

"NEXT WEEK ON SERIAL"
THE PODCASTER AS PERSPECTIVE SHAPER

SERIAL

PRESENTED BY
JENNY MIRAUDO

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Episode One: in this half of the session, participants will:

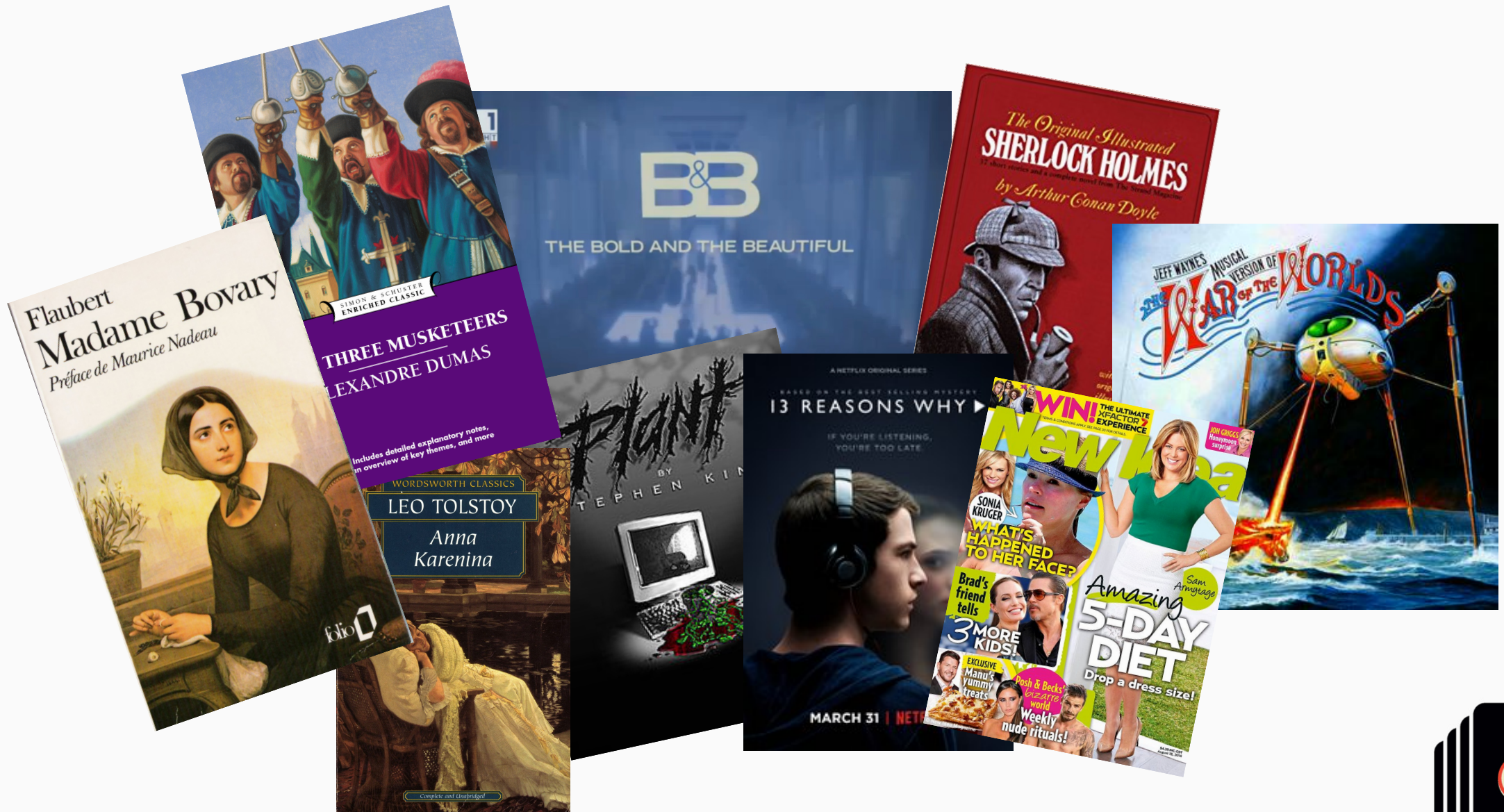
- Develop a historical overview of serialised narratives;
- Reflect on the ubiquitous nature of seriality in modern texts and the re-emergence of the "Old Time Radio" model; and
- Consider serialised narratives as a highly controlled, suspenseful and tense form of storytelling.

Episode Two: in this half of the session, participants will:

- Identify the unique text structure and organisation of serialised narratives;
- Consider the importance of a "tactical narrator" and the use of persuasive authorial voice; and
- Explore the development of engaging teaching and learning resources using serialised narratives (linking closely to the ATAR English syllabus).

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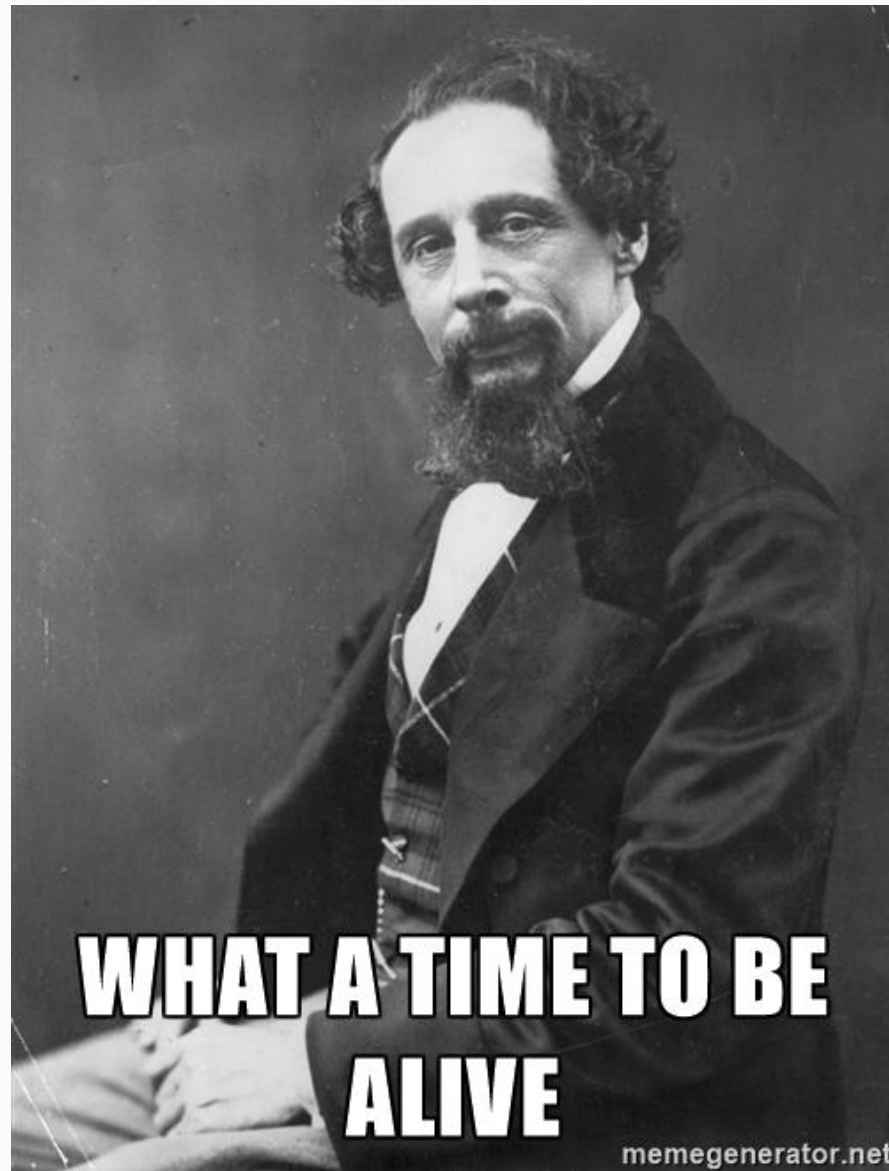


A BRIEF HISTORY OF SERIALITY

- Emerged in England during the Victorian Era, but was widespread across Europe (e.g. the feuilleton in France).
- Publishing was expensive, with “first editions” only purchasable by the wealthy elite. Large mechanised publishing was still unthought of, making book ownership a luxury.
- Authors found success in publishing in newspapers (or inserts) and could consequently reach a wide audience. Serialised narratives drove a change in the way literature was consumed.
- Narratives were now available to readers of all abilities. The texts were intentionally short, which meant they could be read aloud.
- Authors could experiment with sequencing and structure, exploring ways to build suspense and tension.
- Authors could also afford to be prolific, with magazines and papers scrambling for new content. The constant unresolved plots and tension stoked a fervor for fiction.

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A CONDENSED HISTORY



19th Century



20th Century

SERIAL

21st Century

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BUILDING SUSPENSE: SERIALISED NARRATIVES

In 2015, *Serial* was both an unexpected and unprecedented success, reaching impressive download records per week. But the question we must ask ourselves is *how* has this revitalised method of storytelling captivated its audience? Tune in to episode two to find out!

This is awesome. No spoilers! RT
[@charlieherman](#): More from the cereal [#serial](#)
listening party. [@WNYC](#)



party
ie's Cereal tone
; it, btw [#VSCC](#)



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SERIAL AS AN INTERPRETIVE TEXT

The ATAR English Syllabus defines interpretive texts as: *Texts whose primary purpose is to explain and interpret personalities, events, ideas, representations or concepts. They include autobiography, biography, media feature articles, documentary film and other non-fiction texts.*

The close analysis of *Serial* as an example of an interpretive text requires consideration of the way the text is structured and the language features used to engage and position the audience:

- A tactical or strategic narrator who takes the audience on a journey
- The use of first person narration, authorial intrusion and persuasive authorial voice
- Use of rhetorical questions to establish intrigue and suspense
- The reversal of fact, logic or opinion ("breadcrumbs")
- Cliffhanger episode endings
- Several minor cliffhangers or misleads within one episode
- Selection and arrangement of detail
- Vivid descriptions through the use of descriptive and imaginative language
- Witness testimony, recount & expert opinion, presented to the audience in a timely manner
- Attention to aesthetic in the use of music, sound effects, volume and speaking manner

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CONNECTIONS TO THE ATAR ENGLISH SYLLABUS

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Through responding to and creating texts, students <u>consider how language, structure and conventions</u> operate in a variety of imaginative, interpretive and persuasive texts.▪ Students develop an understanding of <u>stylistic features and apply skills of analysis and creativity.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students analyse the <u>representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts</u> to consider how texts represent the world and human experience.▪ <u>Analysis of how language and structural choices shape perspectives</u> in and for a range of contexts is central to this unit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students <u>recognise and analyse the conventions of genre</u> in texts and consider how those conventions may assist interpretation.▪ Students compare and <u>evaluate the effect of different media, forms and modes on the structure of texts and how audiences respond to them.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students <u>examine different interpretations and perspectives</u> to develop further their knowledge and <u>analysis of purpose and style.</u>▪ Through close study of texts, students <u>explore relationships between content and structure, voice and perspectives and the text and context.</u>



SERIAL: A WINNING FORMULA

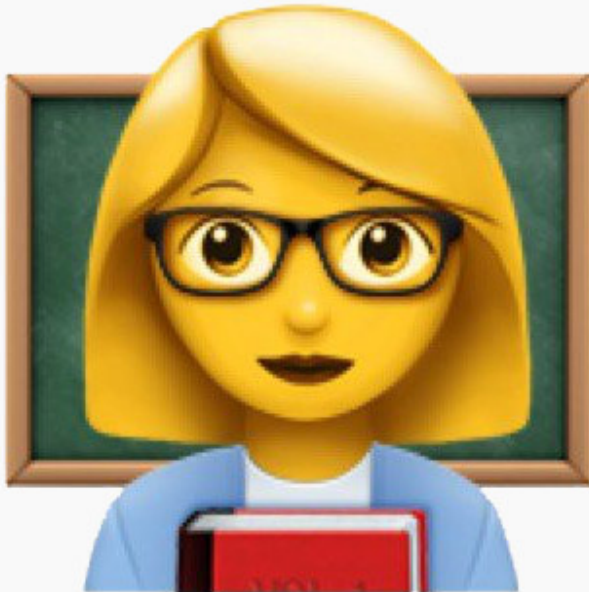
*seriality + high production values + star casting + passion + fiction/reality =
success?*

"I'm Not a Real Detective, I Only Play One on Radio": Serial as the Future of Audio Drama,
Leslie Grace McMurty, 20016, The Journal of Popular Culture

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DISCUSSION POINT



Chat to the person next to you about your recollection of Friday 24th of March (six weeks ago).

- What did you do that day? Were you at school?
- What did you teach?
- What were you wearing?
- What did you do after school?
- Who did you see that day? What conversations do you remember having?



HIGH PRODUCTION VALUES



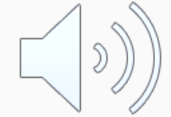
- Quirky and memorable sponsorship advertisement
- Recognisable and somewhat haunting opening theme for every episode
- Recorded diegetic sound effects (e.g. creaking doors, the sound of engines, background prison noises)
- Gloomy music (non-diegetic) at contemplative, dark or disturbing points in each episode
- Same sign off and music played at the end of every episode



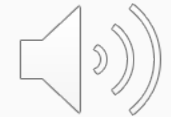
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A "NOIR DETECTIVE" AESTHETIC



- Sarah Koenig takes the audience on a journey: she has already investigated this case and developed her own conclusions, now she is leading the listener through her findings and thought processes.
- As a serialised storyteller, she has complete control over the narrative.
- Her voice is concerned, pensive and puzzled. She frequently makes a point, only to dismiss it or question its validity. Koenig clearly signposts the audience's intended reaction to the evidence she presents.
- Constant use of rhetorical questions and a pervading sense of self-awareness.
- Attention to the description of grim, unpleasant and quirky details.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Promote listening (and comprehension) as a specific skill
- May not be necessary to listen to all episodes
- Link closely to the syllabus and key concepts: interpretive texts, text structure and organisation, language features, perspective, voice, for example
- Engage students in activities: comprehension, analysis, recall of detail, “detective work”
- Promote lively class discussion and debate
- Approach *Serial* as a multimodal text (through access to the corresponding website)
- Socratic seminars: establishing a *Serial* “perp-board”
- Focus on the use of language features and techniques used to promote a perspective (heavily influenced by context) and shape audience responses
- Evaluation of evidence and questions of reliability
- Comparative analysis: ask students to compare *Serial* to other podcasts (e.g. S-Town) or texts that interrogate similar ideas (e.g. *In a Grove* by Ryunosuke Akutogawa or true-crime shows such as *The Staircase* or *Making A Murderer*)
- Class discussions about the ethics associated with interpretive texts



CONSIDERATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT DESIGN



YEAR 11 ATAR English: Unit 2 TASK 4 2016

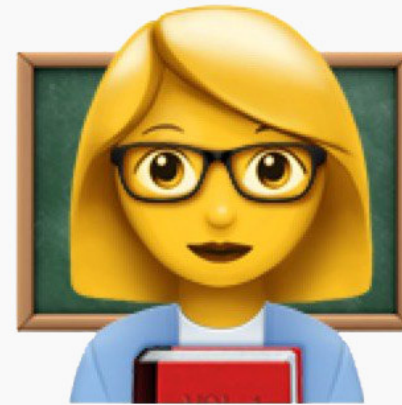
Name: _____ Teacher: _____

Due Date: _____ Parent Signature: _____

DESCRIPTION OF TASK

In groups of 3 or 4 you will prepare and present a panel discussion on a topic selected from the list below. Each group must present a different topic.

1. Closely analyse the techniques used to construct key ideas in an episode of Serial.
 2. Evaluate the effectiveness and value of podcasts using Serial as a primary example.
 3. "I'm 32 years old now, and I know that there's people out there capable of heinous acts who can keep a calm demeanour." Asia McLean (Episode One)
Discuss the relationship between fact, time and memory as explored by Serial.
 4. Explore the role of a narrator, using Serial as a primary example.
 5. "Tell the truth or someone will tell it for you." Stephanie Klein
Discuss the idea of truth as explored by Serial.
 6. Compare the construction of Jay and Adnan throughout Serial.
 7. "Make no mistake about it ladies and gentlemen. This was not a crime about love, this was a crime about Pride." Adnan's Prosecutor
Closely evaluate the strength of the case *against* Adnan.
 8. Criminal law tells us "everyone is innocent until proven guilty." Discuss how Serial positions listeners to view the relationship between innocence and guilt.
 9. Debate whether it is ethical to weave a sensational and entertaining story from a real-life tragedy.
 10. "His family didn't know that he actually drank, he smoked, he was having sex. This was proof of bad character, someone who could be a murderer." Sarah Koenig (Episode One)
Discuss how Serial presents teenage behaviour.
- All discussions must refer to Serial (either as a whole text or by referring to specific episodes).
 - Each panel discussion should last 10-12 minutes. Audio/visual aids are permissible but not essential.
 - Your preparation is part of the assessment, and a hard copy of your "script" must be submitted.
 - It is important that **each group member contributes equally to the construction and delivery** of the panel discussion.



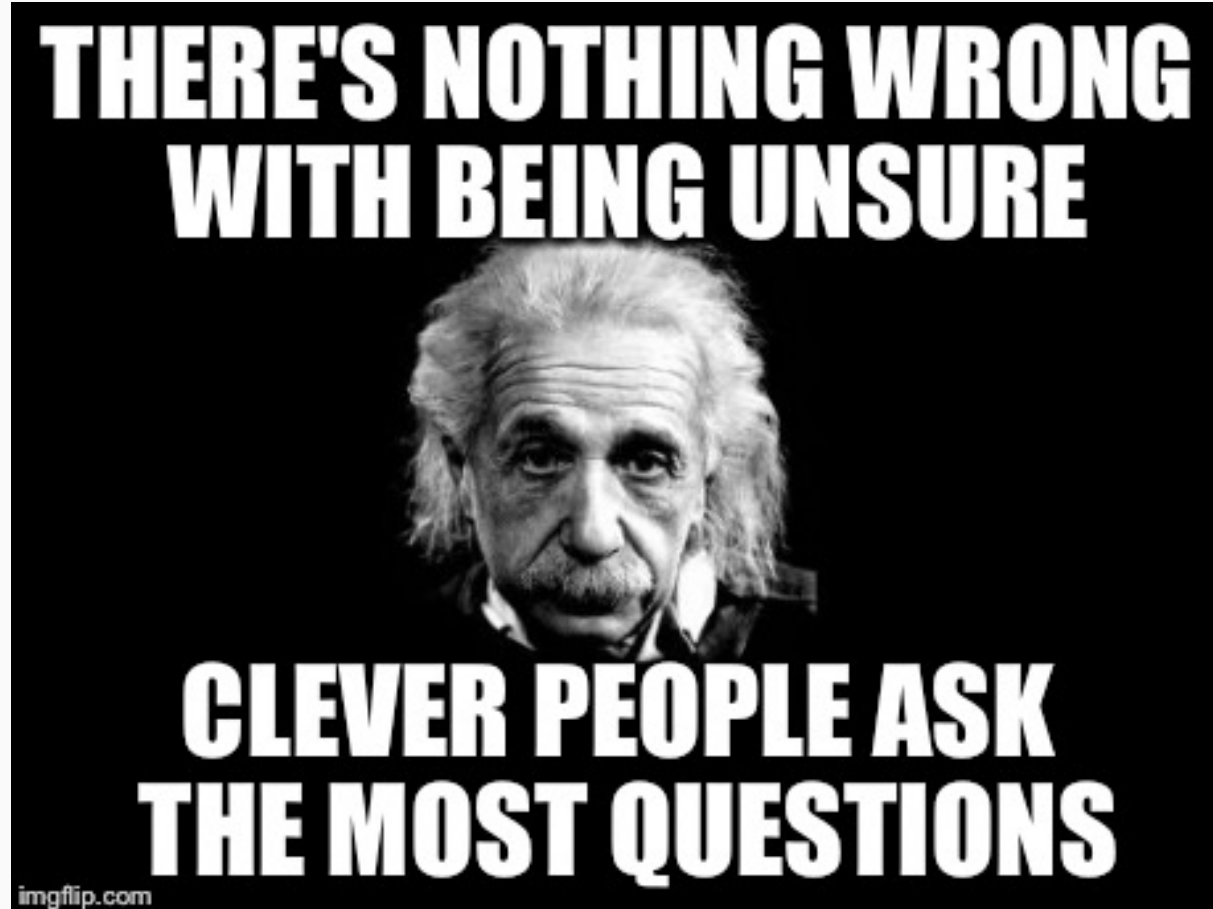
Discussion point: Take a few minutes to discuss the possibilities of teaching a text like *Serial* in your classroom.

- Can you perceive any potential obstacles to teaching this text?
- What potential **responding** assessment tasks could you create?
- What potential **creating** tasks could you create?

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ANY QUESTIONS?



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