

The Texas School of the Air and Its “Stories Plus” Program

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Abstract

In 1939 The Texas School of the Air was created with the purpose to broadcast “educationally and socially desired radio programs” for Texans. This paper reports findings from a content analysis of the Texas School of the Air’s “Stories Plus” program. “Stories Plus” was the “social relations” program that aired from 1940-1942. The analysis of the “Stories Plus” program reveals that the broadcasts were not only “educationally and socially desirable,” but also supplementary to state curriculum.

The Texas School of the Air and Its “Stories Plus” Program

Educators often wrestle with how to address the incorporation of technology into school settings (Dousay & Janak, 2018). Commonly, many educators question how new technological devices will complement the curriculum, and how the needs of the students will be met through their use. From the 1920s through the 1940s, the technological device that garnered perhaps the most discussion among educators was the radio. Educators at this time questioned, “the place of radio in education, and how it may be used in the classroom”, despite its rising popularity in the field (Woods, 1940, p. 14).

During this time, radio was the “trending educational buzzword” (Dousay & Janak, 2018). The radio was commonly considered to be the “marvel of ages” (Morgan, 1939), “the medium that would revolutionize education” (Reiser, 2001, p. 56), and something that would, “become as popular as the classroom textbook” (Dousay & Janak, 2018; Reiser, 2001). Radio was seen as “having a place in the school”

because it possessed certain, “peculiar” aspects that could “undeniably” “enrich, vitalize, and diversify the process of learning” (Woods, 1940, p. 14; Ashby, 1932). Radio could reach audiences over a wide area, could deliver content designed to “spark” student imagination, and could provide access to resources that would otherwise be unavailable to teachers (Ashby, 1932; Hill, 1997).

In Texas, the School of the Air radio broadcast series began in the fall of 1939 and continued to serve Texas communities for the next fourteen years (Hill, 1997). The Texas School of the Air was created with the purpose to broadcast “educationally and socially desired radio programs designed to supplement the public-school curriculum” (Woods, 1940, p. 11). Although it is somewhat unclear why the governing members of the Texas School of the Air felt that the public-school curriculum needed to be “supplemented”, the radio was seen as an instructional tool that could bring “educational and cultural materials” to the classroom, “which no teachers, because of limitations of either time or ability, could prepare” for themselves (Woods, 1941, p.15). This paper, and earlier presentations (Santarelli 2019a, 2019b), examines how the programs of the Texas School of the Air were seen as “educationally and socially desirable” through an analysis of the content of the Stories Plus program.

Local and national radio broadcasting systems dedicated entire stations and programs for the purpose of educating the people of the United States. After the licensing of the first educational radio station, KFOO at the Later-Day Saints University in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1921, seventy-four additional educational

radio stations were established by the end of 1922. Additionally, by the end of 1936, 202 additional broadcasting licenses were issued to educational institutions (Hill, 1997).

Educational radio broadcasting stations could be found throughout the United States, in states such as California, Ohio, Illinois, Kansas, Georgia, Connecticut, and New York. In these states, students tuned into broadcasts presented by groups such as the Ohio School of the Air, The Rocky Mountain Public Radio Program, The Little Red School House, and Virgil Dickson's Radio Lessons (Hill, 1997; Bianchi, 2008). Additionally, school children could also listen to programs presented by national networks such as the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). Students could partake in lessons presented by the American School of the Air (1929, CBS), Music Appreciation Hour (1928, NBC), and later on, the Red and Blue Network (1938-1939, NBC) (Hill, 1997). Together, both the local and national stations aired hundreds of educational programs that K-12 students could listen to both inside and outside the classroom. These programs reached thousands of listeners and covered a myriad of topics that people from around the country could find interesting.

Despite the popularity of educational radio broadcasts, Texas educators expressed concerns about the use of radio programs in the classroom. Texas educators claimed that educational broadcasts were often full of commercial advertisements (Who Owns the Radio, 1930, p. 9), were broadcast at inconvenient times for instructional use (Chapman, 1940), and were sometimes difficult to access due to unwanted feedback and interference (Stone, 1936; Cooper, 1938). In order to address these concerns, Texas teachers, school and district administrators, educational associations, and the Texas Department of Education teamed up to create a cooperative public radio program for Texas called the Texas School of the Air (Cooper, 1938).

The programs teachers could utilize were centered around subjects such as science

(Open Your Eyes), reading (Reading is Adventure), social studies (Stories Plus), vocations (Jobs Ahead) and music (Music is Yours). Each of these programs were designed to be "educationally and socially desirable", meaning that they were created to, "increase knowledge, cultivate discernment, appreciation, and taste, and to enrich character by inspiring social ideals that may result in constructive citizenship" (Woods, 1940, p. 11; Woods, 1941, p.12; Chapman, 1940, p.35).

The Stories Plus program, the focus of this paper, was the "social relations" broadcast of the Texas School of the Air. The program was intended for elementary school aged children and was based on selected children's stories with "social themes pertaining to good citizenship" (Woods, 1940, p.18). The program was entitled Stories Plus because the selected stories were seen as having "far-reaching ends" that could teach students facts, attitudes, and social choices, and that could provide "an atmospheric background for the interpretation of the past" (Woods, 1940, p. 21; Woods, 1941, p. 22). Through the analysis of the content of the Stories Plus program, which focused on teaching students social themes and skills, more can be understood regarding how Texas School of the Air programs were designed to be "educationally and socially desirable". In addition to examining the Stories Plus program, background information regarding radio education use in Texas is provided. The history of radio education use in Texas is important to consider in order to understand why and how the Texas School of the Air and its companion programs were created.

Early Educational Radio Use in Texas

Early discussions of radio education use in Texas generally centered around access to radios and receiving the appropriate equipment. Educators often claimed that a "good radio and receiving set should be in "every school and, in some systems, every schoolroom" (Radio and Education, 1927). The radio was seen as a device that could carry into the classroom the "best music of all time and the voices of the

greatest men and women of the day who offered advice, information, and encouragement to all” (Radio and Education, 1928, p. 43). Radios were to be acquired at all costs in order to avoid the even costly effects of ignorance (Radio and Education, 1928). One of the earliest attempts at placing a radio in Texas schools took place in 1929 in Fort Bend County Schools, where a “new trail” in radio education was blazed in Texas when a radio was placed in each of the county’s schools. Under the leadership of County Superintendent Jesse F. Ward, the radio was utilized to communicate with school administrators, announce important news and events, and to provide programs tailored to the topics of “instructional work and general educational interests” (Radio in Fort Bend County Schools, 1929, p. 26).

Other early discussions on the topic of radio education use in Texas recommended providing students access to the “finest programs” (Radio Education, 1928, p. 43). Through providing students with these programs, educators felt that ignorance, superstition, fear, hatred and poverty, “the direct results of a lack of proper education” could be abated (Radio Education, 1928, p. 43). Educational radio was seen as an “inspiring and enlightening order”, devoted to the “educational uplift of the people”; not as an advertisement agent. (Who Owns the Radio, 1930, p. 9). Educators asserted that teachers should be provided radio programs that were unencumbered by commercial advertisements or “jazzy entertainments”. Although the criteria outlining what made a radio program “the finest on the air”, and why these programs were needed had not yet been established, Texas educators, encouraged students and teachers alike to tune into programs produced by the University of Texas and the University of Chicago, or to programs sponsored by national networks such as the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) (Radio and Education, 1927). Some educators also encouraged the utilization of radio programs that “assuredly conformed to the highest American ideals”. Meaning, that radio programs should both “preserve and nurture” the “sanctity

of the home and the school, and the very foundations of the United States government” (Who Owns the Radio, 1930, p. 9).

A Glimpse into Texas Educational Radio Use During the 1930s

Radio education use in Texas became increasingly popular in the 1930s and the survey conducted by Roy M. Stone, of Lubbock, Texas, provided a glimpse into that rising interest. In November 1935 a questionnaire was sent to the offices of 63 superintendents or principals of Texas schools, in which radios were reported to be in use, in order to determine the extent of radio use in secondary classrooms. The administrators were asked to indicate the kind of equipment they possessed, how the equipment was obtained, the subjects that they thought were best adapted to radio instruction, and what they felt the major benefits and criticisms of the radio were. Out of the 63 questionnaires sent out, 41 “usable replies” were returned (Stone, 1936).

Stone found that out of the 41 schools who responded to the survey, only one school reported utilizing the radio prior to 1930. Instead, a majority of the schools (28 of 41 schools), reported that they began to use the radio during or after the year 1932. A replica of the table used by Stone to display this data in his article can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: When Texas Schools Began to Use Radio

Year	Number of Schools
Prior to 1930	1
1930	7
1931	1
1932	4
1933	10
1934	7
1935	11

(from Stone, 1936)

Stone (1936) found that the most common type of radio equipment used in the Texas secondary schools was the “master set”.

Twenty of the forty-one schools included in this study reported having access to “master set” radio equipment (i.e., a combined public address and radio system with individual classroom loudspeakers). The use of “portable radio” equipment, however, came in a close second place, with nineteen out of forty-one schools reporting that they had access to either 1, 2, or 3 devices.

Another finding from Stone’s (1936) study relates to which subjects Texas administrators thought were best adapted to radio instruction. All forty-one administrators indicated that the radio was used to “supplement the classwork of eighteen different school subjects”. Of these subjects, the ones that were considered to be the “best” adapted to radio instruction were music, English, history, civics, social studies, geography, and public speaking. Other frequently listed subjects were vocational guidance, art appreciation, languages, science, typewriting, physical education, and drama (Stone, 1936). According to Stone’s report, it is unclear as to why the surveyed administrators felt that their school’s curriculum needed to be supplemented. Instead of covering this topic, Stone indicates how the school administrators viewed the radio as being a beneficial educational tool. Out of the 41 surveys collected for the study, 7 benefits of radio education use were identified (Stone, 1936, p. 30)

1. Radio enlarges the educational field by supplementing class work with material students would not otherwise get.
2. The public address system provides an executive instrument which permits administrators to keep in close touch with the school without any loss of time.
3. Radio stimulates interest in school work by breaking routine.
4. Radio keeps students in closer touch with current news and thereby creates interest in reading.
5. Radio creates a better appreciation of music and drama.

6. Radio creates interest in public affairs and broadens the outlook of the less fortunate child.

7. Radio enables students to hear outstanding speakers and artists.

Although all forty-one school administrators indicated that the radio was used to “supplement the school curriculum”, Stone (1936) also found that only nine schools specifically made provisions for educational radio broadcasts in the school schedule. This subsequently was one of the criticisms of using the radio in the school, as administrators noted that fitting radio programs into the school schedule was difficult. Additional criticism of radio usage dealt with having access to “suitable programs for school use”. Although the administrators did not specifically state what made programs “unsuitable” for the school, others cited criticisms such as commercialism and radio interference, could possibly provide some clarity into why school leaders were unsatisfied with the current broadcasts (Stone, 1936). These specific criticisms are important to note, however, because the foundational principles of the Texas School of The Air broadcast program centered on providing resolutions to these problems (Cooper, 1938).

The Texas School of the Air

The Texas School of the Air was the next stage in the evolution of radio education in the state of Texas. The creation of the Texas School of the Air in 1939, marked an important milestone for radio education in Texas because it was the first program series that was capable of and designed to complement Texas educational courses, delivered to students during school hours (Chapman, 1940). During the life of the Texas School of the Air, teachers could tune into “educationally and socially desirable” broadcasts on social studies (Stories Plus - would last only two years), science (Open Your Eyes), vocations (Jobs Ahead), reading (Reading in Adventure), and music (Musical Texas). The selection of these subjects reflects

the recommendations made by school administrators in Stone's 1932 survey.

Organization and Administration

The Texas School of the Air was organized largely through the efforts of the staff members in the Texas State Department of Education (Chapman, 1940; Hill, 1997). One such staff member, who actively participated in the organization of the Texas School of the Air, was the State Superintendent of Education, L.A. Woods (Chapman, 1940). Other groups who contributed meaningfully to the creation and organization of the Texas School of the Air included the Texas Radio Council, North Texas State Teachers College, the University of Texas, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, Texas State College for Women, Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers, and the Texas State Teachers Association. Of these supporting groups, however, the one that had probably the most influence over the organization, other than the State Department of Education was the Texas Radio Council (Chapman, 1940; Hill, 1997). The Texas School of the Air was administered as a division of the State Department of Education and directed by John W. Gunstream. Gunstream, Deputy State Superintendent in charge of Radio in Education in the State Department of Education, was also the chairman of the Section for Education by Radio in the Texas State Teachers Association.

The Texas School of the Air was further directed by an eight-member board of directors; a list of the key individuals on the board for the Texas School of the Air program can be found in Table 2.

To assist the board of directors, an advisory committee, composed of representative educators, college professors, and businessmen from various parts of the state, was also assembled (Chapman, 1940; Hill, 1997). Members of the advisory committee had to be interested in the "proper development" of Texas schoolchildren and had to believe that the radio the radio could be used to reach "broader educational purposes" (Chapman, 1940).

Funding

Despite having a board of directors composed of individuals who could be considered as the "who's who" of Texas educators, The Texas School of the Air began without legislative funding. In the first years, expenses surrounding the "planning, production, research, scriptwriting, line costs, and secretarial work of the educational broadcasts" were largely provided by either the partnering institutions or the participating broadcast stations (Hill, 1997, p. 58; Bianchi, 2008). Expenses not covered by the cooperating institutions and stations were often paid for through private donations.

Table 2
Texas School of the Air Board of Directors

John W. Gunstream	State Department of Education official in charge of Radio in Education
L.A. Woods	State Superintendent of Education
Joe P. Harris	County Superintendent, Dallas County
I.W. Popham	County Superintendent, Travis County
Dr. Homer P. Rainey	President of the University of Texas
T.M. Trimble	First Assistant State Superintendent of Education
Paul Wakefield	Member
George B. Wilcox	President, Texas State Teachers Association

(Chapman, 1940, p. 35)

One donor specifically acknowledged by State Superintendent Woods for providing funds for the Texas School of the Air was Karl Hoblitzelle, President of the Dallas, Texas, based Interstate Theaters and member of the Texas School of the Air advisory committee. Hoblitzelle played an integral part in funding the Texas School of Air, especially during its first year (Woods, 1940; Hill, 1997; Bianchi, 2008). So critical was Hoblitzelle's support that the State Superintendent of Education, L.A. Woods included the following in the 1947-1948 Teachers' Classroom Guide for "Music is Yours"

To Mr. Karl Hoblitzelle, President, Interstate Theatres, Dallas, Texas, for providing funds with which to establish and operate the Texas School of the Air during 1940 and 1941, when no funds were available in the State Department of Education for this purpose, and for continuing the Karl Hoblitzelle Music Fellowship Fund for Radio House Chorus and Orchestra until 1946. (Woods, 1947, p. 3)

By the time the 47th Texas State Legislature met, the Texas School of the Air was in its second year and was recognized as successful in making contributions to the education of Texas school children and, as a result, funds were appropriated for its operations during the 1941-1943 biennium (Woods, 1940; Hill, 1997). That the program was supported by the Texas Legislature can be seen in the *Acknowledgements of Appreciation*: "To the Fiftieth Texas Legislature for appropriating funds with which to carry on the work of the Texas School of the Air during the biennium, 1947-1949" (Woods, 1947, p. 3).

Broadcast Facilities and Programs

The Texas School of the Air programs were aired through an arrangement with commercially owned CBS affiliate stations known as the Texas Quality Network (Woods, 1940). The AM radio stations that regularly

carried the Texas School of the Air programs were WBAP in Fort Worth, Texas, WFAA in Dallas, Texas, WOAI, in San Antonio Texas, and KPRC in Houston, Texas. Later, additional stations would broadcast the programs: KGNC in Amarillo, Texas; KGRV in Weslaco, Texas; KTSM in El Paso (Bianchi, 2008; Woods, 1947). These radio station broadcasts reached portions of 90 of the 254 counties in Texas which had, according to the 1940 census, a population in excess of 3 million (over half of the Texas population at that time). Without additional information, one cannot say how many of the students in the counties were able to listen to the airings - the number probably increased over the 14 year life of the program. Local newspapers included the broadcast times for School of the Air in their papers as "Today's Radio Programs" (see, Today's Radio Programs, 1939, p. 5).

The programs were planned by educators for the purpose to "increase knowledge, to cultivate discernment, appreciation, and taste and to enrich [student] character by inspiring social ideals that may result in constructive citizenship" (Woods, 1940; Woods, 1941; Hill, 1997). The radio programs, broadcast by the Texas School of the Air during the first two years were Stories Plus, Open Your Eyes, Jobs Ahead, Reading in Adventure, and Musical Texas. The programs initially aired daily from 1:15 pm -1:30 pm and covered one of the five major core areas of the public curriculum in Texas specifically, social science, natural science, vocations, language arts, and music.

The Stories Plus Program

The Stories Plus broadcast was the "social relations program", of the Texas School of the Air. The program was intended for elementary school aged children and was based on selected children's stories with "social themes pertaining to good citizenship" (Woods, 1940, p. 21; Woods, 1941, p. 22). Stories Plus was presented by the Radio Workshop in Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas, and aired on Monday afternoons from 1:15-1:30 pm on stations

affiliated with the Texas Quality Network. Emma Petty was the scriptwriter for the Stories Plus program during the first year of production (1940-1941), but was replaced, after the first season, with Ella West Decker. The Stories Plus program series was produced by A.M. Woodford in both the 1940-1941 and 1941-1942 seasons (Woods, 1940; Woods, 1941).

The Stories Plus radio program was only in operation for two years before it was redesigned and renamed as “Your Story Parade”. The Stories Plus radio program was redesigned mostly because of the United States’ entrance into World War Two. With the entry of the United States into World War Two, both the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, L.A. Woods, and the Director of the Texas School of the Air, John W. Gunstream, called for the creation of a radio program that was “tailored for Texas’ wartime children”. As a result, the Stories Plus program was restructured in order to provide “emotionally satisfying stories” for primary and preschool aged children “in a world at war”. Through hearing these stories, it was believed that child “wartime hysteria and injurious nervous strain” could be prevented (Texas School of The Air has New Series, 1942, p. 32).

Teaching Recommendations for the Stories Plus Program

Administrators of the Texas School of the Air believed that the “ultimate value of the radio” depended on how the broadcasts were used by the teacher. Teachers could use the radio in a number of different ways, but those seeking additional instructional assistance could find it in the Texas School of the Air *Teachers’ Manual and Guide* (see for example Woods, 1940). The Texas School of the Air *Teachers’ Manual and Guide* was issued every year and was designed to provide teachers with knowledge about the purpose of the Texas School of the Air, the content covered by each program, and the teaching techniques that fostered the proper utilization of the broadcasts in the classroom (Woods, 1940; Woods, 1941).

In the portion of the teacher’s manual discussing the Stories Plus program, teachers

were provided with; a brief description of the stories told within each of the broadcasts, a list of questions designed to further the educational discussions surrounding the radio broadcasts, and a series of possible extension activities that the students could complete following the conclusion of the class discussion. The *Teachers’ Manual and Guide* also provided teachers with the “moral of the story” for each broadcast. Each of the 15-minute broadcasts, in the Stories Plus series, began with a moral that was illustrated in the chosen story. The morals in the selected stories were seen as those that “pertained to good citizenship” and could teach children “present social choices” (Woods, 1940; Woods, 1941).

The *Teachers’ Manual and Guide* also offered teachers a list of suggested procedures that could be used in order to encourage both the “fullest enjoyment of the stories” and the “clearest comprehension of their meanings” (Woods, 1940, p. 21; Woods, 1941, p. 25). These procedures included the following suggestions

1. Feel and show enthusiasm for the program
2. Arrange a comfortable, ventilated room, with distractions removed
3. Adapt your schedule to the radio program. Provide a few moments before the program for an easy introduction of ‘The Tale’; a few minutes afterwards, for evaluation. (Sometimes, in case of deeply thoughtful play, this discussion might be deferred for a day.)
4. Write the name of the story, the author, and where it may be obtained, on the blackboard.
5. Write also the list of suggested parallel readings on the blackboard.
6. Place the names of the Characters on the blackboard for the children to follow as they listen.
7. Use the questions under the “What do you Think?” and “Should you Like to” sections to stimulate the discussion.

8. Do not force any activity upon the class in connection with this program. Ask for no notes. Try to enlarge the meanings of the story without the suggestion of “testing”. (Woods, 1940, p. 21; Woods, 1941, p. 25)

An Analysis of the Stories Plus Programs

Despite lasting for only two years, fifty-two educational broadcasts were aired in the Stories Plus program. This study presents an analysis of all fifty-two broadcasts in order to further examine how the programs were designed to be “educationally and socially desirable”. Three separate content analyses of the Stories Plus radio broadcasts were conducted. In the first content analysis, the theme of each broadcast was generally examined. Patterns in relation to broadcast dates and the “types of stories” aired, were evaluated. In the second content analysis, the Stories Plus programs were further examined through evaluating each of the broadcasts’ stated morals, discussion questions and recommended extension exercises. Patterns in relation to recurrent morals and the types of questions and activities surrounding the broadcasts were evaluated. In the third content analysis, the broadcasts are compared with the State Department’s “Elementary Education Suggestive Outline for Social Studies” (Wilson, 1941). General connections between the topics covered both in the broadcasts and the elementary school social studies curriculum are also presented.

Findings in Relation Stories Plus Broadcasts Themes

The first content analysis of Stories Plus broadcasts revealed that twenty-six lessons were regularly aired each year of the program. Stories Plus programs began in the first week of October and continued weekly until mid-April; a two-week break was observed around the Christmas Holiday season (Woods, 1940, p. 20; Woods, 1941, p. 24).

The content analysis also revealed that the organizers of the Stories Plus program regularly chose to broadcast stories that coordinated with national holidays. Stories such as, “Our Pilgrim Fathers”, for example, were aired close to the Thanksgiving holiday, while stories such as, “The Christmas Nightingale” and the “Red Glass Bowl” were aired closer to the Christmas holiday. Other stories coordinated with national holidays included the “Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (Halloween), “Columbus Sails” (Columbus Day), and “Father of Our Country” (George Washington’s Birthday) (Woods, 1940; Woods, 1941).

Another consistent pattern among the types of broadcasts aired in Stories Plus were stories that featured historical figures. Nine out of fifty-two of the Stories Plus broadcasts addressed either the biographies or the “accomplishments” of specific individuals from the past. Some of the historical figures referenced in these broadcasts included, Sam Houston, George Washington, and Simón Bolivar. The nine broadcasts referencing historical figures can be found in Table 3.

Table 3 Stories Plus Broadcasts Featuring Historical Figures

Title of the Broadcast	Date Aired	Referenced Historical Figure
The Gentleman Commander	January 31, 1941	Robert E. Lee
Daniel Boone	February 10, 1941	Daniel Boone
A Cowboy’s Discovery	February 24, 1941	James Larkin White (Jim White)
Six Feet Six	March 3, 1941	Sam Houston
Columbus Sails	October 13, 1941	Christopher Columbus
A Tale of Sergeant York	November 10, 1941	Alvin C. York
A Dutch Boy Fifty Years After	February 2, 1942	Edward Bok
Father of Our Country	February 23, 1942	George Washington
The Liberator	March 30, 1942	Simon Bolivar

(Woods, 1940; Woods, 1941)

Stories that incorporated animal characters, either real or fictitious, composed another “type” of frequently aired broadcasts in the Stories Plus Program. Ten of the fifty-two Stories Plus broadcasts incorporated stories with animal characters that played significant roles in the narrative of the story. One broadcast, that incorporated an animal character with a large narrative role, was entitled, “High Water” (January 26, 1941). “High Water” was the story of a community’s plight in rescuing a donkey

named Mexico from the dangers of rising floodwaters. Mexico was a stubborn donkey, and on the day of the flood, he decided to balk. The other characters of the story, at first, laughed at Mexico’s stubbornness, but soon committed themselves towards saving his life, despite the serious risks involved (Wood, 1941, p. 39). A complete list of the broadcasts that incorporated animal characters, with significant narrative roles, can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Stories Plus Broadcasts with Animal Characters Playing Significant Narrative Roles

<i>Title of the Broadcast</i>	<i>Date Aired</i>	<i>Animal</i>
<i>Greyfriars’s Bobby</i>	October 14, 1940	Dog
<i>The Jungle Book</i>	January 6, 1941	Wolves, Tiger, & Bear
<i>The Pet Elephant</i>	January 20, 1941	Elephant
<i>The Story of Lil’ Hannibal</i>	January 27, 1941	Possum
<i>Wind in the Willows</i>	March 10, 1941	Mole, Rat, Badger & Toad
<i>The Yearling</i>	March 26, 1941	Dear
<i>Expedition to the North Pole</i>	April 7, 1941	Bear, Donkey, Pig, Tiger, Rabbit, Kangaroo
<i>Lassie Come Home</i>	October 6, 1941	Dog
<i>High Water</i>	January 26, 1942	Donkey
<i>The Cat Who Went to Heaven</i>	March 9, 1942	Cat

(Woods, 1940; Woods, 1941)

Findings Related to Morals, Discussion Questions and Activities of Stories Plus Programs

The second content analysis, of the Stories Plus program of the Texas School of the Air, examined the “stated morals”, discussion questions, and extension activities of each of the fifty-two broadcasts. In this analysis, patterns in terms of reoccurring morals, and the types of questions and activities surrounding the broadcasts were evaluated.

Findings in Relation to the “Stated Morals” of Stories Plus Broadcasts

The content analysis of the “stated” morals for each of the Stories Plus broadcasts reveals that there were a number of reoccurring morals that organizers of the Stories Plus program thought students should learn

“pertaining to good citizenship”. The recurring morals that appeared in the broadcasts can “generally” be classified as,

- Serving the country or local community
- Having self-determination and perseverance in situations of uncertainty or adversity
- Displaying kindness and providing aid to others
- Caring for animals in a responsible manner
- Working hard and contributing to group efforts
- Recognizing the values of “virtuous” family life

Although each of the broadcast came equipped with an “outlined moral” for students to learn, more than one “moral to the story” was

illustrated by the stories. A number of the broadcasts, for example, could “easily” teach students two or more of the previously listed morals. The broadcast entitled “Forest Fire” (October 7, 1940) is a good example of this occurrence, as the main character Molly both serves her local community and perseveres through adversity by maintaining a “clear-mind” when alerting and assisting firefighters in extinguishing a forest fire (Woods, 1940).

Findings in Relation to the Discussion Questions for Stories Plus Broadcasts

The analysis of the discussion questions, for each of the Stories Plus broadcasts (156 in total), reveals that there were generally three types of questions that organizers of the Stories Plus program thought teachers should ask their students in order to further the educational discussions surrounding the radio broadcasts. The types of questions were ones that either, assessed student listening comprehension, asked students to make and defend moral judgments or prompted students to provide their opinion on the content discussed in the stories.

Questions that assessed student listening comprehension generally asked students to recall specific events, objects, or feelings contained within the broadcasts. In the broadcast entitled “Ann Mary” (November 25, 1940) for example, the assessment of student listening comprehension can be seen when students were asked questions such as, “How did Ann Mary show that she loved her grandma?”, “Can you name three incidents when Ann Mary showed self-control?”, and “When do you think she [Ann Mary] understood the true meaning of Thanksgiving?”. In this broadcast, students displayed their comprehension of the narrative by recalling specific actions completed by the main character, Ann Mary. This type of question could be found in nearly every lesson within the Stories Plus series.

Of the three types of questions created for teachers to use in the classroom, questions that asked students to make and defend moral judgments appeared the least frequently. These

questions generally related to events or situations in the stories where the actions of the characters needed to be justified. In the broadcast entitled, “The Yearling” (March 24, 1941), for example, students were asked whether or not it was wrong of Jody to shoot the deer that he had developed a deep attachment to, despite the deer’s continual destruction of Jody’s crops. In this situation, students were encouraged to make and defend a difficult moral decision; should the persistent destructive actions of a loved one be tolerated or should that relationship be sacrificed in order to achieve a resolution to a larger problem. Questions that asked students to make and defend moral judgments such as the one presented in “The Yearling”, were seldom suggested.

Questions that prompted students to “provide their own opinion” on the content discussed in the stories included a range of evaluative questions. Evaluative questions commonly encouraged students to either evaluate the actions of characters, the situations in their own lives that related to the story, or the actions that they may have made if presented with a similar situation. Evaluative questions that prompted students to provide their own opinion on the content discussed within each story could be found in nearly every broadcast. Examples of these types of questions included; “Is a clown ever important to anyone?” (“Boum-Boum”), “Would you have been brave enough to save the colors?” (“Saving the Colors”) and “What totting can you do for you mammy and pappy?” (“Lil’ Hannibal”).

Findings in Relation to the Extension Exercises for Stories Plus Broadcasts

In the analysis of the suggested extension activities for the Stories Plus broadcasts, a total of 140 activities were identified and evaluated. In the analysis of the 140 activities, eleven different types of suggested extension activities emerged. The extension activities included tasks encouraging students to read or study more about the topic, find and share correlating visual aids and go on field trips to places such as the zoo or local

grocery store. Although eleven types of extension activities were suggested for teachers to use in their classrooms, activities that encouraged students to study or read more about the topic were recommended most frequently and were suggested a total of 31 out of 140 times. Examples of the other ten types of suggested extension activities, and the

frequency of their suggested use in Story Plus broadcasts, are shown in Table 5.

The suggestions were designed to extend and support academic growth, excellence and connections to society. Young children's need for activity and movement is also reflected in the suggestions.

Table 5

Examples and Frequencies of the Eleven Different Types of Suggested Extension Activities

Type of Extension Activity	Frequency	Example	Broadcast Title	Date Aired
Encouraged students to study or to read more about the topic	31	“Read other stories about Lil' Hannibal”	<i>The Story of Lil' Hannibal</i>	January 27, 1941
Encouraged students to make something related to the broadcast	24	“Make a big United States flag like Rebecca did”	<i>Saving the Colors</i>	November 4, 1940
Encouraged either students or teachers to tell additional stories or discussions.	15	“Tell a true story of camp life”	<i>Wishes are Horses</i>	April 14, 1941
Encouraged students to host or partake in events	13	“Have a dog show”	<i>Greyfriars's Bobby</i>	October 14, 1940
Encouraged students to complete geography-based tasks	12	“Locate the National Parks on the United States Maps”	<i>A Cowboy's Discovery</i>	February 24, 1941
Encouraged students to watch movies	11	“See the moving picture of Sergeant York's life”	<i>A Tale of Sergeant York</i>	November 10, 1941
Encouraged students to make a list of objects	9	“Make a list of the great pioneers”	<i>Daniel Boone</i>	February 10, 1941
Encouraged students to go on field trips	8	“Visit the zoo to watch the jungle beasts as described by Kipling”	<i>The Jungle Book</i>	January 6, 1941
Encouraged students to complete service-based tasks	8	“Send some clothes or money to the Red Cross so that they may help people whose home are in the paths of the floods”	<i>High Waters</i>	January 26, 1942
Encouraged students to locate visual aids	6	“Bring pictures of the missions of San Antonio to school”	<i>Seraphina Todd</i>	April 13, 1942
Encouraged students to sing, learn or collect songs	3	“Collect old Cowboy songs that your father or mother remembers hearing”	<i>Pecos Bill</i>	April 20, 1942

Findings Related to Stories Plus's Supplementing the Public-School Curriculum

In order to further determine how the Stories Plus programs were designed to be both “educationally and socially desirable”, a third content analysis was performed. This analysis examined whether or not there was a correlation between the topics presented in the Stories Plus broadcasts and the State Department’s “suggestive outline” for elementary social studies” (Wilson, 1941). The *Elementary Education Suggestive Outline* (Wilson, 1941) provides, to teachers and school districts, an outline of what could be taught in the subject of social studies for each grade. Examples of some social studies topics to be covered in Texas elementary schools are found in Table 6, below.

In analyzing the Stories Plus broadcasts using the social studies topics suggested in the

State Department’s suggested course of study for elementary school social studies, the writers of the Stories Plus programs did attempt to coordinate with the state’s suggested course of study by including topics such as animals, community helpers and community provisions, holidays, and people in the home. Examples of how the Stories Plus broadcasts coordinated with the State Department’s suggested course of study for elementary school social studies can be found in Table 7.

These tables provide an idea of the topics and activities the script authors recommended as being appropriate for teachers to use as they engaged their students in listening to the School of The Air broadcasts. A review of the morals and connections to the state course of study suggests that the Department of Education saw the program as a valuable resource for teachers.

Table 6

Examples of Social Studies Topics To Be Covered in Texas Elementary Schools, Grades One Through Four

First & Second Grade	Third Grade	Fourth Grade
Area of Focus: School and Home Life	Area of Focus: Community Life	Area of Focus: Expanded Community Life
Topics Relating to School and Home Life: School Environments	Topics Relating to Community Life: Provisions and Preparation of Foods	Topics Relating to Expanded Community Life Community protection of Health, Life and Property
People in the Home	Preparation and Care of Clothing	Mercantile Business
Keeping House	Provisions for Shelter – Buildings	Manufacturing Industries
Pets Animals Outdoors Amusements	Community Helpers Provisions for Recreation Animals Plants	Agricultural Industries Transportation Weather Animals and Plant Life of the Community
Tools and Construction Sources of Food Preparations of Food Clothing Books	Books Weather Transportation Communication	Primitive People Holiday and Seasonal Activities

(Wilson, 1941, p. 27-32)

Table 7

Examples of Suggested Social Studies Topics Covered in Stories Plus Programs

Morals Found Within Stories Plus Programs	Correlating Topics and Grade from State Course of Study	Example from Stories Plus Program	Date Aired
Serving the country or local community	Community Helpers (3 rd) and Community Protection (4 th)	<i>Forest Fire</i>	October 7, 1940
Having self-determination and perseverance in situations of uncertainty or adversity	People in the Home (1 st & 2 nd)	<i>Ann Mary</i>	November 25, 1940
Displaying kindness and providing aid to others	People in the Home (1 st and 2 nd) and Community protection of Health, Life and Property	<i>Boum-Boum</i>	October 21, 1940
Caring for animals in a responsible manner	Animals (2 nd) and Animals and Plant Life of the Community.	<i>High Water</i>	January 26, 1942
Working hard and contributing to group efforts	Provisions and Preparation of Foods & Shelter (3 rd) and Plant Life of the Community (4 th)	<i>Robin On The Mountain</i>	October 28, 1940
Recognizing the values of “virtuous” family life	People in the Home (1 st & 2 nd) and Holidays	<i>The Red Glass Bowl</i>	December 16, 1940

(Woods, 1940; Wilson, 1941; Woods, 1941)

Conclusion

After analyzing and interpreting the Stories Plus broadcasts, and their subsequent “stated” morals, discussion questions, and extension activities, more is understood about how the Stories Plus programs of the Texas School of the Air were designed to be both “educationally and socially desirable”. The

Stories Plus program delivered “socially desirable” radio broadcasts through teaching elementary school students morals pertaining to “good citizenship”. Through listening to broadcasts, students were presented with opportunities to learn that “good citizens” often, selflessly serve their country or local communities, determinedly persevere in

situations of uncertainty or adversity, frequently provide kindness and aid to others, responsibly care for animals, continuously work hard and contribute to group efforts, and endlessly play a role in upholding the family. Stories Plus broadcasts such as “A Tale of Sergeant York” (November 10, 1941), exemplified many of these morals, as students learned not only about York’s heroic efforts in the battle of Meuse-Argonne but also about his “kindness” in donating his gifts towards the education of the men and women living within the mountain communities of Tennessee (Woods, 1941, 31).

The Stories Plus program also delivered “educationally desirable” radio broadcasts by providing teachers with provocative discussion questions and engaging extension activities. The discussion questions that teachers could use often assessed student comprehension, called for student input and even encouraged students to make moral decisions. Through using these questions, teachers could further the educational discussions surrounding the radio broadcasts and could challenge student thinking. An example of a discussion question that challenged student thinking and required students to make a moral decision can be found in the broadcast lesson “Forest Fire” (October 7, 1940). After listening to a broadcast about a woman who sped into town to rouse men to fight a fire, students were asked the difficult question of whether or not the woman was justified in breaking the speed limit in order to warn the authorities about the fire. Through using this question in the classroom, students could discuss how to conduct themselves in an emergency and could discuss larger topics such as, “when, if ever, is it okay to disobey a law”.

The extension activities that teachers could use, also contributed to broadcasts’ success in being “educationally desirable”. The extension activities were designed to broaden a student’s understanding of the topics discussed in the broadcasts. Through actively participating in activities such as finding visual aids, watching films, and partaking in community service projects, students could have the opportunity to learn more about the topics

covered in the broadcast on their own. In the broadcast lesson entitled “A Cowboys Discovery” (February 24, 1941), for example, students were encouraged to learn more about National Parks through locating other parks on a map of the United States (Woods, 1940, p. 34). In completing this activity, students learned where other National Parks were located in the country and where those parks were located in relation to the Carlsbad Caverns National Park that was discussed in the broadcasts.

In this analysis, it was also evident that the Stories Plus program of the Texas School of the Air attempted to coordinate with the state “Suggested Course of Study for Elementary School Social Studies”. The Stories Plus broadcasts commonly addressed the elementary social studies topics of animals, national holidays, and community members. Therefore, teachers wishing to utilize the radio as an educational medium in their classroom could do so with peace of mind, knowing that Stories Plus broadcasts coordinated with the state’s elementary social studies curriculum.

The Texas School of the Air ran for 14 years, and during its final years of production, the Department of Education began to make master tapes for Texas School of the Air programs through the Texas School of the Air and Tapes project (Hill, 1997). Under the Texas School of the Air and Tapes project, thousands of programs were transferred to tapes provided by local schools. Although much is unknown about the demise of the Texas School of the Air, the Texas School of the Air and Tapes projects appears to be a contributor to its termination, as schools began to accumulate taped programs in the construction of audio libraries (Hill, 1997). Hill (1997) also suggests that the demise of the Texas School of the air could be additionally attributed to the rise of television writing that due to the rising interest in television, “radio education lost much of its early appeal” (p. 65).

While this analysis offers clarity in regard to what was presented in one of the Texas School of the Air programs, Stories Plus, and how they were designed to be “educationally and socially desirable,” further

research surrounding the Texas School of the Air is needed. Additionally, despite the Stories Plus program's ability to deliver "suitable programs" that met the educational needs of Texas children, it was only one of the four Texas School of the Air programs. The Stories Plus program only aired for two years, before it was redesigned and renamed Your Story Parade. Therefore, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the content presented in the Texas School of the Air, other programs such as, Open Your Eyes, Reading in Adventure, Jobs Ahead, Musical Texas, and Your Story Parade, should also be examined. The Texas School of the Air programs served Texas children and teachers for fourteen years and were heard by thousands of listeners. The programs of the Texas School of the Air influenced the education of Texans and the extent of this influence should continue to be explored, especially within the large scope of radio education in the United States.

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