeks were set aside for their preparation and delivery.

Episodes to cover:

1. Episode One-several lessons
2. Episode Two-Two lessons (The episode is only 37 minutes long, so it could be completed in one lesson with homework)
3. Episode Five- One Lesson (first 28 minutes of the episode only)
4. Episode Six-Longly episode, you may need two lessons (at this point you can stop if you need to)
5. Episode Eight-extension activity if students are interested and you have time

	Lesson	Activities
Week 1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction to text structure and language features (up to individual teachers) ▪ Benefits of podcasts: class discussion ▪ Brief overview of the history of podcasting: teacher instruction ▪ Links to the syllabus: teacher instruction ▪ Students complete the episode one vocabulary prep (complete in class if time, otherwise given as homework prior to listening to episode one)
	2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serial introduction activity: "Exploring Serial: Is Reliability Important?" (worksheet included) ▪ Listen to episode one and complete "Episode One: The Alibi" (worksheet included) ▪ Allow time for class discussion and creation of a Socratic "crime map"
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examining the selection of detail by looking at Asia's letters ▪ Students to complete "Episode One: Examining the Evidence-Asia's Letters" ▪ Spend time examining the <i>Serial</i> website (<i>Serial</i> as a hybrid/digital text)
Week 2/3	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listen to episode two and complete comprehension activity: "Episode Two: The Breakup-Exploring Perspective" (worksheet included)
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Class survey: students complete the "Shady Scale" activity to evaluate the presentation of Adnan's behaviour
	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listen to the first 28 minutes of episode five only ▪ Students to complete mapping activity with cell tower records (map and tower records available from the <i>Serial</i> website)
	8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listen to episode 6 ▪ Students to complete comprehension activities with class discussion
	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If you want to, listen to episode eight (this is optional) ▪ Students to complete discussion and comprehension activities
Week 3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some work on panel discussions (amount of time up to teachers)
Week 4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivery of panel discussions

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Exploring Serial: Is Reliability Important?

"For the last year, I've spent every working day trying to figure out where a high school kid was for an hour after school one day in 1999 - or if you want to get technical about it - and apparently I do, where a high school kid was for twenty-one minutes after school one day in 1999." (Sarah Koenig's introduction to the podcast)

Serial follows the unusual case of Adnan Syed, who was just a high school student when he was charged with the murder of his ex-girlfriend, Hae-Min Lee. His case hung delicately on his inability to explain twenty-one minutes of a day in his life six weeks prior to his arrest. How difficult would it be for you to accurately account for a random block of time in your life?

Give a detailed account of our lesson on Wednesday 23rd of March (just one week ago).

- Who was absent that day?
- Did anyone leave the room at any point?
- What clothes were you/your teacher wearing?
- What work did you complete during the lesson?

Now, do the same thing for the first two hours after school on Wednesday 24th of February (six weeks ago).

- Can you account for your time after school that day?
- Do any significant events stand out in your mind?

Group Discussion (Getting Your Story Straight)

1. Form a group with students in the class who have been at the same event as you in the past six months (a school event may be a good starting point). Decide on the event, but do not discuss it at all.
2. Sit separately from each other, and write down any details you remember (e.g. Who was there, what everyone was wearing, what time people left, who you spoke to).
3. Next, compare notes with your group. Are your recollections of the event similar? Are there any clear differences in your recollections?

Sarah Koenig begins Serial by conducting this experiment. What do you think she is trying to prove? What effect does this have on the listener?

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Episode One: The Alibi

Understanding Connotation: The Power of Language

Connotation: A suggested or implied emotion, idea or meaning that is conveyed through the careful selection of a word or phrase.

Denotation: The literal or primary meaning of a word or phrase.

1. What does it mean when someone is “loosey-gosey” with the details? (8:09)
Is this different to lying?
2. How is a “teeny weeny bag of marijuana” different to a “small amount of drugs”?
3. Explain what the narrator implies when she says: Adnan and his friends were “healthy American teenagers who were going to do what teenagers do.”
What effect does this have on the issues being presented to the listener?
4. The state portrays Adnan as “duplicitous” (deceitful, not telling the truth). Saad (Adnan’s friend) sees it differently. He says, “we all grew up with dual personalities” and this comes with being “a normal kid with immigrant parents.” What is the difference between the two statements?
5. The narrator notes that Adnan was asleep in his bed when he was arrested. Why does this matter to the “story” being told? What could be lost if this point was not made?
6. The narrator says that Adnan has “big brown eyes, like a dairy cow.” What suggestion does she make by using this simile?
7. Reflect on the language choices made by Koenig in the first twenty minutes of the episode. Can you detect a sense of bias? What attitude would she like the audience to adopt?

Jay vs. Adnan: Where’s the Truth?

Listen to Jay and Adnan tell their version of events. Answer the questions below in dot-points to compare their stories. (*Hint: you may need to write these notes in your workbook*)

Jay: 12:00-19:00

Adnan: 20:00-28:00

1. Summarise Jay’s version of events.
2. What does Jay avoid saying? What remains unclear?

3. At any point, do you suspect Jay is lying? What gives you that impression?
4. Summarise Adnan’s version of events.
5. What seems unusual or unclear in Adnan’s version? What give you this impression?

Purpose and point of view:

For each “character”, explain their point of view about the situation and what they hope to accomplish (their purpose). An example has been provided for you.

Character	Point of view/Purpose
Rabia	<p><i>Point of view:</i> That Adnan is innocent and was wrongfully imprisoned due to the actions of a “shady” lawyer who was not following the correct procedures.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To prove that Adnan did not receive a fair trial and that there is significant evidence to prove reasonable doubt.</p>
Jay	<p><i>Point of view:</i></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p>
Adnan	<p><i>Point of view:</i></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p>
Sarah (the narrator)	<p><i>Point of view:</i></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p>
Asia	<p><i>(Carefully consider Asia’s point of view and purpose:16-year-old Asia may have a different purpose to 31-year-old Asia).</i></p> <p><i>Point of view:</i></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p>

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Episode Two: The Break-up

Exploring Perspective

High school is a complex muddle of break-ups and make-ups: relationships are concentrated, emotional and open to public opinion. Adnan and Hae's relationship is no exception. In today's lesson, you are encouraged to critically analyse their relationship based on the evidence presented to you through the perspectives of other people in their lives at the time.

In this episode, Sarah sets out to answer two critical questions:

- What was Adnan and Hae's relationship and break-up really like?
- Was he so hurt he decided to kill her?

1. As you are listening, take detailed dot-point notes about the differing perspectives offered. An example has been provided for you.

Person	Perspective <i>(Hint: a position from which things may be viewed or considered. A perspective is more than an opinion; it is a viewpoint formed by one or more contexts)</i>	Evidence from the episode that supports their perspective on Hae and Adnan's relationship
The State (Prosecutors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two experienced state prosecutors who believe they have enough evidence to prove Adnan is guilty of murder. ▪ It is unlikely they would bring a case to trial if they were not firmly certain of the strength of their case. ▪ They allege that Adnan has a clear motive for the murder as he was shamed and emasculated by his break-up with Hae. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prosecutor Kevin Urick told the jury in his opening statement, "He became enraged. He felt betrayed that his honor had been besmirched, and he became very angry, and he set out to kill Hae Min Lee." Or this is from closing, "It was humiliating, what she did to him. Make no mistake about it, ladies and gentlemen. This was not a crime about love, this was a crime about pride." ▪ Prosecutor Casey Murphy: "He saw the pain in his mother's face because she knew they were together. And he saw himself, in the end, standing there with nothing to show for it but a guilty conscience and a pack of lies in which he cloaked himself."
Hae (through her diary)		
Aisha		
Adnan		

Jay		
Shanin (Adnan's mother)		

- Near the end of the episode, Sarah brings up a new issue: Did Adnan try to get into Hae's car after school? In dot-points, summarise the differing opinions each person offers.

Jay	
Adnan	
Krista	<i>Krista remembers Adnan asking Hae for a lift. She initially said yes, but changed her mind at approximately 2:20pm. This is the last time Krista saw Hae.</i>
Becky	
Officer Adcock	

- Based on the information presented in this episode, what conclusions have you reached? Do you think Adnan asked for a ride home? Do you think this is important?
- Read two extracts from the episode included below. Identify the language features Koenig employed. Has her opinion on Adnan changed since the first episode? How is the listener positioned to respond?

Extract One

At this point, I'm going to say flat out that I don't buy the motive for this murder, at least not how the State explained it. I just don't see it. Not one person says he was acting strangely after they broke up. He and Hae, again by all accounts were still friends. He was interested in other girls. He was working at his job. He was headed to college. About two weeks after his arrest, he gets an orientation packet from the University of Maryland. I don't think he was some empty shell of a kid who betrayed his family and his religion and was now left with nothing and conjured up a murderous rage for a girl that broke his heart. I simply don't buy it. And the reason I don't buy it is because no one who knew him, then or now, says that's how it was. I want to be clear, though, that that doesn't mean he

didn't do it. It just means that so far, I think the State's story about why he killed her doesn't hold up.

Extract Two

So, he reverses himself. Why would he do that? Why would he tell the first cop he's expecting a ride and then once it's clear Hae is missing change his story? Maybe the girls are thinking of a different day. Or maybe Adnan misspoke when he talked to that first cop. Or maybe he did ask Hae for a ride at some point that day, but he's forgotten. Or maybe he's lying. I'm not a detective but I consider this a red flag. What I don't know is this a teeny tiny red flag like he just got confused and so what? Or is this like a great big flapping in the breeze red flag? Like maybe he's hiding something.