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A critical investigation using approaches drawn from case study into how Year Nine students' reading of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* can be enhanced through an exploration of sound

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Abstract

This study explores how the class novel can be taught through the mode of sound, in particular by creating soundscapes: a creative method in which a text or event is re-created solely through the use of sound. The investigation focuses on a Year 9 class making a soundscape from a passage in Hound of the Baskervilles and consequently exploring how this process created an enhanced pupil understanding of some of the novel's key themes and ideas. The study is also careful to explore how creating soundscapes from novels can be limiting due to the regimented nature of the soundscape and its degree of removal from the original form of the novel.

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Introduction

This paper will explore how reading the class novel can be taught with a focus on sound, primarily through an exploration of the auditory descriptions within the novel. This exploration will occur through a reflection upon small-scale research designed to evaluate whether a focus of sound and the novel results in an enhanced student understanding. I have drawn upon approaches from case-study to conduct my research; the appropriateness of the method was warranted through my intention to focus upon a specific teaching method in order to illuminate a wider, more general question of pedagogy concerning reading.

I have chosen to focus on sound and the novel because it is an uncommon pairing within the classroom. Sound is, I suggest as a grounding for this paper, more often associated with the form of *poetry*. This popular pairing of poetry and sound is often explored in the modern classroom through activities such as choral readings and spoken word performances. In addition, one might also argue that sound is often explored in relation to drama texts through stage directions and the characters' voices. Although, sound could be referenced in relation to *dialogue* within prose, it will be beneficial to investigate whether there are other ways in which we can focus on sound in the class novel, similar to the popularity of approaches with poetry and drama.

Contextual information

The class

The investigation followed a top-set Year 9 group studying Conan Doyle's novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles.* The class contained 30 students and was part of a state secondary school situated in a

market town in the region of East Anglia, with intake of ages 11-19. Prior to starting this investigation I had been working at the school, on my second training placement, for nearly two months. I had sole responsibility for teaching the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* for the duration of approximately six weeks. My plan was to teach the novel with reference to the current 2015 AQA English Language GCSE Assessment Objectives (AO) (Table 1 below). Although my teaching covered all AOs, this investigation primarily explored AO2 (analysing the effects of language) and AO1 (interpreting explicit and implicit information and ideas).

AO1	• Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. • Select and synthesise evidence from different texts.
AO2	• Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
AO3	• Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.
AO4	• Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

Table 1: AQA English language Reading Assessment Objectives

The teaching sequence

I taught the class for four 50-minute lessons per week over a six-week time frame and five of these lessons were specifically focused towards this investigation; although throughout this teaching sequence the primary method of interacting with the text was through listening to an audio recording. The first lesson in the sequence focused on listening skills, in which the students learnt about how sound can be used to convey meaning in fiction. The lesson was adapted from a suggestion by Andrew McCallum in *Creativity and Learning in Secondary English* (2012). The suggested lesson topic is under the sub-heading 'Exploring the mode of sound' and McCallum (2012) writes that the outcome of the lesson is for "students to engage with a mode that is often overlooked" and to "draw attention to how the creativity of the texts relies on all modes for completion" (p.50). The lesson was based around an animated short film adaptation of Shaun Tan's graphic novel *The Lost Thing* and encouraged the students to analyse the use of sound (and enhance their listening skills) by initially playing the video without the images, asking them to infer points about the story.

The next three lessons were based around soundscaping: the primary means of exploring the sound in this investigation. After introducing the concept of a soundscape (a creative method in which a text or event is re-created solely through the use of sound) through a drama example, I read out the chosen soundscape passage from the novel (see Appendix 1) and we discussed the variety of auditory descriptions used and what form they took (dialogue, sound effect or narration). I divided up the passage into sections and assigned each group to one section, explaining that their task was to re-create the passage into a suspense soundscape. For homework the students completed an initial plan which they then shared with their group the following lesson, in order to produce the final plan on a template provided (see Appendix 2). The final soundscape lesson was a performance lesson in which the students rehearsed, performed and critiqued one another's soundscapes in relation to how they created suspense. Once the performances were over, the remaining lesson in the sequence required the students to analyse how Conan Doyle builds suspense in the novel by selecting a quotation from the soundscape and analysing the effect of its language in it, with reference to their prior knowledge of literary techniques *in addition to* their experiences of creating a soundscape of the passage.

Literature Review

What is reading and how do we read?

Although this question may seem rudimentary, an integral aspect of this investigation is to explore the pedagogical framework of reading. This is in order to consider how young people relate to reading and so that teachers and educators can encourage students to further develop as readers.

The Reading Circle

In *The Reading Environment,* Aidan Chambers (1991) highlights how reading is an active procedure and "doesn't just mean passing our eyes over printed words in order to decipher them" (p.11). Instead, reading is a cyclical process which involves selecting the reading material, engaging with it and then discussing it (see Figure 1). Since *The Reading Environment* is a guide for educators, Chambers argues that at the centre of this reading process is an 'engaging adult', who both helps the students learn to appreciate reading, but who also gains exposure to new ideas from the students. This mutually beneficial process is depicted through the arrows pointing from the

centre in *both directions*. In this essay I am focusing on the 'reading' and the 'response' areas of the cycle and how the 'enabling adult' can elicit an enhanced student response to the novel.
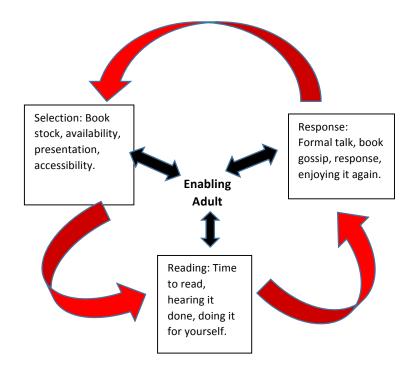

Figure 1: Redrawing of Aidan Chambers' 'The Reading Circle' (Chambers, 1991, p9)

Chambers later re-visits this notion of the Reading Circle in his book *Tell Me* (1993), which is another 'practical information' guide for teachers and educators. Here he argues that "the circle shows that reading isn't concerned only with words on a page being scanned, but is a *dramatic performance* composed of many inter-related scenes" (Chambers, 1993, p.12 [my emphasis]). If we perceive the act of reading as being a dramatic performance, then reading could be perceived as being for others, as opposed to for oneself. This claim, on the surface, appears to be a fallacy, since one could counter that reading, interpreting and processing are all independent, personal experiences. However, what Chambers' statement seems to be suggesting is that *the process of* reading is a dramatic performance which we seem to enter for our own experience, but which can be enhanced through interacting with others. Therefore, I suggest that Chambers' 'Reading Circle' is a prescriptive claim for how students *should read,* as opposed to a normative claim detailing how they *do* read. Although Chambers' credibility as the author of the book allows him to make this claim, it is worth considering that he could be biased in his perception of the 'enabling adult' being central to the reading cycle. This is because it is the enabling adults who comprise his book's intended audience; he is writing a guide for teachers, librarians and educators. Nevertheless,

Chambers' focus on how an enabling adult (wherever they may be placed in the circle) can help a reader respond to a novel is an important concept which emerges from Chambers' work and is something which will be explored throughout this paper.

The role of the reader

Many theorists have debated the nature of the reader's role in literature. Although there is not the space in this essay to provide a comprehensive exploration of all of these stances, it is worth noting that Chambers' emphasis on the *active* role of the reader seems to be adopting a philosophical stance which promotes reader-response to be of the upmost importance. This position is explored by Louise Rosenblatt in her literary theory book *The Reader, the Text and the Poem* (1978), which highlights the importance of the reader in attributing signification to language. Rosenblatt (1978) argues that "the finding of meanings involves both the author's text and what the reader brings to it" (p.14). Consequently, she is advocating a two way channelling: the words enticing a response in the reader and also the reader attributing significance to the words. This suggests that in the absence of the reader, the semantics of the words would be lacking, but equally the reader cannot find meaning without the text itself. Therefore it is "false to find the meanings solely in the text, or to find them solely in the reader's mind" (ibid.).

Rosenblatt's theory has credence through being a major contribution to literary theory, both at the time of publishing and later. Rosenblatt (1993) highlights, in the preface to the new edition, that "the general intellectual atmosphere today is more favourable to my celebration of the formally neglected role of the reader" (p.viii). This comment confirms her work's philosophical standpoint of the importance of the role of the reader and how there has been a gradual convergence between her theory and society's beliefs. Although critics of Rosenblatt's work may say that her theory has little empirical data to ground it, it is useful, for the purposes of this paper, to link her transactional theory to Chambers' reading circle.

Although Rosenblatt writes primarily about *poetry,* she implies that her ideas can be expanded to other modes of literature by posing the rhetorical question:

> Does the reader, like a director, have to supply the tempo, the gestures, the actions, not only of Hamlet but of the whole cast? And must he not perform similar acts of evocation from any text, be it poem, novel, or play?
>
> (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.13)

This is, once again, giving authority to the role of the reader when reading and interpreting *all* forms of fiction, as the reader transforms the written word into a sensory experience. Rosenblatt writes that the text and the reader are both essential aspects of reading and provides an analogy to help demonstrate this relationship:

> The text, we have seen, patterns and delimits, but it ultimately functions like a chemical element: it itself is merged in the synthesis with the other elements to produce a particular event – a poem, a novel, a play.
>
> (Rosenblatt, 1978, p15)

Therefore the text *as it stands* is not enough to be considered a literary form in itself, rather it is synthesised with 'elements' in order to become that form. This coincides with Chambers' 'reading circle', which highlights the multiplicity of reading due to 'elements' such as the enabling adult, the reader and the interaction around the book. Perhaps, in this sense, Rosenblatt is defining 'a poem, a novel, a play' as being inherently *more* than a written text. This skeletal text can only take its true form when synthesising with external factors: transforming it into a novel.

Reading and audio

This section of the review will explore why I have chosen to create the, not so common, pairing of reading and audio in this investigation, by proposing some benefits of exploring reading through sound.

Listening and sound

Throughout *The Reading Environment,* Chambers (1991) emphasises the practical importance of our auditory relationship with reading, claiming that "to enjoy a story or a poem you have to know how to convert print into […] the sound of the characters thinking and talking" (Chambers, 1991, p.54). Chambers also highlights the credence of listening and sound in stories by commenting on the tradition of verbally sharing stories in the past, concluding that "our taste for reading literature is deeply rooted in this oral experience of story" (ibid*.,* p.45). Thus, when we are going through this transformative process of converting print into sound, Chambers argues that it is the "signals of punctuation and the rhythm of sentence structures [which] are used to move the story along" (ibid*.,* p.54). Chambers seems to be suggesting that, such as when we read a poem we look at aspects such as enjambment, punctuation and stanza breaks to aid both our reading *and*

understanding of the meaning of the poem, a similar process is occurring when we read novels. This process is evidenced in the fact that when a group of people read the same text aloud, it will always sound different (even if just marginally so). Chambers comments that these "different readings aloud of the same text show what readers do is interpret" (ibid.). From his ideas, Chambers recommends producing a "dramatized reading" (ibid.*,* p.57) in the classroom, which is a performance of a story but without visual aids, focusing on sounds.

There has thus been presented *two* important auditory relationships with novels: the first being the experience of *listening to* a novel being read; the second is of the sounds and dialogue *within the story.* In this essay I wish to explore the impact of both forms of auditory experiences of reading in the classroom and to further Chambers' ideas by investigating whether an auditory engagement with a story can lead to not just to student e*njoyment,* but an enhanced understanding of the novel itself.

Oral stories in the classroom

Linking to Chambers' emphasis on hearing a text read aloud, David Reedy and Bob Lister (2007) carried out a research project investigating 'the impact of an oral retelling of the *Iliad* in the primary classroom'. This research, published in UKLA's *Literacy* journal*,* focused on two primary schools and was based on the outcomes of the 80 students from each school (approximately aged 10) experiencing a series of lessons based around the oral retelling of the ancient Greek story. Similar to Chambers' view about our experience of stories being rooted in the oral tradition, Reedy and Lister highlight how the *Iliad* was traditionally composed and performed orally, as was the version studied by the students, *War with Troy*. The findings of the project can be summarised as:

1) The oral retelling was inclusive to all abilities, enabling all students to be engaged with the story.

2) The oral retelling fostered an enthusiasm for wider reading and creative writing.

3) The oral retelling resulted in an enhanced understanding and response.

Reedy and Lister's research project was reasonably small-scale (based in East London), therefore it is important to note that the above summaries are *not* universally applicable claims. However, for this assignment I am primarily concerned with the third outcome on the list: how students *listening* to the story read aloud resulted in an enhanced understanding, since this is what I intend to research

through my work in school. Although it is worth noting that my top-set Year 9 students would have had a higher reading age than the primary students involved in this study, my focus is not on reading age or ability, but more of an organic understanding of the text.

Listening leading to an enhanced student understanding

Reedy and Lister (2007) comment how the students' "responses show how their inference and deduction developed and the understanding of underlying themes was marked" (Reedy & Lister, 2007, p.6). The evidence for this was shown through subsequent interviews and by working with the students following their exposure to *War with Troy.* Upon interviewing students, Reedy and Lister argued that there was evidence of students' ability to comprehend the key theme of fate running through the story. One of the students is quoted to have derived the stories' overall message that "you couldn't go against the fates in Greek mythology" (ibid.). The study concludes that this perceptive engagement is directly linked to the oral re-telling of the story. Although this conclusion seems to be slightly biased toward favouring a positive impact of oral story-telling, disregarding other factors which may have helped the students, I have included the research study in order to offer a practical reflection of how sound and fiction can be perceived as helping students.

Creativity and the class novel

This section of the review will explore whether there is any connection between sound and creativity and, if so, how this could lead to an enhancement of student learning.

What is creativity in the classroom?

In *Creativity and Learning in Secondary English,* Andrew McCallum (2012) argues that there is a link between creativity and learning, since over the last century "the relationship between English and creativity has been turned on its head" (McCallum, 2012, p.18). The new perception of creativity lends itself to student learning, since creativity in English is now *in the hands of the reader* (see Table 2). This notion links creativity to the focus of this essay (reading the class novel) whilst also being connected to Chambers' views of readers taking ownership of their own reading (through the transformative process of interpreting stories through sound). I suggest that this process would be deemed 'creative' according to McCallum's table, as it fulfils *at least* three of the

criteria: placing an emphasis on the reader and also being a transformative and fluid process (since the transition happens seamlessly when we read). In this investigation I am also interested in incorporating the further creative notion of 'multimodality' into reading.

Creativity in English *was…*	Creativity in English *is…*
In the hands of the author	In the hands of the reader
Original	Transformative
Internally focused	Externally focused
Fixed	Fluid
Elitist	Democratic
Mystical	Practical
Individual	Dialogic
Monomodal	Multimodal

Table 2: The changing nature of creativity

(Redrawn from *Creativity and Learning in Secondary English,* Andrew McCallum, 2012, p.18)

Although there seems to be something paradoxical about fitting the notion of 'creativity' into a box, it is useful to attempt a definition, since the term is inherently abstract and subjective. By providing a list of indicators, McCallum is not providing one rigid definition, but is retaining an aura of fluidity to creativity. What is unclear from this box alone, is whether these factors are necessary or sufficient for creativity; that is whether creativity is encompassed through all of these factors simultaneously, or whether a combination of a few of these factors are sufficiently creative.

McCallum on re-creativity

Nevertheless, from a teaching perspective, this table is useful to illustrate the recent pedagogical emphasis on student learning, as indicators in the right-hand column are more inviting of student learning than those of the left-hand column. To further explain how creativity is linked to learning, McCallum (2012) coins the term 're-creativity' which "refers to the self-conscious manipulation of source material to bring something new into being" (p.54). McCallum argues that re-creativity is "analogous to learning" (ibid.) since pre-existing knowledge is *re-created* at the point of learning new things. I suggest that this process is important to explore as it seems to coincide with modern-day teaching, which places an emphasis on active student learning, rather than passive recitation of facts.

However, McCallum is quick to highlight the pitfalls of re-creativity, stating that "students may well find it hard to access material and so struggle to be re-creative" (ibid., p.55). Nevertheless, although re-creativity can be viewed as a challenge, it is not to be confused with *originality,* since this would not be accessible learning. McCallum argues, and I agree, that "we might not all be capable of originality, but we can all work with original material" (ibid., p.57). This is an important distinction to make, as creativity does not require being unique (perhaps a common misconception in our fast-moving, effervescent society), but instead the learning is formed from an engagement with the material surrounding us.

Re-creativity is, nonetheless, not simply a re-telling or a re-making. McCallum explains that "re-creativity moves re-telling on so that students become conscious of the reasons for working on source material and can articulate transformative choices they have made" (ibid., pp.72-73). One of these reasons is that "opportunities [are] opened up by transforming one mode into another […] such shifts are likely to offer more scope for learning than those that remain solely within the modes of written language" (ibid., p73). McCallum argues that re-creativity is analogous to "opening up a range of possible worlds" (ibid.) by creating new pairings and experiences: a synaesthesia for learning. It will be useful to now apply McCallum's notion of re-creativity to the classroom and assessing whether actively producing a re-creative task in the classroom does lead to learning opportunities.

Speaking and listening as 're-creativity'

I suggest that one way in which 're-creativity' can occur is through transforming written texts into speaking and listening activities. Kempe and Holroyd (2004) state that speaking and listening activities are "useful to help young people to understand the range and nature of the signifiers that accompany the spoken word" (Kempe & Holroyd, 2004, p.50). This range of signifiers relating to an analysis of the spoken word is presented in Table 3 below. The 'spoken text' category allows for an analysis of the choice of words and intonation and an aural text allows for an analysis of sound. Kempe and Holroyd present the human voice as a possible mode of McCallum's re-creative tool, by explaining that it is analogous to an "instrument" in its ability to "manipulate physical processes in subtle ways" (ibid., p.53).

1. Choice of words 2. Intonation	Spoken text	Auditive signs	Temporal
3. Facial expressions 4. Gestures 5. Movement 6. Position in space	Physical text	Visual signs	Temporal and spatial
7. Physical appearance 8. Costume	Physical text	Visual signs	Spatial
9. Setting 10. Lighting 11. Use of objects	Visual text	Visual signs	Temporal and spatial
12. Sound	Aural text	Auditive signs	Temporal

Table 3: A classification of analysing spoken communication
Redrawn from *Speaking, Listening and Drama,* (Kempe & Holroyd, 2004, p.51)

One benefit of re-creating the written word into the spoken word, according to Kempe and Holroyd, is that "by getting pupils to play with the sounds of the words […] the semantic meaning can become clear without the aid of footnotes" (ibid.). So this is one theory of how an auditory experience of the written word may result in an enhanced understanding of the semantical fields in the novel. This may be particularly useful when studying texts from older time periods, to make it easier for students to access the meaning of archaisms. This also coincides with Vygotsky's theory of language acquisition (1978) in which he argues that we learn through talk: building our language ability through interaction via our "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky as cited in Britton, 1987, p.25). This zone helps us to realise our knowledge and understanding of language through the help of others, such as teachers and parents. This also links to Chambers' reading circle, with the 'enabling adult' in the centre, encouraging students to develop a response to the reading material by using language.

Concluding thoughts

The pairing of reading and sound may not be as uncommon as I initially thought if we consider the oral story traditions of our past (as highlighted by Chambers, Reedy and Lister). There have also been numerous claims that listening to texts, or converting print into sound, aids student learning. This could be in terms of an enhanced understanding (Reedy and Lister) or by providing the students with an opportunity to be re-creative in their approaches to novels and thus, as McCallum suggests, broadening their learning. Another potential benefit of connecting reading to sound, as

Kempe and Holroyd suggest, is that listening can encourage students to uncover deeper semantics in the words.

Research Questions

Following from exploring some of the literature around reading, creativity and speaking and listening, I devised the following questions to explore through my research:

1) How can producing a soundscape enhance the students' engagement with the novel?

2) To what extent does a focus on sound limit or enhance students' understanding of suspense?

3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of using an audio recording of a text?

I will provide a response to each of the questions later on in this paper in order to explore whether a focus on sound can result in an enhanced student understanding.

Ethical Issues

Before commencing my research, I completed an ethics checklist in order to consider any ethical issues that might occur as a result of the investigation in the classroom. I also ensured that I received permission from the school to carry out the proposed research and conversed with the class teacher, who was observing my lessons, about the nature of my research. I also presented my proposed medium-term plan to her and my school mentor.

Another important area of preparation for the investigation was an examination of the ethical guidelines outlined in BERA relating to research in education. Reading these guidelines allowed me to consider the role of the students in the research, through the code of practice that

> researchers must take the steps necessary to ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported.
>
> (BERA, 2011, p.5)

As a consequence, before commencing my research with the class, I provided a brief explanation as to what I was doing, my methodology and intentions regarding where the research was to be presented emphasising that any data produced in the essay would be solely for the purposes of my own learning. I also ensured that the students had provided me with "voluntary informed consent" (ibid.) stated in BERA by asking for their consent before every stage of research and giving them an

opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point. This gave the students' sole autonomy over their participation.

Methodology

For the investigation I used approaches drawn from case study. Denscombe states that a case study focuses "on one (or just a few) instances of particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance" (Denscombe, 2010, p.52). Thus, a case study is an apt methodology for my research, since I wish to be looking at a specific class, studying a singular topic in a particular way but in a fair amount of detail. My objective for the project was to explore one approach to teaching *Hound of the Baskervilles a*nd critique its results. This objective appeared to prefer a case-study approach as it enabled a more sustained and in-depth examination throughout the teaching sequence.

Although I have touched upon the benefits for this paper utilising a case study approach, Denscombe also highlights the issue of "scepticism which arises from doubts about how far it is reasonable to generalize from the findings of one case" (ibid.*,* p.60). There can, as Denscombe suggests, be issues of case studies not being representative or trying to leap from the unique to the general. However, for this paper, I am careful *not* to make claims that my research can be generalised to make claims about, for example, all Year 9 classes across the country. My research is dependent on numerous factors, for example, both class size and student ability. In order to generalise the findings, the research would have to be repeated in a variety of school environments.

Questionnaires

An important part of this study, to reflect on students' learning, was through questionnaire responses. Students completed an anonymous questionnaire towards the beginning of the research, after the initial listening skills lesson (see Appendix 3). I used this questionnaire as a way of understanding students' reading preferences, with an emphasis on sound within fiction. I also produced a final questionnaire, primarily for comparative data, at the end of the teaching sequence (see Appendix 4). This was similar in content, but not identical to, the initial reading questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gain a wider view of the students' learning from the teaching sequence.

When producing these questionnaires, I used Denscombe's *The Good Research Guide (2010)* to aid my writing. For example, when phrasing my questions, I was careful to consider my "target group" of year 9 students and avoid "vague" and "leading" questions (ibid*.,* pp.163-164). To further ease the completion of the questionnaire, I also ensured that "specific instructions [were] given for each question where the style of question varie[d] throughout the questionnaire" (ibid. p.160). This is evident in the instructions in both of the questionnaires. I also tried to keep my questioning clear, unambiguous, non-repetitive, short and straightforward. I did not use literary jargon and always ensured that I defined any words, such as 'auditory (sound)'. In relation to data analysis, I decided that my primary focus was on producing quantitative data, for ease of analysis and clear comparisons; therefore my questionnaire mainly consisted of closed questions, in the form of a multiple-choice option, selected by the students.

Student work

A potential difficulty with this particular research project was capturing evidence through the students' work. I had to consider carefully the exact pieces of evidence that I wanted to collect from the students, aside from a recording of their soundscapes. As Keith Taber highlights:

> A source of information about teaching and learning is the wide range of outputs produced by learners as the normal part of work in the classroom. Student's classwork (and homework) can be analysed to provide information about learners' knowledge and understanding.
>
> (Taber, 2007, p.145)

However, although student work produces an abundance of data to analyse, it is also the case that "difficulties inherent in assessing work as part of normal teaching apply when we use this material as research data" (ibid.). This is because teachers will often access student work through an *interpretation:* an inherently subjective outlook. Therefore I was aware of the potential pitfalls of using data from this form, in isolation from other (more concrete) data forms.

For the data, I used the groups' completed final soundscape plans (Appendix 2) and secondly, a written analysis of quotations from the novel (taken from the soundscape passages), in which students evaluated how they built suspense. The advantage of the final group plans is that there were only six of them, allowing for ease of cross-comparison. With the written analysis it was harder to gather recordable evidence, due to the, inevitable, variety of interpretations of the task, as I wanted to give students as much freedom as possible in order to generate genuine responses.

Nevertheless, these responses are still a crucial item of data, as they reflect the intertwining of the practical soundscape project with an analysis of the text.

Interview

The final method I used was one small-group, semi-structured interview carried out after the final lesson in the teaching sequence. I was limited for time and space, so only used three students for this interview, thus these results are not as representative as my other modes of data. Despite this, the students provided some illuminating responses that I was able to record and use in my data, in order to elaborate upon the findings from the questionnaire and students' work.

Data presentation and analysis

1) How can producing a soundscape enhance the students' engagement with the novel?

This question was formed through claims made in the literature, such as Reedy and Lister's research findings that the oral nature of the re-telling resulted in an *enhanced student understanding* and also McCallum describing re-creativity as a synaesthesia for student learning (since a soundscape is both oral and re-creative). As I mentioned at the start of this paper, soundscapes are more commonly associated with enhancing understanding of other literary forms such as poetry, so it will be interesting for this investigation to explore their effect on prose.

The students' prior awareness of sound

The results of the initial questionnaire gave me an insight into how much consideration the students were already giving to sound, prior to my research. I asked questions about sound in films in addition to sound in novels, in order to test my preconceived notion that students would pay more attention to the former. The results, presented in Figure 2 below, were surprising since they showed less of a dichotomy than I had anticipated.
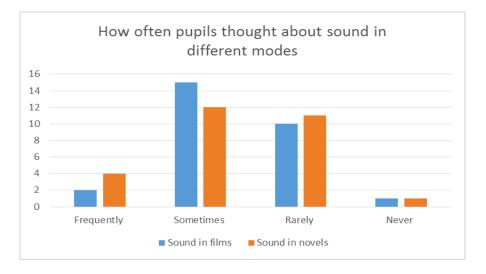
Figure 2: A comparison of students' consideration of sound

Although sound is a key factor in films, it was encouraging to learn that students were giving an almost equal consideration to auditory features within novels. This could be because when exploring which aspect of a novel students' primarily focused their attention on, speech was the second-highest category (after visual images), whereas sound descriptions only received a vote of 1/28. Therefore it could be argued that dialogue and narrative voice were the reason why the results were near equal; since the students had made the connection between speech and sound.

Creating the soundscapes

I selected the passage in Appendix 1 for the soundscape as it lent itself well to the task, due to the abundance of auditory descriptions included (both explicitly and implicitly). When the students were producing plans for their soundscapes, they were constantly making connections between the text and their plan through selecting quotations and analysing how they built suspense. This added an extra notion of how the reader is influenced by the building of suspense, also stretching the students' application of AO2 ('explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers'). Even though I did not specifically mention the reader in the plan outline, most of the groups made a connection to the reader such as 'makes the reader feel anxious or scared depending on the tempo and creates a creepy atmosphere' (group 4); 'the running makes the reader feel as if there is someone close by or watching' (group 6); 'makes the reader feel wary of danger' (group 5).

This initial link to suspense and the reader provided a useful framework for which the students could build their soundscape around. The final outcomes of the performances demonstrate the varied approaches of the groups. Some groups favoured maintaining a voice-over for suspense (group 1) and other groups did not have any dialogue at all (group 6). This varied outcome highlights how the students had a largely free reign to be 're-creative' in their transformation. Throughout this transformation of text into soundscape, the students had a high level of engagement with the text itself, in terms of both explicit information (for example, picking out sound descriptions), but also by inferring what sounds might be heard or emphasised in order to create suspense. This encouraged the students to think about AO1 'identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas'. The passage chosen was also told in the form of an ancient manuscript reporting events from years ago, so the students also had the chance to transform the tense of the text into present day (group 2 did this particularly successfully).

After making the soundscape

After the soundscape performances, I asked the students to pick a quotation from a list (see Figure 3 below) and analyse how it created suspense, considering all of the work they had done for their soundscape as well, as other language techniques. The question was phrased as: 'Pick a quotation and analyse how it creates suspense for the reader. Use your experiences of producing/ listening to soundscapes to shape your answer as well as knowledge of literary devices'.

'the words used by Hugo Baskerville, when he was in the wine, were such as might blast the man who said them.'	'the three shrieked with fear and rode for dear life, still screaming across the moor'	'the man [...] was so crazed with fear that he could scarce speak'
'their skins turned cold, for there came a sound of galloping across the moor'	The hounds 'were whimpering in a cluster at the head of a deep dip or goyal'	'plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing , a great, black beast, shaped like a hound'

Figure 3: The selection of quotations for analysis

From Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles, Chapter Two*

The main aspect I was looking for in the response was whether there was evidence of an 'enhanced understanding', following from the class' work on sound. Although some of the responses did not reference sound at all, the majority of them did not only reference the sound description being used, but also analysed how it caused suspense in relation to the effect on the reader. Some of the most insightful responses are listed below:

A) *'Conan Doyle uses the word 'shrieked' which is onomatopoeia. It shocks the reader as you wouldn't expect three fully grown men to be making that noise.*

B) *'The word 'plucking' connotes the plucking of guitar strings, making his throat seem fragile and delicate while it is pulled apart'*

C) *'The sound of the galloping horses sounds like a drumming heart-beat. This causes anticipation for the reader as to what will happen next'*

D) *'The man could 'scarce speak' as though he had been gagged with fear by the events around him'*

E) *'The sound of horses charging towards you create a scary, heart-racing effect for the reader.'*

What links all of these analyses is, I suggest, the fact that there is an indication that the students have used their experience of producing and listening to soundscapes to shape them. The students in responses B, C and D compare their sounds to something else in order to demonstrate how it builds suspense, representing the main method of creating sounds in a soundscape. The comparison of the plucking throat is particularly memorable and gives due credence to Conan Doyle's graphic language in this quotation. The majority of the responses also refer to the reader's experience of the suspense. From these responses I suggest that there are two benefits which the students seemed to have derived from producing a soundscape:

1) The soundscape helped the students to understand *how* certain language features can build suspense.

2) By listening to others' soundscapes, it helped the students to better comprehend the effect on the reader.

The first benefit seemed to be achieved by transforming the passive written word into an active soundscape. This process of 're-creativity' tests the students ability to do this and also, as McCallum suggested, requires a deep engagement with the original source material (the novel), in

order to transform it. The soundscapes thus afforded most of the students a heightened understanding of the purpose of the sound and its link to the plot. The second benefit, I suggest, was largely as a result of the students listening and responding to the other groups' performances, thus making the transition between listener and reader later.

When interviewing some of the students, I asked 'how, if at all, do you think making a soundscape enhanced your understanding of the novel?'

> *Student A: I didn't used to think about sounds in stories much. It made me more aware of the sound used.*
> *Student B: Yeah it made me think more about the sounds that I wouldn't think about normally.*
> *Student C: It brought the atmosphere of the book to life. There was a change from reading the words to making the soundscape. It came to life for me.*
> *Student B: And listening to others' interpretations made me more aware of what was happening and then I could make my own interpretation.*

This conversation is interesting because the responses progress from the fairly rudimentary response of students A and B's initial answers, to a higher-order awareness of how sounds can create atmosphere in a novel. The notion of the atmosphere and the words coming 'to life' links into my proposed benefits of soundscaping, in that transforming the words into a completely new form allows the students to gain an access into understanding language and also being able to form their own responses and interpretations.

2) To what extent does a focus on sound limit or enhance students' understanding of suspense?

This question is a vital consideration, since sound is only one method in which to build suspense and could thus be a limitation to solely focus on it.

Suspense and sound

The main connection that I wanted the students to make between their soundscape and the text was through an understanding of how suspense is built. In the initial questionnaire, I encouraged the class to start thinking about creating suspense through sound by asking them what aspect of sound was best used to create suspense in films (Q2) and then asking the open question of how an author

could create a similar mode of suspense through writing. This question allowed the students to begin to think about suspense being created through sound, being introduced to the idea through their understanding of films. This link was also made clearer due to the fact that we had already discussed ideas about suspense in film after watching *The Lost Thing* in lesson one.

Overall, most of the students were able to explain some interesting ideas about how authors can build suspense. One student wrote that suspense can be built by '*using personification, metaphors and similes to describe sounds*'; another wrote '*short, sharp sentences*'. A few answers mentioned the use of ellipsis, speech and dramatic descriptions of sound. One student also focused on the structure of the text by writing '*pauses in narrative and dramatic build up*'. Although some of these answers mentioned specifically sound or dialogue, approximately 60% of the responses focused on structure and punctuation (such as ellipsis and exclamation marks). This revealed that although some students were initially open to the notion of sound building suspense, they were keen to mainly include structural techniques which they were familiar with.

The soundscape and suspense

The soundscaping lessons could be divided into three main sections: 1) planning, 2) rehearsing and performing and 3) listening to others' performances. In my final questionnaire, completed after the teaching sequence, I asked the students to rate how effective each section of the soundscape was in providing an understanding of suspense. The options were: detailed, limited or no understanding. Across the three categories, 11% of student voted for 'no understanding', with the most popular choice being 'detailed understanding' at 47%, with 'limited' receiving a response of 42%.

Although these results imply that, for my class, the vast majority of students received at least a limited awareness of how suspense is built in the novel, it is interesting to see which section encouraged the students' learning the most. Figure 4 shows the spread of votes for each of the sections.
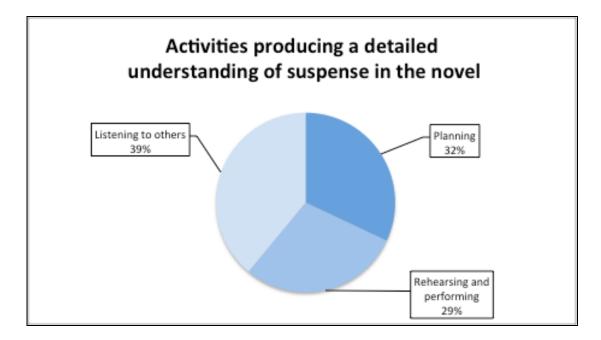
Figure 4: An evaluation of the effectiveness of each soundscape section.

From this graph, it is evident that the students voted 'listening to others' as the best way in which they received a detailed understanding of suspense. When asking the students, on the questionnaire, to explain their responses, they wrote that the listening was helpful because: 'you could really understand the suspense'; 'I could be part of the experience myself and then use it in my own work'; 'everyone had different paragraphs, so it was good to compare'; 'I could hear the suspense being built'; 'I could close my eyes and imagine what was happening as the suspense built' and 'I could really understand suspense as 'the listener'.

These are a few samples of the justifications for the benefits of listening to others' performances. From these, we can see that the main benefit of listening to the soundscapes seemed to be being able to gain an awareness of suspense being built by being put in the position of the audience and thus being made *acutely aware of the effects of the suspense*. Thus this, according to the questionnaire, resulted in a more detailed understanding of how Conan Doyle builds suspense. This notion links to my analysis of the students' work in the previous section, in which the students' responses largely paid close attention the effect of the sounds on the reader.

Others (as did I) may find it intriguing that, although it was a near contender, the planning stage was not more useful to the majority of the class, with the majority voting it as providing a limiting understanding of suspense. The reason one might presume that this stage would be the most useful

is because this was the only stage in which the students had to constantly refer to the novel itself. Perhaps this result shows that students *can* be engaged in a deep understanding of the main themes and ideas of the text without actually having it in front of them. This links to the final cycle of Chambers' 'reading circle', discussed in the literature review, in which the 'response' section is still a highly valued aspect of reading, but does not necessarily require access to the text. It is vital for teachers to not disregard reading activities which do not directly involve the text; students can be developing reading skills even just by listening or talking about books!

The limitations of soundscapes

However, a central question to this investigation is also whether the students found a focus on sound limiting when exploring suspense. The response to this question was a simple yes or no dichotomy and the results revealed that 66% of students *did* find focusing on sound limiting. When asked to explain their response in the questionnaire, the students' reasoning included: '*sound is not the most important way of making suspense'*; '*because some people hear sounds differently'*; '*in films you can add sounds to improve, but in a novel there are only set sounds'*; '*because there are only some sounds that create suspense'* and '*you can only picture so much from sound'*. Although the text did lend itself well to being made into a soundscape, due to Conan Doyle's emphasis on sound throughout the novel (such as the recurring motif of the howling hound), it is clear from these responses that some of the students found a focus on *just s*ound as too restrictive.

I also had the opportunity to discuss this question in the interview and although two of the students did not seem to have many thoughts for how the soundscape was limiting, one of the students explained that she found it slightly limiting because '*the soundscapes did not focus enough on the language in the passage'*. Since the transformative process is from language to sound (thus one could perceive it as taking language away), one can understand her perspective. However, another student later disagreed with this view stating that '*we did look at the language and their effects, because the author's sound descriptions are words'*. So in order to capture Conan Doyle's building of suspense, they had to initially study the language choices in order to create their soundscape.

This split in opinion in the interview also represents the divide of opinions from the questionnaire results. The reason behind this could be that, perhaps, some students found it easier to find the link between the sounds they were re-creating and Conan Doyle's writing than others. Therefore, in this instance, it might be harder for some students, when being re-creative to make the link back to the

original text. This can be a danger, I suggest, for re-creative tasks if the re-created form is fairly far removed from the original form— which, arguably, a soundscape is.

3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of using an audio recording of a text?

This final research question, although not directly linked to sound in the novel, links to this paper's overall question by referring to the sound of the novel being read aloud. Although the audio speaker was still reading the words from the novel, I was interested to see how, if at all, the audio affected the students' responses.

Students' opinions of the audio recording

In the initial questionnaire, when asking the students about their reading preferences, 60% voted for audio as being their preferred option (out of audio, family member, peer or teacher). When asking the same question in the final questionnaire, after listening to the novel primarily on the audio, the preference for audio listening had risen to 69%. In both instances, listening to peers reading aloud was the least popular choice. When students were justifying their responses in the questionnaire, their thoughts included: 'because they go at a better pace', 'audio recording allows a voice with no slip-ups', 'uses lots of expression and different voices', it is 'professional' and 'I can get into the book more'.

These reasons all seem to favour the seamlessness of a professional audio recording, as opposed to the fallacies of the natural reading voice. Aside from this particular class, I have not been in many classes who use audio recordings regularly. This might be one aspect which teachers, as the 'enabling adult' can consider when encouraging students to develop their reading. If students are frustrated with slow or inaccurate reading, surely they would be less willing to retain the information. When interviewing students, Student A was able to give me an additional advantage for using audio, stating that 'when the speaker emphasises some words, you know they are like— important. You can pay more attention to their meaning'. So there is reason to believe that an audio recording also brings the opportunity of an enhanced understanding of the novel.

When interviewing the students, I was also able to explore some of the disadvantages of using an audio recording. Student B highlighted the issues that *'sometimes an audio recording goes too fast so you miss bits— in a book you could just flick back'.* Although I ensured that the students had a

copy of the book in front of them as we listened, I can appreciate that pace can be an issue and may mean that students feel out of control of their reading.

Concluding remarks

This project focused on how a focus on sound could enhance students' reading of the novel The Hound of the Baskervilles. I was careful to explore both the possible advantages and limitations of my research, in order to provide a well-balanced perspective. The main method of sound which this investigation explored was through producing a soundscape of the novel. Both the soundscape itself and the work completed before and after it are valuable indicators of student engagement with the novel. My thoughts on the advantages of soundscaping, for my particular class, were:

1) The soundscape helped the students to understand *how* certain language features can build suspense.
2) By listening to others' soundscapes, it helped the students to better comprehend the effect on the reader.

However, soundscaping can also be a limiting activity since it has potential to disregard other crucial aspects of the novel, such as language. Although some of the students were able to make this connection, some were not able to and thus found the analysis of building suspense limiting. I have suggested this was because some students may have struggled with the re-creative aspect of the task but this may also be due to other factors, such as soundscaping favours those who are auditory learners. I also, briefly, touched upon the advantages of using an audio recording in encouraging students to engage with reading material, expressing the desire that audio recordings will rise in popularity (although not replace students reading out loud entirely). From this investigation, it would be interesting to compare my findings to those of a different cohort of students and also to compare the results of soundscapes in a novel to a similar activity with poetry.

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Appendix One

The Hound of the Baskervilles- Extract from Chapter II 'The curse of the Baskervilles'

Group One
"Know then that in the time of the Great Rebellion (the history of which by the learned Lord Clarendon I most earnestly commend to your attention) this Manor of Baskerville was held by Hugo of that name, nor can it be gainsaid that he was a most wild, profane, and godless man. This, in truth, his neighbours might have pardoned, seeing that saints have never flourished in those parts, but there was in him a certain wanton and cruel humour which made his name a byword through the West. It chanced that this Hugo came to love (if, indeed, so dark a passion may be known under so bright a name) the daughter of a yeoman who held lands near the Baskerville estate. But the young maiden, being discreet and of good repute, would ever avoid him, for she feared his evil name. So it came to pass that one Michaelmas this Hugo, with five or six of his idle and wicked companions, stole down upon the farm and carried off the maiden, her father and brothers being from home, as he well knew. When they had brought her to the Hall the maiden was placed in an upper chamber, while Hugo and his friends sat down to a long carouse, as was their nightly custom. Now, the poor lass upstairs was like to have her wits turned at the singing and shouting and terrible oaths which came up to her from below, for they say that the words used by Hugo Baskerville, when he was in wine, were such as might blast the man who said them. At last in the stress of her fear she did that which might have daunted the bravest or most active man, for by the aid of the growth of ivy which covered (and still covers) the south wall she came down from under the eaves, and so homeward across the moor, there being three leagues betwixt the Hall and her father's farm.

Group Two
"It chanced that some little time later Hugo left his guests to carry food and drink – with other worse things, perchance – to his captive, and so found the cage empty and the bird escaped. Then, as it would seem, he became as one that hath a devil, for, rushing down the stairs into the dining-hall, he sprang upon the great table, flagons and trenchers flying before him, and he cried aloud before all the company that he would that very night render his body and soul to the Powers of Evil if he might but overtake the wench. And while the revellers stood aghast at the fury of the man, one more wicked or, it may be, more drunken than the rest, cried out that they should put the hounds upon her Whereat Hugo ran from the house, crying to his grooms that they should saddle his mare and unkennel the pack, and giving the hounds a kerchief of the maid's, he swung them to the line, and so off full cry in the moonlight over the moor.

Group Three
"Now, for some space the revellers stood agape, unable to understand all that had been done in such haste. But anon their bemused wits awoke to the nature of the deed which was like to be done upon the moorlands. Everything was now in an uproar, some calling for their pistols, some for their horses, and some for another flask of wine. But at length some sense came back to their crazed minds, and the whole of them, thirteen in number, took horse and started in pursuit. The moon shone clear above them, and they rode swiftly abreast, taking that course which the maid must needs have taken if she were to reach her own home.

Group Four
"They had gone a mile or two when they passed one of the night shepherds upon the moorlands, and they cried to him to know if he had seen the hunt. And the man, as the story goes, was so crazed with fear that he could scarce speak, but at last he said that he had indeed seen the unhappy maiden, with the hounds upon her track. 'But I have seen more than that,' said he, 'for Hugo Baskerville passed me upon his black mare, and there ran mute behind him such a hound of hell as God forbid should ever be at my heels.'

Group Five
"So the drunken squires cursed the shepherd and rode onward. But soon their skins turned cold, for there came a galloping across the moor, and the black mare, dabbled with white froth, went past with trailing bridle and empty saddle. Then the revellers rode close together, for a great fear was on them, but they still followed over the moor, though each, had he been alone, would have been right glad to have turned his horse's head. Riding slowly in this fashion they came at last upon the hounds. These, though known for their valour and their breed, were whimpering in a cluster at the head of a deep dip or goyal, as we call it, upon the moor, some slinking away and some, with starting hackles and staring eyes, gazing down the narrow valley before them.

Group Six
"The company had come to a halt, more sober men, as you may guess, than when they started. The most of them would by no means advance, but three of them, the boldest, or it may be the most drunken, rode forward down the goyal. Now, it opened into a broad space in which stood two of those great stones, still to be seen there, which were set by certain forgotten peoples in the days of old. The moon was shining bright upon the clearing, and there in the centre lay the unhappy maid where she had fallen, dead of fear and of fatigue. But it was not the sight of her body, nor yet was it that of the body of Hugo Baskerville lying near her, which raised the hair upon the heads of these three daredevil roysterers, but it was that, standing over Hugo, and plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing, a great, black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon. And even as they looked the thing tore the throat out of Hugo Baskerville, on which, as it turned its blazing eyes and dripping jaws upon them, the three shrieked with fear and rode for dear life, still screaming, across the moor. One, it is said, died that very night of what he had seen, and the other twain were but broken men for the rest of their days.

Appendix Two

Final soundscape plan (template)

Timing	Quotation	Sound and how it is made	How suspense is created

Appendix Three

Reading skills Questionnaire

Please take some time to fill out this questionnaire for my research into listening and the class novel. Your responses will be kept anonymous, so there is no need to put your name on the sheet.

On Monday I taught a lesson on *f.* **If you were not in, please leave out Q2.**

1. **BEFORE Monday's lesson, which phrase best described your approach to sound in films? (**please **tick)**

    ☐   I would <u>frequently</u> think about specific sounds in films.

    ☐ I would <u>sometimes </u>think about specific sounds in films.

    ☐ I would <u>rarely</u> think about specific sounds in films.

    ☐ I would <u>never </u>think about specific sounds in films.

2. **Following Monday's lesson, which of these aspects of sound do you think is best used to create suspense in films?**

    ☐ Background music   ☐ Voice over   ☐ Direct speech   ☐ Sound effects

3. **Following from your answer to Q2, how do you think that an AUTHOR might create a similar mode of suspense in their novel using a technique from WRITING?**

    _____

4. **Do you prefer reading a novel in your head, or listening to it being read out loud?**

    ☐   In head   ☐   Out Loud   ☐   Out loud whilst following text

5. **When listening to a novel, please rank (1-4) your preference for who is reading it.**
    ☐ Teacher   ☐ Peers   ☐ Audio recording   ☐ Family member

6. **When you are listening to/ reading a novel, what do you pay most attention to?**

    ☐ **Visual Images**   ☐ **Sound**   ☐ **Speech** ☐ **Characters**

    ☐ **Other (***please specify)*_____

7. **Which phrase best describes your approach to sound in novels?**

    ☐   I <u>frequently</u> think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

    ☐ I <u>sometimes </u>think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

    ☐ I <u>rarely</u> think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

    ☐ I <u>never </u>think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

Appendix Four

Reading skills Questionnaire 2

Please take some time to fill out this questionnaire for my research into listening and the class novel. Your responses will be kept anonymous, so there is no need to put your name on the sheet.

1a. Think about your experiences of PLANNING for your soundscape.

How did this help you understand how Conan Doyle (CD) builds suspense in his writing? (*Please tick*)

☐ The plan gave me a <u>detailed</u> understanding of how CD builds suspense.

☐ The plan gave me a <u>limited</u> understanding of how CD builds suspense.

☐ The plan gave me <u>no</u> understanding of how CD builds suspense.

1b. Please explain your answer to 1a. _____

_____

2a. Think about your experiences of REHEARSING and PERFORMING your soundscape.

How did this help you understand how CD builds suspense in his writing? (*Please tick ONE*)

☐ The rehearsal and performance gave me a <u>detailed</u> understanding of suspense.

☐ The rehearsal and performance gave me a <u>limited</u> understanding of suspense.

☐ The rehearsal and performance gave me <u>no</u> understanding of suspense.

2b. Please explain your answer to 2a. _____

_____

3a. Think about your experiences of LISTENING to others' soundscapes.

How did this help you understand how CD builds suspense in his writing? (*Please tick ONE*)

☐ Listening to others gave me a <u>detailed</u> understanding of how suspense is built.

☐ Listening to others gave me a <u>limited</u> understanding of how suspense is built.

☐ Listening to others gave me <u>no</u> understanding of how suspense is built.

3b. Please explain your answer to 3a. _____

_____

4a. From your experiences of examining auditory descriptions (sound), how effective do you think they are at creating suspense in a novel? (*Please tick ONE*)

☐ Very effective   ☐ Reasonably effective   ☐ Not very effective   ☐ Not effective at all

4b. Please explain your answer to 4a. _____

_____

5a.   When listening to a novel, please rank (1-4) your preference for who is reading it. *(1 is the greatest preference, 4 is the least).*

[ ] Teacher   [ ] Peers   [ ] Audio recording   [ ] Family member

5b.   Please explain your reasons for this preference. _____

_____

6.   When you are listening to/ reading a novel, what do you pay most attention to? *(Please tick ONE).*

[ ] Visual Images   [ ] Sound   [ ] Speech   [ ] Characters

[ ] Other *(please specify)* _____

7a.   Following our work on soundscapes, which phrase best describes your approach how you will now approach sound in novels? *(Please tick ONE).*

[ ] I will <u>frequently</u> think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

[ ] I will <u>sometimes</u> think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

[ ] I will <u>rarely</u> think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

[ ] I will <u>never</u> think about specific sound descriptions in novels.

7b. Please explain the reason for your answer. _____

_____

8. Please select any skills that you think you have developed through the lessons (and homework) in which we have worked on soundscapes and soundscape skills. *(Please tick all that apply)*

[ ] Listening   [ ] Reading   [ ] Independent study   [ ] Performing   [ ] Team work

[ ] Other *(please specify)* _____

9a. Do you think that focusing on SOUND is limiting when exploring suspense in the novel?

[ ] Yes   [ ] No

9b. If yes, why? If no, why not?

_____

_____