

Recorded Read Aloud Project

Student Guide

Background and Rationale

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted in-person instruction for both Mercer and local schools in March 2020, reading tutoring programs immediately stopped. United Way of Central Georgia, which runs the Read2Succeed initiative to support literacy education for elementary-age children, collaborated with Mercer's Center for Engaged Learning to pilot a Recorded Read Aloud Project for the 2020-21 school year. In lieu of the in-person reading tutoring for Macon undergraduates, students in Read2Succeed service learning courses created "storytime videos" that educators throughout Middle Georgia could access to support reading education in the classroom and at home. This pilot was adapted from an [assignment that Dr. Amy Borchardt, associate professor of psychology at Mercer, developed for her INT 201 students](#) in response to the March 2020 shift to virtual learning.

The Center for Engaged Learning combines students' videos into an electronic catalogue of read aloud videos that is updated each semester with new additions from students. United Way shares this catalogue with their education partners throughout Middle Georgia, and the availability of these read aloud videos has been an integral component of teacher outreach and relationship development as United Way works to expand its Read United programming beyond Bibb County.

Although Read United has been able to implement limited reading tutoring in the 2021-22 school year, they have expressed a strong need for more read aloud videos to share with educators and parents in the region. With feedback from service learning faculty during 2020-21, we have revised this project to better support faculty and student needs and learning goals while still meeting the need identified by United Way.

[To view the current catalogue, click here.](#)

Project Scope

Students will work independently or in small groups to create a read aloud video of a children's story and an accompanying cover letter that describes the purpose and goals of the read aloud video. The stories, which should be appropriate for children in grades K-3, can be selected by the student(s). The number of videos that a student creates within a semester is at the discretion of the instructor.

Project Structure

The Recorded Read Aloud project should be implemented in three phases:

1. Planning and preparation

Read aloud videos can have a powerful impact on children's literacy development. Check out this article from KQED about [How Online Book Read-Alouds Can Help Students' Literacy and Connection](#).

Your instructor will give you guidance on what kinds of things they want you to consider as you select your book for the read aloud video, but be sure to take time to reflect on your own experiences with children's books. What kinds of books made an impact on you? If you didn't

enjoy reading, what kinds of stories, characters, or readers do you wish you'd been exposed to that might have helped foster an interest in reading? What kinds of curricular gaps or developmental challenges are elementary school kids facing that you could address with the book you select? Do you want to use this opportunity to give them something that will make them laugh? Or reflect? Or learn new ideas? Or meet new people? Or be inspired? What do *you* want to accomplish with your read aloud?

2. Production

After you have selected your book and practiced and practiced and practiced (did we mention practice?), you will be ready to record your read aloud video. You can use Zoom to record, or you can set up with a camera. Be sure to watch some read aloud videos online for ideas about things you can do to keep your children viewers interested and engaged.

For some quick tips on recording and editing good read alouds, [check out these videos on the CEL website from Mercer theatre professor Frani Rollins](#).

3. Review, Reflection, and Dissemination

Once your video is finished, publish it as “unlisted” on YouTube. If you have a gmail account, you automatically have a free YouTube account where you can upload your video. If you don't have a gmail account, you'll need to make one for this project.

After you've published your video as unlisted on YouTube, follow the instructions your professor gives you for sharing the link. Be prepared for a peer review process with your class where you get feedback on your video. You may want to make some edits after you get feedback.

Once your video is finalized, your instructor will share the unlisted link with Lauren Shinholster in the Center for Community Engagement for inclusion in the Read Aloud Catalogue.

Recommended Resources for Video Production

- [Read Aloud Tutorial Series with Professor Frani Rollins](#)
 - Tips for Reading Out Loud (7 min 30 sec)
 - Lighting for Online Recordings (1 min 30 sec)
 - Making your Book Look Good Online (4 min 50 sec)
 - How to Frame Your Book on Screen (5 min)
 - Free Video Editing Software (6 min 30 sec)
- [Making a Read Aloud Video like a Pro for Distance Learning](#)

This in-depth video tutorial from 5th grade teacher Joe Paradise is praised as one of the most comprehensive read aloud tutorials available.
- [8 Tips to Make Read Alouds More Engaging](#)

This short list of tips from booksourcebanter.com offers some useful reading and production strategies to consider as you plan for your video.
- [How to Choose Read Aloud Books: Babies to Third Graders](#)

This brief article from Reading Rocket provides bulleted recommendations of characteristics to

look for when selected a book for a read aloud that will make for a fun, engaging listening/reading experience for your target age group.