
UNIT 4 WRITING FOR CHILDREN : RADIO

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"For Children you **have** to write as you do for grown-ups-only better."

Maxim Gorky

4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At the end of your study of this **unit**, you **will** be able to:

- describe the basic issues related to designing a radio script for children of different ~~age~~ groups
- use the techniques to write a children's programme for Radio Broadcast
- state the do's and don'ts in writing a radio script for children

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the last Unit of **Block 2**. In the previous unit, we had **discussed** the art of **scripting** a radio play.

In this last unit of **Block 2**, we shall **discuss** the basic techniques relating to writing for children. Children are **often** avid **consumers** of the media : whether it's listening to stories or watching **television**. You would have noticed how they **pick** up popular jingles, advertisements **and** songs. That's **all** the more reason why we have to be careful about what is **being conveyed** through the **media**. The work thus becomes additionally **challenging** when programmes **for** children are to be designed. Hence, in this unit, we **shall** discuss **the** distinct nature of children's programmes and the basic requirements to make **these** programmes interesting, entertaining and attention arresting for children.

4.2 RADIO'S POTENTIAL FOR YOUNG AUDIENCE

Very often, radio is seen to be at a disadvantage as far as children are concerned because there are no pictures. However, what is often overlooked is radio's potentiality to draw **mental** pictures. Voices, music, sound-effects stir the imagination and lend themselves to varied pictures that may actually be very difficult (and expensive) to create in visual media like films and television. We all remember the time when, as children, we listened to fantastic stories and imagined the most **magnificent** or homfic of places, peoples and situations. Even as adults, we do the same when we read Lewis Carroll, **Tolkein**, C.S. Lewis or our very own Sukumar Ray¹.

Bruno **Bettleheim**, professor of child psychology, writes:

"Children wish for so much but can arrange so little of their own lives, which are often dominated by adults unsympathetic to their priorities. That is why children have a far greater need for day dreaming than adults do. And because their lives have been relatively limited, they have a greater need for material from which to **form** day dreams."

Dreams apart, material **based on** reality is also important. Children do take an active interest in day-to-day reality and it is condescending to imagine that they always want to be in fairy **and** fantasy land. The only word of caution here is that reality for children may not be what reality is for you and me or for other adults. That's where the trouble and challenge **begin**.

4.3 THE AUDIENCE

I once saw a **children's** programme on TV on eating habits. It had a presenter talking to a group of children who varied **from** ages **4-13**. The presenter was fairly interesting. She managed to communicate very well with the over-eight group. For the younger children the programme was a disaster: two of them were crawling around, one ready to cry while the others busied themselves making faces at each other.

Aiming your **programme** at a **specific** target audience is crucial. A programme aimed at children between 4-12 years of age is not likely to work because children within that range have very different mental and physical abilities. Therefore, subgrouping is important. Studies on child psychology suggest that there are different stages in the mental development of children. **Piaget**, the famous psychologist, for instance, talks of the predominance of egocentric thought in the early years of a child's life. You will have noticed how 4-or-5 year olds talk to themselves while playing. They are not very interested in listening to others, unless of course the words spoken by another child are related to their needs or are in some way concerned with some activity. Older children, above eight years, are able to listen to others and understand casual relationships. Therefore, designers of children's programmes must work within the **framework** provided by child psychology as well as other related subjects.

For our convenience let us make the following age-groups:

- Group A : 4 to 5 years
- Group B : 6 to 8 **years**
- Group C : 9 to 12 years

A good **producer/scriptwriter** should know **her/his** audience well. This means getting as much **information** as is possible on the **composition** of the audience—age, measure of their power of understanding, background, aptitude, education, economic status, language, etc. Our country has special problems as our population is by no means homogeneous. We speak different languages, wear different clothes, eat different kinds of food and have **different** customs. In other words, we have a **multicultural** society. Therefore, if we imagine that children of a certain age-group, belonging to

¹Famous writers of books for children.

different parts of the **country**, will have similar perception of a certain programme, we will inevitably be **barking** up the wrong tree. A sensitive scriptwriter has to take note of **her/his** audience profile and be aware of the differences while writing a programme.

Activity 1

Pick any topic for a radio programme for children. How will you deal with it differently for each age-group? Discuss your answer with your counsellor or fellow students. You **can**, for example, think of narrating the story of the **Mahabharata** or **Gulliver's Travels** to **those** different age-groups. Try to edit the story according to the mental capacity of the children. This activity will help you **recognise** the problem of writing for children of **varying** ages.

4.4 DURATION : HOW MUCH TO SAY AND FOR HOW LONG,

Children are the most **demanding** of audiences. If the programme fails to amuse them they are not likely to humour the scriptwriter by being either polite or patient. If a child walks out of **your programme**, you know exactly how successful you have been. There is no **point** in **blaming** the child. It is time to go back and redesign the programme. The **programme** duration should be linked to the child's attention span. Again the **producer** of children's programmes needs to have an understanding of what attracts **children** at **different** ages. Long before children learn to speak in the manner understood by the adults, they **learn** to communicate through nonverbal means. This is through a **combination** of gestures and word-like sounds. A younger group of children, say 4-6 years, would be more attracted to sound and sound patterns. At this stage, the weaning of nursery rhymes is less important to them **than** the rhyming of **similar sounding** words. Take for instance, Sukumar Ray's description of Mother Spook's **affection** for Baby Spook:

My **podgy** imp, my **dancing** chimp, my laughter-lapping fright
 My charming hunk, **my** rooting skunk, in moonless woods at night
 My sunshine-theft, **my** summer's grief, my April shower of rain,
 My sugar-pest, my syrup-pressed from crunchy-candy-cane,
 My precious spice, my pot-of-rice **beneath** the kitchen beams,
 My rider fair upon the mare of **all** my moonlit dreams,
 My pudding-Joe my ball of dough, my **flopsy** floury **freak**,
 My crying love, my thotless dove, just let me hear one squeak.

(Translated by **Sukanta Chaudhury**)

The length of the **programme** would therefore depend on how much of interest it holds for the child. A talk-show would be a disaster for the 4-8 group whereas a programme with more activity could engross them much longer. **Information** overload is usually a **disaster**. Children do not remember anything except the boredom. It is much better to make many short programmes with one concept each than clutter a number of concepts into one programme. If it is story for a younger age group, it should have not more than 3-4 characters because a large cast tends to confuse the young children. The important thing is to sustain their interest.

One way of maintaining attention span is varying the content and pace of the programme as much as **possible**. 'Sesame Street', the popular children's TV series in America, U.S.A., has a **running** time of one hour with as many as 50 different segments — which rarely **last** one minute each. Some of them are just 1/2 minute long. There could be a story, **followed** by a quiz, then a hobby activity, a song, a jingle and so on. This sequence is **constant** so that children know what to expect.

Activity 2

Get a group of children to listen to some broadcasts on AIR. Observe them **carefully**. Look out for what holds their attention and where it wanders. Make a **list of** what apparently attracts them. **Note** down your observations and **discuss** them with your counsellor. This is a **practical** activity and will give you an understanding of the

duration of children's ability to concentrate and listen to programmes of their preference.

4.5 THE PROCESS OF MAKING A PROGRAMME

Let us now **discuss** the various steps involved in the process of making a programme. **The three steps** include research, selection and organisation and an understanding of **different types** of programmes on Radio for children. The making of a good programme is dependent on the script. Before sitting down to script a programme, it is essential to do research, select and **organise** the matter that goes into the programme.

4.5.1 Research

All **good** programmes are backed by thorough research. This could be audience research or content **research** or both.

We **have** already noted the importance of audience research in section 4.3. In this, you may need the help of a communication specialist or researcher. **She/he** will help **you** to determine who your audience is and what their specific needs are. With the **help** of preproduction research you will determine your focus and treatment. At this **stage** it is important for both researcher and producer to be involved. **Research** findings will greatly improve your script.

Content research should proceed as a parallel activity. This means that the programme **content** should be researched thoroughly. Your sources of information **could** be books, articles, **films**; audio **cassettes**, songs, libraries, institutions, people **and** so on.

4.5.2 Selection and Organisation

It is a tough task deciding what is important and what is not. Your first tendency **will be to put in** everything you have unearthed in your research. That is where your discipline as a scriptwriter comes in. Once you have drafted your script, sit on it for **about** two days and keep **revising** it. Each time you will end up discarding excess words and expressions. You **only** finally end up with just **10%** of what you had researched. **This** is not research gone waste. You can choose the right **10%** only **when** you have the rest of the **90%**.

Organizing facts or ideas in a coherent fashion **comes** next. Ideas **should** flow **logically** from one to another. For this, you **will** need to **provide** links and **connections**. You can ensure this by first making an **outline** of your script and **defining** the sequence.

4.5.3 Types of Programmes

So I know what to say, but how? For a start, what kind of a programme am I making – in other words, what is my intent? Education? **Information?** Entertainment?

One often hears the statement "Oh...nothing interesting.. I make dull educational programmes...". The assumption here is that education is dull. If education is dull **then** it is more the **fault** of educators than **education** itself. Who says education **cannot** be fun? But to make learning fun, we **need** to learn the specific needs of children. For example, we need to know how children at different age levels learn. It is **known** that little **children** (ages **3-6**) seldom sit quietly and listen to programmes. Activity is very important to get their attention. Educational programmes on radio **for** them **would** have to incorporate some kind of 'doing in response': "How do little babies **cry**?" "How does **Kalu** the dog bark?" and so on. You may have to provide **gaps** in the programme to incorporate responses by the audience. Games are another interesting way of getting their attention. It is useful to remember that learning **programmes** for little children often need an adult or older child to facilitate participation.

Other popular formats could be riddles, musical programmes and quizzes. For example, to identify animal sounds, one could build a story around a visit to the **zoo**. Instead of describing each animal, the audience could be made to listen to their sounds and guess which ones they were. This can be done through a song **where, at** a particular point, the children are invited to join in and sing.

Older children can **concentrate** on school broadcasts that are both curriculum and noncurriculum based. Caution; these should not become extensions of classroom teaching. That is **the** best way of keeping your audience away from the radio. Besides, radio can never take the place of a **teacher** or book. A teacher **facilitates** continuous interaction and a book inspires reflection. Educational programmes on radio can only be supplement; so the ones that try to teach everything are doomed from the start. It is a **much** better idea to explain one or two concepts and stimulate interest in knowing more. It might even be worthwhile, at the end of the programme, to indicate other sources **of** information. What is important is making learning fun.

Take the teaching of history, for instance. Dramatising an episode of history is more interesting than reading **from** a text book. Learning about the mutiny of 1857 with the sound of horses, battle cries, with music and ambience, is a totally different experience.

Let's talk about **Aurangzeb** for a minute. One way to teach children about Aurangzeb would be to **have** a narrator talking about him and giving us all the facts. Quite another idea would be to take a young boy learning a 'boring' history lesson. While trying to commit dates and details to his memory he falls asleep on the text book. Suddenly, someone taps him on the shoulder (sound effects) and the boy is startled awake. He **finds**, in front of him, a handsome man dressed in princely clothes. The young man discloses that he is indeed Aurangzeb and **most** distressed that the boy had dropped off to sleep reading about him. The boy **apologises** and mutters something about school tests and so on. Aurangzeb laughs and takes **the** child back in time. Now Aurangzeb tells the child all about himself and his times. **This** is an interesting **and** attention-riveting way of teaching history.

Similarly, there is **no reason** why Chemistry learning cannot be made interesting with a quiz, or even essay **writing** competitions and poetry sessions for that matter, through question-answer or **recitations** or read aloud poems with dramatic effect.

Noncurriculum based **information** is also very important. **Children are** no longer interested in just fairy **tales** – it is an insult to their intelligence. There is no reason why they cannot have **documentaries**, magazines programmes or features on radio. What about interviews with the head of the zoo or the chief **fire** officer or the prime minister? The **children's** magazine Target once organized an interview of the **prime** minister by children. **The** questions asked and the discussions initiated were far better than those conducted **by** full time professionals.

Environmental **consciousness**, knowledge about wildlife, handicapped people, information about the latest book fair or film festival, a conversation with Sir Edmund Hillary or **Leander** Paes... You would be **surprised** at what children are interested in these days. How about 'The News' for children?

Finally, of course, **there's** pure entertainment – fiction, fantasy, adventure, musicals and **so** on. Story **telling** is probably the oldest thing in the world and children love it. Stories need to be **adapted** for radio. In fact, they need not be 'told' like stories at all. They can be even **more** fantastic in their scope; Batman **can** fly over **Gotham** city; strange voices **from** outer space **can** be heard; mighty earthquakes and floods **can** occur; **animals** can **speak**... just anything **can** happen.

4.6 DEVELOPING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

Writing for Radio is **an** art. It differs from other forms of writing – which **includes** writing for the print **and** audio-visual media. The writer for Radio, and especially for children's programmes on Radio, has to have an understanding **of** language that is suited to the comprehensibility of children and that sustains their listening interest.

4.6.1 Writing Techniques

When you read a book, it is at your own pace. You can go over a sentence again, consult a dictionary and take time to understand it. But listening to radio involves simultaneous listening and registering it in the mind. The following are a few hints to arrest children's attention and help them register in mind.

i) Language should be brief, simple and conversational. Long, involved and flowery sentences are out : "Those of you who may have chanced to stop at the beauty of a sun-dappled, dew-laden forest on a winter morning and heard the eloquent notes of the **cockoo cry** out to her mate..." is passe. Instead, make it short and simple. Don't state the **abvious**:

"The forest looks quite beautiful on a sun dappled winter morning." Add sound effects of birds **chirping** and the faint sound of a cuckoo. Writing simple sentences doesn't exclude the **possibility** of **expanding** the vocabulary. New words can be introduced but these must **be** explained simply and creatively:.

Mooch: Reprimand. **Rep-ri-mand**. It sounds so grand. Do you know what it means? I am sure I will be given a prize...the teacher said, I would be "reprimanded".

Pooch: Oh Mooch, you are so silly. It means you will be scolded. **That** is what "reprimand" means.

Mooch: Oh...Oh... But you got a book last time you were "reprimanded"...

Pooch: Your English is impossible, Mooch. Teacher said I would be "rewarded" not "reprimanded".

ii) **Give breathing spaces**. The best way of testing this is to speak your **script** aloud. If it does not sound conversational, modify it.

iii) Be personal. It is most important to master the art of being personal on radio. **The** lesser the distance between listener and broadcaster, the better. Talk with **children**, rather than at them, e.g. "Today, we will talk about..." is preferable to "Today, I will tell you..."

iv) **Avoid patronizing**. Sweet Voice: "Guess what we have for our dear little **kiddies today?**" **It** is a complete **fallacy** to think that children like being cootchy-coped all the **time** and have their intelligence insulted. They would rather interact at a "normal" level.

"**This** is **Minu** here and it is good to have you listening," sounds much more casual than ■ **Minu "mausi"** gushing over the line.

v) **Assumptions can be dangerous**: "**All** of you are going to love this song I have **composed**".

Such assumptions are likely to defeat the aim of the programme and fail to make the necessary impact.

4.6.2 The Use of Sound

Little children learn to identify sounds even before they learn words. "Bow-Bow" means 'dog', 'meow' means '**cat**', "Broom" means 'car' and so on. Therefore, sounds play a very important part in their learning. Even ■ they grow older, they never lose **their fascination** for strange sounds and noises. They love banging tins, playing with **mouth** organs, trumpets, horns, and creating all kind of sounds. Before using sounds, **remember** they do not sound the same on a microphone. Try recording wind, you **will know**. The quality of the equipment makes a difference of course. Sometimes **rattling** a tin sheet gives better thunder effect than the original thing. Similarly, **crushing** a sheet of wax paper into a ball sounds like the crackling of fire, water **dripping** onto metal gives a 'rain' effect and so on. Try out some of these yourself : **you may** even be inspired to make a programme on "Making Sounds" for children.

Activity 3

Think of sounds or effects that would describe the **following** emotions:

- a) **Anger**
- b) **Fear**
- c) **Joy**

Check with 4.11, aids to answers.

4.6.3 The Language of Radio

Just as cinema and television have a visual language, radio uses an aural language. You need not describe in words what **can** be conveyed through sound. In a visual medium, scriptwriters are often warned against 'over-stating'. It is the same with radio. If the ambience **of** a morning in the forest **can** be conveyed through the chirping of birds, the **buzzing** of bees and other sounds, don't use words. The same **goes** for emotions (anger, joy, fear, humour,...), time (early morning, twilight, night) or transitions. Music is a good transitional device. But so is the sound of a clock, footsteps fading **out**, a telephone ringing etc. It depends on how you use them.

However, make sure **your** audience understands what you have to convey. Extreme shifts in time and space pose a problem for smaller children. They **expect** a story to move forward. If it **moves** backwards, they may be **confused**. The 'flashback' technique needs to be **used** with great care.

4.6.4 Adapting for Radio

Adapting a written text to radio is essentially understanding the **codes** that the medium follows. A major component of children's programmes, for example, are stories. What adds variety is the fact that stories don't have to be 'told' in the traditional sense of **story** telling on radio. Much of the work of adaptation is giving a 'voice' or 'sound' **to characters** and events. **These** voices and sounds don't always exist in a narrative **which** normally relates events in the indirect voice:

"The wicked **wolf** smiled at **Little Lal** Jamun. He told her to pick some flowers for her **grandmother**. Little **Lal** Jamun thought that was a good idea. She thanked the wolf and set out in the direction of the forest. The wicked wolf chuckled **to himself** as he thought of what a tasty meal grandma would make".

A rough radio script **for** the above would go thus:

Wolf: (gruff voice) "**Aha..aha..look** little Jamun, Why, don't you pluck **some** flowers **for** your grandma — huh? (laughs)...heh---heh..."

Jamun: (sharp, **high** pitched voice): **Oooh** — that's a very good idea Mr. Wolf — thanks very much. I **can see** some pretty flowers over there..."

SOUND OF HUMMING (JAMUN) TO SLOWLY FADE OUT
BACKGROUND SOUND OF FOREST AMBIENCE (BIRDS) TO FADE UP

Wolf: (**chuckling** to himself, smacking lips)
"**Heh---heh---heh---heh..Ummm...s** l u r p . (sings)

"**There** was an old dame
who lived down the lane
And **what** a good meal...
Oh **How** good I feel...Heh-Heh-Heh

FADE OUT VOICE — FADE IN OMINOUS MUSIC

4.6.5 What Attracts Children

Programmes for children require a lot of imaginative work. Just having a catchy **opening** is not enough because attention has to be sustained throughout. You have to 'build certain hooks into the structure. These could be elements within the plot or purely technical details. The following are some suggestions:

- i) **The Unfamiliar:** A mere elaboration of their every day existence is dull and boring. One way of avoiding this is to build in elements of surprise or drama: what did Kaju find in the school library? What happens to the stray kitten? Will **Kaju's** mother let him keep it? Another idea is to literally introduce unfamiliar fantasy characters and situations. I remember a story about the land of Goodies when I was young. Ice creams grew on trees, chocolates could be dug from the ground and houses were built of biscuits with cream as cement! This may not work **on** radio but a wheezy visitor from outer space might just! You need to have a very good idea of what fires the imagination of children. Is it **outer space**, friendly animals, **squawky** birds, gruff voices, ear splitting shrieks, loud bangs, **crazy** music, or **all**?
- ii) **Familiarity and identification:** It may **seem** contradictory to talk of both the familiar and the unfamiliar. What we are essentially talking about is a sense of identification. Children relate better to characters, names and accents that are **recognizable**. Vijaya Ghosh, the associate editor of 'Target', a children's magazine, writes about literature for children:

Even 5 years age, the choice was limited to whatever books were dumped by foreign publishers in the Indian market. We had to make do with Jacks and **Jills** and **Goldilocks** and their ilk...Who had seen daffodils or tulips? Or boarding schools where golden-haired girls and strapping blue-eyed boys indulged in midnight feasts and broke bounds at night? Terribly exciting no **doubt**, but totally unrelated to life in India...

This can well apply to radio.

The universal appeal of *Grimms Fairy Tales* or Hans Christian Anderson should not be done away with. However, the *Panchatantra* stories can be equally good material for Indian children. It doesn't take very much of an effort to adapt Little Red Riding Hood to the story of Little Lal Jamun. The issue is not just of **Indianizing** names but of creating characters that are **closer** to an Indian child's **surroundings**.

- iii) **Characterization:** Identification could also be created by having constant characters. 'Sesame Street', the children's series on American television, is extremely popular because of its muppet protagonists like Big Bird, Bert and **Frenie**. Too many characters on radio can be confusing. It might be a good idea not to have more than three major characters at a time. Introduce them early in the programme and **keep** them consistent. Children get confused with wide variation in **behaviour**. For example, if Kaju loved the kitten, why did he hurt it? Also be careful with names – don't give them **bizarre** names like **Ferozi** Farar **Farishta** which is **difficult** for the **child** to remember!

For example, let us take two characters: **Minu**, who **tells** stories, and **Laddu**, who constantly bothers her with questions. (Of course these **characters** need not be human – they could be animals, birds or even inanimate objects). The two of them cannot be seen so their **appearance** is unimportant. What is important, however, is how they sound. **Their** voices must be easily identifiable. If **Minu** has a low deep voice, **Laddu's** could be a squeaky, shrill one. You can create variety with both male and female voices and with differences in tone, accent and level.

47 MUSIC, SONGS AND SOUND EFFECTS

Radio **seeks** to develop an auditory imagination in children through devices **like** music, sound effects and songs. Children are attracted **specially** to sound or voices that they have not heard before. Simple techniques can add variety. You can create a **funny gibberish language** by playing a spoken tape backwards or a squeaky voice by

recording it at high speed. You can add a reverberation or echo or any other effect. In the movie *Star Wars* by Steven **Spielberg**, the villain, **Darth Vader**, was identified by an ominous hiss **every** time he appeared on screen. This was done by attaching a high powered microphone inside the oxygen tank of a **scuba** diver.

In 1969, 'Sesame Street' was developed on the then revolutionary theory that the same qualities which attracted children to TV commercials—repetitive jingles, 'catchy' tunes and songs (**among** others) could be used to teach them basic **skills** and concepts. Most of the **basic** messages in commercials for young children are **still** presented **through theme songs**. Sometimes it's not even necessary for the song or rhyme to have any **meaning—it is just** the sound pattern that attracts little children.

4.7.1 Repetition and Recapitulation

Children love **repetition**, so they never get tired of hearing the same song or music over and over again. In the American TV series, 'Mister Roger's Neighbourhood', **Mr Rogers** always enters singing his 'Won't you be my **neighbour**', song. The repetition of this song gives the children a sense of familiarity. Another useful device, especially for **educational** programmes, is recapitulation. **This can** be done **interestingly** if built into the script: forgetful character who is slow to pick up (children love laughing at and correcting such people) or even a game woven into the story—"Quickly tell me **again**, what **colour** is the traffic light when it tells you to stop?" (Let there be a **pause** for the audience to react before coming up with an answer.)

4.7.2 Activity

Passive **listening** doesn't **work** with little children. They cannot concentrate on a programme **unless** it **engages** them in a dialogue or activity. **They** also love to do the same thing over and over because they improve on their performance every time. It could be physical activity like clapping hands, banging on tables or verbal responses like repeating sounds or **guessing** things. Most of the time, these programmes need a facilitator (another person who acts as mediator between the radio and the children) with the children at the **listening** end.

4.7.3 Humour: What Makes Children Laugh

Humour is an important **ingredient** for children. They are immediately attracted by what is funny. But the **point** is, what is funny for children? The following **are** some pointers:

- i) Jokes, Riddles and **Puns**: Simple jokes, riddles and puns seem terribly funny to children.

Gobar: Did you **know** Hari ran from his home to school in 3 seconds flat?

Gobhi: Yeah? He **must** have broken some record....

Gobar: That **was** why he was running.

What did the **Red Chillie** tell his **lazy** brother?
"Hurry Much" (children love puns of **this kind**)

What did the **banana** tell the ice-cream?
 Let's split!

(Make sure your **audience can** understand the pun...banana-splits are definitely urban, upper-class.)

Why is **April** the **most** tired month of all?
Because it had 31 days of March!

- ii) Slapstick action and **situations**: Fights, tumbles, falling, hurtling, bouncing, bumbling **all** elicit **humour**. Situations **equivalent** to **"pie-throwing"** are an instant hit.

A character slipping **on** a banana peel may sound like a cliché but children never fail to get **amused** by **situations** like this. On radio, we have to use appropriate sound to present these **situations**.

- iii) **Nonsense**: **This simply means** situations that may not make perfect sense. *Alice*

Another thing to be **careful** about is **setting** high standards of achievement. **This** is being done all too **often**, making children miserable. Our constant characters would be much more **identifiable** if they played pranks and did not **always** top the class.

Child psychologists also **warn** against threats of punishment, example: "He will **learn** a lesson...", "God will **Punish** naughty boys" or "I told you **so.**" **Instead** of threats they suggest **consequence** statements, which are statements that point out the consequences of **certain** actions.

For example:

"You cannot **play** if you do not finish **your** home work." (Negative)

"When you **finish** your home work, you **can** play." (Positive)

4.8.1 Violence

Children grow up with **enough** violence around them, in commercial **films** and **TV**, in the kinds of aggressive **toys** that are made for them and in their families. **Some** of the fairy tales and stories that we have grown up with are **also** extremely violent: "The wood cutter hacked to **death** the wicked-wolf" Or

"Jack fell down and **broke** his crown", and **so** on. **This** can be avoided. Themes with a violent end could **also** be tempered down. For example: "He fell down and hurt himself."

Instead of

'He fell down and broke his crown.'

4.8.2 Gender Bias and Stereotypes

A few years back, Kamla **Bhasin**, a **programme** officer with the FAO, Delhi, published a book of **poems** in **Hindi** called *Uti Suti Meeto* which means 'Topsy Turvy Meeto'. In her **foreword** she said that she was tired of the constant reinforcement of gender **stereotypes** in most **books** for children. Her **book** is a refreshing collection of **poems** where Meeto and her brother **Chotu** grow up with both parents giving them a bath, their mother going to work, father making **her** a cup of tea and so on.

Unfortunately, most of **our** fairy tales and stories still reinforce stereotypes like the 'strong wood-cutter', **weak** little **Red** Riding Hood, the ugly duckling, the handsome prince, the **dark** skinned **invaders** and so **on**. These stereotypes are deeply ingrained in our own thinking. **Therefore** it requires a constant effort to avoid them. For example, in recent **years**, 'Sesame Street' has added new and important people to their programmes. These **include** Blacks, **Hispanics** and children with disabilities. People writing or making **programmes** for children must be **conscious** of these issues.

4.9 THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

The problem starts when we think we have made a **perfect** programme and sit back contented. Most **children's** programmes on **All** India Radio suffer due to a lack of adequate feedback on **where** they are going **wrong**. Children are the best judges of programmes for **themselves**, of course. But it is the job of the researcher or even the producer to translate **their** reactions into suggestions for improvement:

"What did **you** **remember** in the programme?"

"Nothing" (!!!)

Is your programme too **long**, too boring? It is, if your audience goes to sleep or starts fiddling with the volume **control**. **Summative research determines** the impact of the programme and is very **important** to plan future programmes.

4.10 SUMMING UP

- i) **As** we have seen, there are no ready formula for perfect programmes. Children are by no means a homogeneous audience either. Their attention span is extremely limited and therefore a programme may have to be divided into several short segments to create variety.
- ii) A knowledge of child psychology is **useful** when designing programmes for different age groups.
- iii) Younger children **love imitating** and doing things by repetition.
- iv) Since much of the learning at **this** stage is through sound, radio plays an extremely important role in developing in them an auditory imagination. It can create fantastic locales and visions without actually 'showing' them.
- v) Finally, **children** also **need** programmes that have to do with reality—only we must make sure that we do not impose on them our own sense of reality.

4.11 AIDS TO ANSWERS

Activity 3

I can think of:

- a) Slamming of a door, making a noisy exit...
- b) Ominous music, deep breathing or panting...
- c) Whistling, humming, **laughter**....

Activity 4

Here is the beginning of one outline.

Boy : (reciting to **himself** and learning by rote) Shahjahan was called the greater builder...(Yawns) Aurangzeb was born in 1707—no, Aurangzeb **DIED** in 1707..... Aurangzeb was **born**....(voice becomes fainter and fainter and finally fades out)

Music fades in and suddenly on SFX is heard: Pop-pop-pap.
Something like a pop corn machine.

Man's voice: not like history do you?.... falling asleep on your books? (Aurangzeb)

Boy : Who? What? Oh, I must have dropped off....Oh, hello, where did you come from....in that fancy costume?"

Aurangzeb : (To himself) What does one do with these common **phillistines?** This my boy, are my royal, imperial clothes. Of course, you would not know.....you don't know anything about the past, I can imagine....sleeping over your **books**.

Boy : I hope you are not my teacher in disguise. You can't be....old boy wouldn't fit into these clothes. We are not throwing a fancy dress party either....so who are you mister?

Aurangzeb : I am Aurangzeb.

Boy : Who?

Aurangzeb : Aurangzeb, young **man**. Your head fell on the book with such force that I simply had to jump out of it.

Boy : Really, your honour, I mean highness....excellency....Can I call you **Aurangzeb?**

Aurangzeb : **Well**,they *call* me **Badshah**.

Boy : I remember reading that but funnily I don't remember anything else.

Aurangzeb : Maybe you would, if you saw it **all**. I have an idea. Why don't I take you **home** and **simply** show you around? Only, you will have to call me **Badshah.....**if you want to come back alive! So now hold on tight **while** I utter the magic words.

Aurangzeb : **BARRAKARRADDUMM!** POP-POP-POP (**SFX**) fades in
BANG (Loud noise)

Boy : **Ooooh**, my head, what are we doing under the table?

Aurangzeb : Dreadful memory. It misfired. We will try again.
KARRRRRAABARRRADOOMMM. Pop-pop-pop-pop (**SFX**)

Boy : Hey, where are we? And what are those strange people doing in those weird **clothes?**

Aurangzeb : **Don't** insult our people, child. We are home. Just follow me.