



# **Audible for Schools**

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

# Guidance on Use of Audiobooks and Captions





At the heart of the Audible for Schools program is a belief in the potential of audiobooks and captions to improve student literacy. The possibilities fall into two broad categories.

## 1. ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH INCREASED ACCESS TO TEXTS AND ATTENTION TO DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

**Overview.** Perhaps the most basic understanding a teacher must have is who his/her students are as learners. Audible audiobooks with captions provide exciting opportunities to increase access to learning for more students.

- **Provides multiple modalities to access big ideas and concepts from text.**  
Students who previously could not participate in class discussions or thoroughly respond in writing to texts they struggled to read can now do so as audio and captions provide additional avenues to that content.
- **Creates ways to build off and connect with students' strengths and assets as learners.**  
More ways to access text means more opportunities to take an assets-based approach to engaging students in their learning.
- **Appeals to more learning styles than text alone.**  
The combination of audio with visual snippets of text puts more tools in the hands of teachers to tailor learning based on the learning styles of their students.
- **Ensures all students have access to 21st century resources.**  
Broadening access translates to flatter playing fields whether within a classroom or across unequally resourced communities.
- **Increases student efficacy and confidence.**  
All of the above contribute to increased student efficacy and confidence as learners which can lead to higher engagement and motivation.



## 2. BUILDING LITERACY SKILLS

**Overview.** As a developing technology, the research based on audiobooks and captions is still evolving. Experimenting with the ways that simultaneous audio and visualization of text may produce increased student literacy achievement are happening in classrooms and homes across the globe. The prospects are promising and the outcomes of initiatives like the Audible for School's program will help the field continue to learn. We believe the following literacy skills can be positively impacted through use of these technologies.

- **Build content knowledge.**  
Understanding content-rich texts (especially texts a student may struggle to comprehend without audio) can greatly expand a student's knowledge base thus equipping him/her with the tools to tackle complex texts independently.
- **Build vocabulary and word recognition.**  
Whether it is hearing a word in context or utilizing tools to immediately see a word's definition, audio and captions technologies are well matched to the ways in which we learn new words.
- **Improve fluency.**  
From using audio to engage with a text multiple times to hearing a book read fluently, the variety of uses of audio and/or audio with captions can positively influence the multiple variables involved in improving fluency.
- **Improve listening comprehension.**  
The combination of skills above increase the likelihood of independent listening comprehension which can lead to improved comprehension.

Uses for Audible and  
Audible Captions





The target audience for the Audible for Schools program is students 13 years of age and older in grades 8-12. The instructional uses described below are offered with that age range in mind. There are no claims to be made that what follows is an exhaustive list; rather, it is a starter list of some anticipated uses of the audiobook and voice-to-text technology available through this program. At Audible, we look forward to hearing how educators in your state, district and schools implement some of these ideas as well as ways you innovate in your local context.

## CLASSROOM USES

**OVERVIEW.** Whether in whole class or small group settings, teachers can leverage audiobook and captions technology to support their literacy learning goals for students.

- **Multiple reads of a text to improve comprehension.**

Close reading involves cycles of reading, analysis/ comprehension and re-reading of a text in order to understand an argument or flow of a plot, text structures, and vocabulary among other things.

Professionally read, fluently delivered audio can aid students in focusing only on understanding and not making sense of whether a word was correctly

pronounced or a sentence accurately read. The audio in conjunction with visual processing of the text can then assist in making meaning of key unfamiliar vocabulary and/or text structures or conventions, as examples.



## CLASSROOM USES (CONT.)

- **Build content knowledge.**

Sometimes what students need most to understand a complex text is more background knowledge on the time period, nation/region or topic of the text. Building content knowledge can be accomplished through listening to more content to build their knowledge base, as well as by filling in gaps in context that are critical to understanding by using Wikipedia. Teachers can identify appropriate texts for this purpose can implement in whole group, small group, individual, or homework settings.
- **Build vocabulary.**

In addition to the accurate pronunciation provided through the listening experience, the definition, translation, and Wikipedia functions within the Audible Captions technology provide students quick access to make meaning of unfamiliar words. Imagine an ongoing expectation where students use these features to identify new words to their personal vocabularies and share them with classmates and teachers.
- **Writing in response to text.**

Audio with captions provides greater access to content for many students and thus enables students to write about the content. Writing in response to texts deepens and sharpens students' command of a text or combination of texts.
- **Topic or thematic projects.**

The volume of titles available in the School Collection and full Audible library opens opportunities for a wide range of topic or theme-based tasks and projects where students can draw upon content from multiple texts. The texts could address the same topic or a common theme or be by the same author. The School Collection includes many authors with multiple titles, including George Orwell, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, James Baldwin, and John Steinbeck.
- **Shared reading for advisory or homeroom.**

Grounding community building groups like advisories or homerooms in discussion of a common text can be a powerful way to build community and make connections with others. Imagine even 15-minute homeroom periods that start with an engaging listen and follow with discussion of the topic.



## INDEPENDENT READING

**Overview.** More districts and schools are carving out time for students to independently read in the middle and high school years. Audiobooks and voice to text technology provide an opportunity to enhance engagement and student participation in independent reading.

- **Choosing/sampling audiobooks for independent reading.**

Sampling books using audio technology can both significantly decrease the time necessary to choose a book and increase the likelihood of a student sticking with a book. In addition, readers can't help but get hooked when they hear a passionate, fluent, knowledgeable narrator read a book.

- **Using audiobooks to improve understanding**

One of the key habits of proficient readers is the ability to self-monitor and know when they have read something but don't understand it. Proficient readers will often re-read what they didn't understand and use a variety of strategies to make or approximate meaning of what was read.

The tools available in the voice-to-text technology can help students in those moments, whether it is the definition of a word, the fluent pronunciation of a word, or the tone a speaker uses. By sharing this technology with students we make every user a literacy researcher. Imagine what we could learn by hearing back from students what worked for them in making more meaning of a text.



## BOOK CLUBS

**Overview.** Book clubs are a great way to bring students and teachers together around a specific book or genre of interest. These can be as local as a single classroom or as broad as district or statewide.

- **City-wide conversations.**  
Engage the Mayor or other local elected officials to select a city-wide book that exists in the School Collection.
- **Book of the month.**  
Imagine school or city-wide common reads of a text that culminates in after school discussions in a club setting. Different books will attract different groups of students and provide opportunities to both learn and build community.
- **Genre clubs.**  
Students finding other students who like what they like can be a powerful way to build friendships and connections within school. Imagine monthly book clubs, led by staff or students, that meet after school and discuss a book within a genre of interest. Sc-fi is a genre club that can't miss.
- **Guest facilitator clubs.**  
A great way to invite members of the community into your schools is through guest facilitation of a shared book.



## CONTESTS

**Overview.** There is no shortage of creative ways to use a contest approach to motivate more students to enthusiastically engage in learning opportunities.

- **Volume of reading and listening.**

This is an oldie but a goodie that could be altered to read multiple books by the same author or on the same topic or theme rather than just sheer volume.

- **Best creative interpretation of a book.**

When the Newark, NJ Public Schools launched a district-wide Audible initiative in 2017-18, one school selected Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* as a shared book and designed a poetry slam contest in which students made connections between Noah's experiences as a youth in South Africa and their own. Contests like this can incorporate writing and multiple forms of artistic expression (drama, dance) into a creative competition.

- **Student reviews/recommendations of books.**

Social media are dominated by likes, retweets, and other methods of sharing or commenting on content you like. Some of those same approaches can be used to encourage students to get their peers excited about books they love. Imagine students contributing to virtual discussion spaces/blogs and sharing their reactions to books they've read and listened.



## READING & LISTENING WHEN SCHOOL IS NOT IN SESSION

**Overview.** Take advantage of students' 24/7/365 access to their Audible account and create opportunities for students to engage with literature – either assigned or independently chosen – as part of their learning when they are out of school.

- **Summer reading lists.**

Credits are distributed three at a time, every three months. Summer reading lists could be compiled that leverage the School Collection or the 12 credits. Whether it's a required reading list or a summer reading contest, the access to so many texts can help reduce or even reverse the summer slide.

- **Vacation reads or projects.**

Breaks from school can be opportunities to keep the brain active with literacy. Schools, grades, or individual teachers can design contests or thematic projects.

- **Snow days.**

For those of us in climates where weather closes school with some regularity, imagine the announcement on your district website or automated phone call/text system that first tells students there's no school AND then shares that they should listen to a chapter or portion of a particular book, maybe write about it, and be ready to discuss it when back in school day after tomorrow.



## RECAPTURE LOST LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

**Overview.** Take advantage of students' 24/7/365 access to their Audible account and create opportunities for students to listen and read and provide opportunities to both learn and build community.

- **Substitutes.**

With no disrespect to substitute teachers even in the best of circumstances learning time with a substitute is less effective and often lost learning time. Imagine substitute lessons where the lesson focuses on shared listening and reading of a text followed by a writing task.

- **In-school suspension/classroom removal activities.**

When students are removed from their regular classroom for a short time period, listening to an Audible title and/or writing about it can be a productive way to use what otherwise can be wasted time. Imagine your Dean of Students working with your ELA and History teachers to create a library of 15-30 minute excerpts that speak to common discipline code infractions (honesty, mediating conflict, bullying, gossip) which students could then listen and read and then reflect on and apply to their own choices.