

# Drama as an Aid in Academic Learning and Creative Writing: The CBS Radio Mystery Theater

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**Abstract:-** A comprehensive radio series of 1,399 episodes which originally ran seven nights a week from January 1974 to December 1982. The series dealt with a very large expanse of subject matter, not only in classic and modern literature and history, but also at times featured basic facts in the areas of the sciences including chemistry, medicine, astronomy and physics. As a result, the series served, and continues to serve as an effective educational tool in addition to being a source of entertainment very similar in style to the audiobook. It also serves as a virtual template for the study of the art of storytelling and creative writing.

**Keywords:-** Academic Learning, Audiobook, CBS Radio Mystery Theater, Creative Writing, English Literature Instruction, General Education, Radio Drama, Storytelling.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

For nine years, *The CBS Radio Mystery Theater* was for many an escape into another world. Whether it be the times of the Egyptians, the Romantic or Gothic eras, or just a new dimension within the present one. The series was the brainchild of Producer/Director Himan Brown, who's accomplishments in radio to this day are well documented. It was indeed the 1970's version of his previous series *The Inner Sanctum* which he had produced from 1941-52 decades earlier, complete with the opening of a creaking door. At last reports, this is one of only two sounds that are copyrighted in the U.S. Copyright Office, the other being NBC's three chime signature. [1]

The format of the show was well planned and thought out, which made it effective in grabbing and holding the attention of the audience. The host, E.G. Marshall, and later Tammy Grimes in the final season, would welcome the listener over introduction music, greeting them with some insightful thoughts before the "teaser" or snippet of drama from the upcoming story before announcing the title, author of the episode, and usually the sponsors before promising to return with Act I after the commercial break.

More than just a host, they also served as the listener's guide throughout the story. When returning with the first act, they would introduce the story with commentary, often with a quotation from a famous author or poet which would be applicable to the story, helping to stimulate the audience's thoughts. After the first act, they would pose questions about

character's feelings and possible motives, basically just checking in with the listener to see how they were following things. This pattern followed through the second and third acts as well, as the arc of the story progressed. At its climax, they would often offer their own insights, while skillfully allowing the audience to discover their own interpretation of the tale. This format proved very effective as the series was intended for a more adult audience, and by its fourth season in 1977, *Mystery Theater* had an audience of over two million listeners.

The series was inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame in 1990, and was given public acclaim by many organizations. It received the George Foster Peabody Award in 1975, The Mystery Writers of America Raven Award, a Special Citation by The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, and an Award from the Director's Guild of America. Himan Brown was presented a Broadcast Preceptor Award by San Francisco State University for his professional contributions with the series in May, 1979. [1]



Fig 1. Series Initial Magazine Advertisement, Winter 1973.

After over 3000 broadcasts and 1,399 episodes, *The CBS Radio Mystery Theater* drew its final curtain at the end of 1982. There was a short revival of the series in 1998 where Producer/Director Himan Brown hosted the series in much the same way E.G. Marshall and Tammy Grimes had done two decades earlier. The drama was the same, only the introductions and commentary edited out with new versions done by Brown. It was released on CBS Radio's Westwood One affiliates, (and later in the early 2000s was carried by National Public Radio's satellite feed) yet was weakly

promoted and did not continue after the first season. However the series, in both its original and re-release formats are being broadcast on stations all over the world, as well as being available on the Internet from sites such as YouTube, where new generations are discovering the series for the first time.

One of the enduring qualities of this type of storytelling is that it is indeed a shorter, and more dramatic predecessor to the audiobook which has become quite popular in recent years. For sake of convenience and the time constraints of daily life, an audience does not have to set aside time to become involved in a storyline like traditional means in print or in video. Many times the audience is listening to the story while performing an everyday task like commuting to work, or doing housework. Instead of competing for an audience's time, it entertains and even inspires during time already allocated to something else. [2]

Himan Brown once commented in an interview which took place early during the series that he was astounded at the success and popularity the program was having with younger audiences, at ages ranging from 12 to 28 years old. Part of his amazement was due to the fact that most of the people in this age group had been raised on television, and he felt that the series would have far more appeal to those who had grown up with radio drama. [1] This demographic was further proven by the contest drawing during the 1975 season, when an 11-year-old listener in Ft. Madison, Iowa won the *Mystery Theater* first week's grand prize drawing, a vacation to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. [3] As the series continued, the National Education Association, an organization of 1.8 million teachers became interested in the program.

During the 1976 season, *Mystery Theater* did a week-long series of Mark Twain stories and the NEA recommended the broadcasts to their members. John Ryor, NEA President at the time commented: "We have studies that show radio drama can stimulate imagination...I think radio drama has stimulated student interest in literature in ways not adequately evaluated and explored" [1]

With this new, unexpected interest by both a younger audience and educators, a spin-off series was created: *The CBS/General Mills Radio Adventure Theater* in 1977. Directed by Brown, featuring most of the same actors, and hosted by *Happy Days* star Tom Bosley. It featured 52 tales geared towards a younger audience, such as adaptations of *Moby Dick* and *Captain's Courageous*, broadcasting on Saturday and Sunday evenings. The season-long series was recommended by the NEA and was even used in some classrooms for teaching purposes at the elementary to junior high school levels. [4] This support and recommendation for the *Mystery Theater* continued through the series, including several weeks in 1979 where the weekend episodes were dedicated to adaptations of classic mysteries and suspense stories. (Figure 2.)

Along with the suprisingly younger demographic however, the millions of adults tuning in regularly were getting quite an education as well. Whether they were aware of it or not, listeners were being exposed to a massive, broad expanse of material. To literature, in some cases at levels only those with degrees in the field would ever even know existed, let alone experience, along with small doses of scientific data in chemistry, astronomy, medicine, and even at times, physics. *Mystery Theater* was usually very careful about being as thorough as possible, as well as letting the audience know when they were taking liberties of some kind. In addition, through the characters and especially through the hosts and their commentary, the audience was exposed to hundreds of famous quotations and an exceptionally large vocabulary.

This presentation hopes to demonstrate these facts by illustrating some examples from a small fraction of episodes.

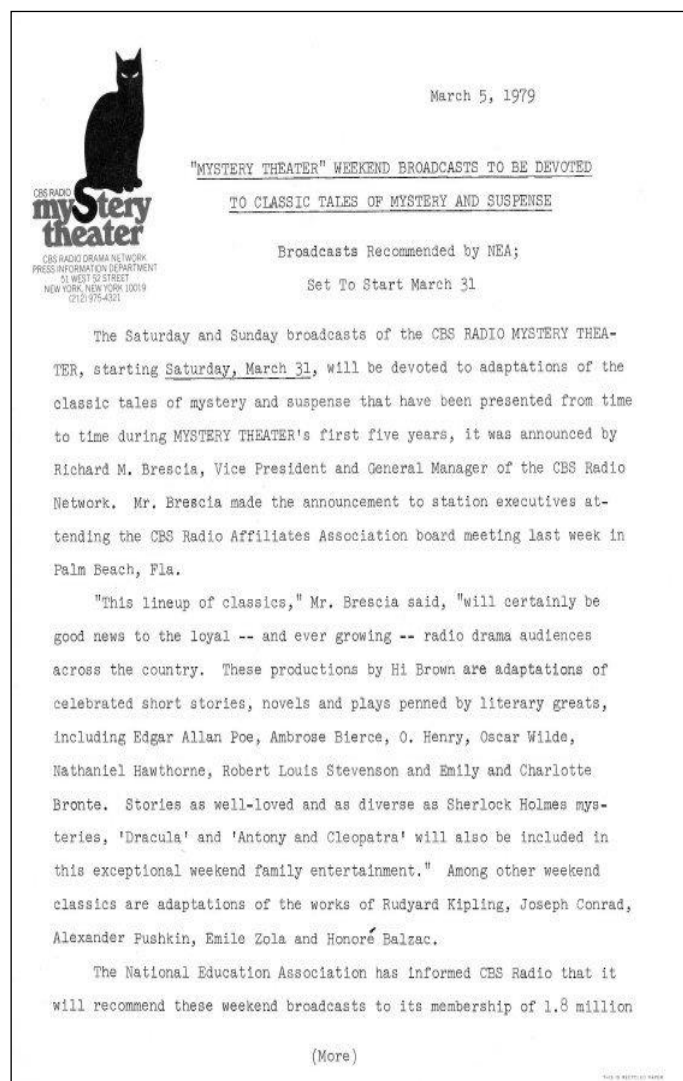


Fig 2. Announcement from Press Information Department of the CBS Radio Drama Network Regarding NEA Recommended Episodes, March, 1979.

## II. CLASSIC LITERATURE

Many episodes were direct adaptations from classical pieces of literature, whereas at other times they were modern versions of classic stories. [5] Although not an exhaustive listing, many works by well-known authors were featured. Those which were adapted using an alternate title are listed where the original title of the story is known, as well as its year of first publication:

- **S. Ansky** “The Demon Spirit” (10/31/1974), adapted from *The Dybbuk*, a play first produced in Warsaw, 1920.
- **Sir Edward Arnold** “The Wandering Wind” (1/17/1979).
- **Honoré de Balzac** “The Countess” (5/26/1977), “The Colonel Chabert” (7/12/1977), “Episode of the Terror” (9/7/1981), adapted from “An Episode during the Terror” first published in 1830.
- **Robert Barr** “The Absent-Minded League” (7/18/1978), adapted from the story, “The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont”, first published in 1906.
- **Ambrose Bierce** “An Occurance at Owl Creek Bridge” (6/4/1974), “The Dammed Thing” (12/10/1974), “The Death of Halpin Fraser” (4/10/1975), “One of the Missing” (1/1/1976), “A Matter of Conscience” (7/14/1977), “A Long Way from Home” (6/9/1978), “The Thing at Nolan” (11/20/1978).
- **Algernon Blackwood** “Night of the Howling Dog” (8/28/1975), “Toy Death” (7/22/1981), adapted from “The Doll”, first published in 1946.
- **Charlotte Brontë** “Jane Eyre” (2/22/1977)
- **Emily Brontë** “Wuthering Heights” (2/29/1977)
- **Edward Bulwer-Lytton** “The House and the Brain” (3/6/1978), “The Last Days of Pompeii”, miniseries in five parts, (1/7-1/11/1980).
- **Miguel de Cervantes** “The Adventures of Don Quixote” (8/24/1977).
- **Anton Chekov** “The Safety Match” (1/26/1978), “Ward Six” (12/13/1978), adapted from “Ward Number Six”, first published in 1892. “The Brooch” (5/19/1982), “The School Mistress” (11/4/1982), “The Boatman and the Devil” (12/7/1982).
- **Wilkie Collins** “The Dream Woman” (7/18/1974), “Mad Monkton” (5/1/1975), “Shadows from the Grave” (2/28/1979).
- **Joseph Conrad** “The Secret Sharer” (5/13/1976), “The Warriors from Loanda” (3/25/1977), adapted from “An Outpost of Progress”, first published in 1897.
- **Charles Dickens** “A Christmas Carol” (12/24/1975), “Trial for Murder” (10/24/1977), “Hunted Down” (11/17/1977).
- **Fyodor Dostoevsky** “Scenes From a Murder” (9/7/1982), adapted from “Crime and Punishment” first published in 1866.
- **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**, “The Hound of the Baskervilles” (3/1/1977), “A Study in Scarlet” (2/25/1977), “The Sign of the Four” (3/8/1977), “The Adventure of the Red-Headed League” (4/26/1977), adapted from The Red Headed League” first published in 1891. “The Boscombe Pool Mystery” (5/31/1977), adapted from “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” first published in 1891. “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (6/28/1977), “A Scandal in Bohemia” (7/11/1977), “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet” (10/7/1977), “The Gloria Scott” (11/14/1977), adapted from “The Adventure of the Gloria Scott”, first published in April, 1893. “The Parasite” (4/7/1978), “The Black Door” (6/23/1978), “The Cabinet of the Unsolved” (7/27/1978), “Doctor Eduardo” (9/11/1978), adapted from “The Story of the Black Doctor”, first published in 1898. “The Black Sheep and the Captain” (9/14/1978), adapted from “The Winning Shot”, first published in 1883. “The Captain of the Pole Star” (10/6/1978), “Never Answer an Advertisement” (10/18/1978), “The Mysterious Rochdale Special” (9/22/1980), adapted from “The Story of the Lost Special”, first published in 1898. “The Dagger of Almohades” (11/10/1980), adapted from “The Case of Lady Sannox”, first published in 1893. “The Vanishing Herd” (1/29/1981), adapted from “The Priory School” first published in 1904. “The Musgrave Ritual” adapted from “The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual” (9/31/1981), “The Silver Mirror” (12/28/1981), “The Naval Treaty” (4/2/1982), “The Rigate Mystery” (11/25/1982).
- **Jacques Futrelle** “The Great Brain” (2/21/1979), adapted from “The Problem of Cell 13”, first published in 1905. “Dangerous Memory” (10/24/1979), “The Secret of the Fifth Bell” (3/12/1980), adapted from “The Haunted Bell”, originally published in 1906, “The Master Minds” (9/11/1980), “The Raft” (3/2/1981), adapted from “The Tragedy of the Life Raft”, first published in 1912. “Diogenes, Inc.” (5/13/1981) adapted from “Diogenes Pauses”, originally published in 1906.
- **Nikolai Gogol** “Diary of a Madman” (3/25/1974), “The Overcoat” (3/3/1977).
- **Maxim Gorky** “The Guilt of the Innocent” (5/11/1978), “The Fools” (7/11/1979), adapted from “An Autumn Night”, first published in 1902.
- **George Griffith** “The Five-Hundred Carats” (10/12/1981).
- **Nathaniel Hawthorne** “The House of Seven Gables” (6/13/1974), “The Kiss of Death” (10/15/1975), adapted from “Rappaccini's Daughter”, first published in 1844. “The Birthmark” (6/20/1977), “Dr. Heidegger's Experiment” (2/7/1978), “The Mysterious Hanging of Squire Huggins” (9/6/1980), adapted from “Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe”, first published in 1834.
- **Lafcadio Hearn** “The Fateful Bell” (4/2/1980), adapted from “The Soul of the Great Bell” first published in 1939.
- **Victor Hugo** “Les Misérables” miniseries in five parts (1/11-1/15/1982).
- **H. Rider Haggard** “She” (11/21/1977).
- **Thomas Hardy** “What the Shepherd Saw” (1/12/1976).
- **Bret Harte** “The Postmistress of Laurel Run” (2/3/1978).
- **O. Henry** Week in January, 1977. “Two Renagades” (1/10/1977), “The Passing of Black Eagle” (1/11/1977), “Tobin's Palm” (1/12/1977), “Don't Die Without Me”



- (1/13/1977), adapted from "The Furnished Room" first published in 1904. "A Departmental Case" (1/14/1977), "Cherchez la Femme" (1/15/1977), "Jimmy Valentine's Gamble" (1/16/1977), adapted from "A Retrieved Reformation" first published in 1903. "Wanted, a Husband" (5/7/1980), adapted from "The Exact Science of Matrimony" first published in 1907.
- **Robert Hichens** "Shadow of Love" (10/4/1978), adapted from "How Love Came to Professor Guildea", originally published in 1900.
  - **Sir Anthony Hope** "The Prisoner of Zenda" (4/22/1977).
  - **Washington Irving** "The Guillotine" (9/17/1979), adapted from "The Adventure of the German Student", first published in 1824. "The Specter Bridegroom" (12/3/1979).
  - **Henry James** "The Third Person" (9/19/1975), "A Tragedy of Error" (4/6/1978), "Edmund Orme" (5/15/1978), adapted from "Sir Edmund Orme", first published in 1891. "The Locked Trunk", adapted from "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" first published in 1868 "Tomorrow Is Never" (5/12/1980), adapted from "The Aspern Papers", first published in 1888. "Maud-Evelyn" (7/2/1980), "Confession" (10/22/1980), "The Liar" (9/28/1981), "The Tool Shed" (3/22/1982).
  - **M. R. James**, "This Will Kill You" (3/4/1974), adapted from "Casting the Runes", first published in 1911. "The Figure in the Moonlight" (5/2/1978).
  - **Rudyard Kipling** "The Light That Failed" (2/28/1977), "The Bisara of Pooree" (7/18/1977), "At the End of the Passage" (10/10/1979), "By Word of Mouth" (10/21/1979), "That's What Friends Are For" (2/4/1980), "The Leopard Man" (8/24/1981), adapted from "The Mark of the Beast", first published in 1890.
  - **Leopold Kompert** "The Silent Woman" (6/1/1978).
  - **Maurice Leblanc** "My First Rouge" (6/4/1982), "The Rivalry" (7/2/1979), "The Gettysburg Address" (9/24/1979).
  - **Gaston Leroux** "The Phantom of the Opera" (4/28/1975).
  - **Catherine Louisa Pirkis** "Murder at Troyte's Hill" (4/17/1978).
  - **T. L. Neuger** "The Romany Revenge" (11/29/1978).
  - **Joseph Sheradin LeFanu** "Till Death Do Us Join", (4/5/1975), adapted from "Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter", originally published in 1839. "Carmilla" (7/31/1975), "The Man with the Claret Mark" (11/3/1978).
  - **Prosper Mérimée** "The Venus D'ille" (4/30/1974).
  - **William Morrow** "The Permanent Man" (4/9/1979).
  - **Guy de Mupassant** "The Horla" (2/22/1974). "The Hand" (4/24/1974), "The Diamond Necklace" (5/19/1975), "The Graveyard" (11/8/1976), adapted from, "Was it a Dream?" originally published in 1903. "The Artist" (12/28/1976), "Revenge is Sweet" (2/14/1978), adapted from "A Piece of String" first published in 1883.
  - **Edith Nesbit** "Man Sized in Marble" (4/12/1977).
  - **Eugene O'Neil** "Flower of Evil" (9/14/1981), adapted from the stage play *Desire Under the Elms*, first produced

in 1924, which in turn was inspired by the Euripides play *Hippolytus* first produced in 428 B.C.

- **Alexander Pushkin** "The Queen of Spades" (3/8/1976), "The Last Duel" (4/30/1982), adapted from "The Shot", first published in 1831.
- **Edgar Allen Poe** "Fall of the House of Usher" (3/14/1974), "The Black Cat" (4/1/1974). Week of stories, January 1975, "The Premature Burial" (1/6/1975), "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1/7/1975), "The Oblong Box" (1/8/1975), "Berenice" (1/9/1975), Adaptations of "The Masque of the Red Death" (1/10/1975), "The Tell Tale Heart" (1/11/1975), and "A Cask of Amontillado" (1/12/1975). "The Pit and the Pendulum" (2/4/1975).



Fig 3. Advertisement for Series on WHBF Radio, 1270 AM Rock Island, Illinois, January 1974.

- **Melville Davisson Post** "The Sealed Room Murder" (10/23 1975): Adapted from "The Doomdorf Murder" originally first published in 1918
- **Mary Shelley** "The Transformation" (5/7/1975).
- **Sir Walter Scott** "It's Hell to Pay the Piper" (10/31/1975), adapted from "Wandering Willie's Tale" from the novel *Redgauntlet*, first published in 1824.
- **William Shakespeare** Week in April, 1976. "Murder Most Foul" (4/19/1976), adapted from *Macbeth*, "The Assassination" (4/20/1976), adapted from *Julius Caesar*, "Love Song of Death" (4/21/1976), adapted from *Romeo and Juliet*, "The Green-Eyed Monster" (4/22/1976) adapted from *Othello*, "Long Live the King is Dead" (4/23/1976), adapted from *Hamlet*, "The Prince of Evil" (2/24/1976) adapted from *Richard III*, "The Serpent of the Nile" (2/25/1976), adapted from *Antony and Cleopatra*.
- **Robert Louis Stevenson** "The Suicide Club" (5/7/1974), "Dr. Jeckll and Mr. Hyde" (6/18/1974), "The Beach at Falsea" (8/12/1974), "The Imp in the Bottle" (9/3/1974), "The Body Snatchers" (12/5/1974), "The Sire D'Maletroits Door" (2/6/1975), "The Cezar Curse" (3/14/1975), "Markheim, Man or Monster?" (5/23/1975), adapted from "Markheim", first published in 1884.
- **Bram Stoker** "Dracula" (5/2/1974).

- **Leo Tolstoy** “Much Too Much” (5/2/1977), adapted from “Too Dear!” first published in 1897. “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” (10/13/1978).
- **Mark Twain** Week in 1976. “Tom Sawyer, Detective” (1/5/1976), “Is He Living or Is he Dead?” (1/6/1976), adapted from “Is He Dead?” first published in 1893. “The Russian Passport” (1/7/1976), adapted from The Belated Russian Passport” first published in 1902. “A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court” (1/8/1976), “The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg” (1/9/1976), “The Stolen White Elephant” (1/10/1976), and “The Mysterious Stranger” (1/11/1976). “The Dead House” (12/29/1978), adapted from “Life on the Mississippi” first published in 1883. “A Curious Experience” (5/30/1979), “The Goddess Caper” (8/1/1979), adapted from “The Legend of the Capitoline Venus”, first published in 1869.
- **Jules Verne** “The Mysterious Island” (7/19/1977), “The Intruder” (2/27/1980)
- **H.G. Wells** “The Man Who Could Work Miracles”(8/26/1976), “City of the Dead” (11/4/1976), “Flash Point” (9/1/1978), “The Long, Long Sleep” (1/15/1979), “Watcher of the Living” (3/7/1979), “Search for Eden” (5/7/1979), adapted from “The Country of the Blind” first published in 1904.
- **Edith Wharton** “Afterward” (3/2/1976), “The Man in the Black Cap” (9/5/1979), adapted from “The Glimpse” first published in 1932. “The Beast” (10/1/79), “The Gilbert Stuart” adapted from “The Rembrandt” (10/27/1980), “Guilty” (11/3/1980), “The House of the Dead Heart” (7/16/1979), adapted from “The House of the Dead Hand” originally published in 1904.
- **Oscar Wilde** “The Canterville Ghost” (7/15/1974), “The Picture of Dorian Grey” (8/7/1974), “The Saxon Curse” (3/29/1976).
- **Émile Zola** “The Corpse That Would Not Die” (6/7/1976), adapted from “Thérèse Raquin” first published in 1867. “J’Accuse”(10/16/1981).

### III. EXPOSURE TO CLASSIC QUOTATIONS

As Host, E.G. Marshall and Tammy Grimes would introduce or comment during stories with many sayings of famous or well known authors, philosophers, scholars, etc. which would help set the mood of the story that was unfolding or would soon unfold. And sometimes the quotations would be within the dramas by the characters themselves. A few examples of passages that many would never hear, let alone learn outside the study of literature include:

- “Rejoice not over thy greatest enemy being dead, but remember that we die all” -Ecclesiasticus 8:7
- “Nor are we to use living things, like old shoes and throw them away when they are worn out, or broken with service”-Plutarch. “All Living Things Must Die” (4/29/1974).
- “Each man kills the thing he loves”- Oscar Wilde. “The Cask of Amotillado” (1/12/1975).
- “The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary. Men alone are quite capable of every

wickedness” - Joseph Conrad. “The Transformation” (5/7/1975).

- “Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes” - Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden*. “The Rape of the Maia” (6/27/1975).
- “Money is a sixth sense, without which, one cannot make proper use of the other five”- Somerset Maugham “Help, Somebody” (8/18/1975).
- “Who knows but some of counterfeit ventriloquists prove true ones”- Henry Moore “The Voice of Death” (9/11/1975).
- “He who steals my purse steals trash. ‘Tis something, nothing. ‘T’was mine, ‘tis his. Yet he who robs me of my good name steals that which not enriches him, but makes me poor indeed”- William Shakespeare from *Othello*. “The Corpse Wrote Shorthand” (12/19/1975).
- “When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth” - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, from *The Sign of the Four*. “Don’t Play With Matches” (9/26/1976).
- “It takes ‘o heap of living in a house t’ make it home. It takes a heap ‘o sun and shatter, an’ ye sometimes have t’ roam.” -Edgar Guest, “Little Lucy’s Lethal Libation” (6/16/1977).
- “Never look back. Something might be gaining on you”- Sachel Page “Sorry To Let You Go” (10/21/1977).
- “If wrinkles should be written upon our brow, let it not be written upon our hearts. The spirit should not grow old.” - James A. Garfield. “Dr. Heidiggers Experiment” (2/7/1978).
- “Lives of great men all remind us, we can make our lives sublime, and departing leave behind us, footsteps on the sands of time” - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow “Angel from England” (2/20/1978).
- “War is like an epidemic insanity...infecting men’s brains instead of their bowels” - Ralph Waldo Emerson “Loser Take All” (2/24/1978).
- “There are only two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart’s desire, and the other is to get it” -George Bernard Shaw (also credited to Oscar Wilde) “Loser Take All” (2/24/1978).
- “It is just as easy to marry rich, than marry poor”- William Makepeace Thackeray “Close Shave” (7/24/1978).
- “When your daemon is in charge do not try and think consciously. Drift, wait, and obey” - Rudyard Kipling “Our Own Jailer” (8/18/1978).
- “What beckoning ghost along the moonlight shade, steps and points to yonder glade” -Alexander Pope “The Forever Alley” (10/2/1978).
- “Man is the only animal who knows he will die” - Voltaire “Night Visitor” (11/24/1978).
- “Better die once, and for all, than to live in continual terror of death” – Aesop. “The Long, Long Sleep” (1/15/1979).
- “For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come, when we have shuffled out of this mortal coil, must give up pause. There is the respect that makes calamity of so long

- a life” - William Shakespeare, *Prince of Denmark* “The Long Long Sleep” (1/15/1979).
- “Come he slow, or come he fast, it is but death that comes at last” -Sir Walter Scott “War of Angels” (4/30/1979).
  - “It ain’t no sin if you crack a few laws now and then. Just so long as you don’t break any” -Mae West “War of Angels” (4/30/1979).
  - “Love is the story of a woman’s life. But it is only a chapter in a man’s” -Madame de Stael “The Giuseppe Verdi Autobus” (8/27/1979).
  - “Don’t think about it. Just stock up your brain attic with furniture that you can get at when you need it.”- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle “The Great Brain” (2/21/1979).
  - “Her lips were red, her looks were free, her locks were yellow as gold. The nightmare of life in death is she who thickens men’s blood with cold- Samuel Coleridge “The One Thousand Pound Gorilla” (12/31/1979).
  - “Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be! The last of life, for which the first was made.” -Robert Browning “Talk To Me” (2/11/1980).
  - “I prefer an accomodating vice to an obstinate virtue” -Molière. “Laundry Money” (3/3/1980).
  - “If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead, either write the things worth the reading, or do the things worth the writing”- Benjamin Franklin “How Can I Ever Thank You?” (4/30/1980).
  - “Satan is a hard boss to work for. While everyone else is on vacation, that is when he keeps you the busiest”-Mark Twain “Wanted: a Husband” (5/7/1980).
  - “The power to guess the unseen from the seen... is said to constitute experience” -Henry James “The Unseen and the Seen” (5/25/1980).
  - “Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war” -William Shakespeare “Kill Now, Pay Later” (8/20/1980).
  - “Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless” -John Ruskin “Number One” (9/15/1980).
  - “Nothing is now left remarkable beneath the visiting moon”- William Shakespeare *Antony and Cleopatra* “The Threshold” (9/17/1980).
  - “There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune” -William Shakespeare *Hamlet* “Confession” (10/22/1980).
  - “Roll on deep blue ocean, roll. Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain. Man marks the earth with ruin. His control stops with the shore.” -Lord Byron “Is Venice Drowning?” (2/6/1981).
  - “Alas, how easily things go wrong, a sigh too much, or a kiss too long. And there follows a mist, and a weeping rain, and life is never, the same again.”- George MacDonald “Behind the Blue Door” (3/13/1981).
  - “The world is too much with us. Getting and spending we lay waste our powers. Little we see in nature that is ours. We have given our hearts away” -William Wordsworth “Waking and Sleeping” (6/29/1981).
  - “Society is wonderfully delightful. To be in it is merely a bore. To be out of it is simply a tragedy- Oscar Wilde “Daddy’s Girls” (10/26/1981).
  - “Time is the stream I go a-fishing in”- Henry David Thoreau “Pie in the Sky” (7/17/1981).
  - “Goodspeed to your youthful valor boy! So shall you scale the stars!”-Virgil “Stranded” (6/8/1981).
  - “Let us honor, oh my brothers, Christmas Day. Call a truce then to our labors. Let us feast with friends and neighbors and be merry as the customs of our caste. For if faint and forced the laughter, and if sadness follow after, we are richer, by one mocking Christmas Past.”- Rudyard Kipling “The Leopard Man” (8/24/1981).
  - “Great love is born out of great knowledge of the object one loves. If you do not understand them, you can only admire them lamely. Love is the daughter of knowledge, and love is deep in the same degree as the knowledge is sure.” -Leonardo Da Vinci, “The Liar” (9/28/1981).
  - “If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. That is the principle difference between a dog and a man.” -Mark Twain “Diana the Huntress” (11/27/1981).
  - “When moving forward to the discovery of the unknown the scientist is like a traveler who reaches higher and higher summits, from which he sees in the distance new countries to explore. Be ready for what you find” -Louis Pasteur “Harry’s Taxi and the T-Machine” (12/14/1981).
  - “Music is the universal language of mankind”- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow “The Magic Stick of Manitu” (3/19/1982).
  - “I have never seen a greater monster, or greater miracle, than myself”- Michel de Montaigne “Escape to Prison” (6/28/1982).
  - “With curious art, the brain too finely wrought, preys on it, and is destroyed by thought.” -Charles Churchill “The Hand of Amnesia” (7/12/1982).
  - “Life is a garment we continually alter, but which never seems to fit” -David McCord “Redhead” (8/3/1982).
  - “Hear the tolling of the bells, iron bells, what a world of solemn thought” -Edgar Allen Poe, “The Way Station” 9/20/1982.
  - “All our knowledge brings us closer to our ignorance. All our ignorance brings us closer to death” -T.S. Eliot. “Fly Swatter” (10/13/1982).
  - “The world will never starve for want of wonders, but only of want of wonder” -G.K. Chesterton, from *Tremendous Trifles* “Three Fireflies in a Bottle” (10/22/1982).

#### IV. EXAMPLES OF HISTORICAL EVENTS AND SCIENTIFIC DATA

Although much of classical literature is illustrative of the times in which it was written, as the series continued, many later episodes dealt with historical events (Figure 4). A few examples, all of which were based on actual historical events and/or documents include:

- “Burn Witch, Burn” (12/15/1975), a story about the witch trials of Salem in 1692 and the involvement of Cotton Mather.
- “The Pinkerton Method” (11/23/1977) The story of how the first national detective agency began.



- “Angel from England” (2/20/1978) The story of British Nurse Edith Cavell and her work during World War I.
- “Nefertiti” (1/8 through 1/12/1979) Five-part series about the Egyptian Queen, her strained relationship with her husband and dealing with her enemies during her reign.
- “Portrait of an Assassin” (10/8/1980) The story of the assassination of President James Garfield by Charles Guiteau in 1881.
- “The Legend of Alexander” (1/12-1/16/1981) Five-part series which sequences the events in the life of Alexander the Great.
- “The Fountain of Truth” (1/20/1981) Ponce De Leon and the conquistadors in search of the Fountain of Youth.
- “Last Act” (3/11/1981) Story of the Herbert John Bennet murder on Yarmouth Beach in England in 1900, and how the wrong man may have been executed for the crime.
- “Did I Say Murder” (3/27/1981) Eleanor of Aquitaine who left her husband Louis VII of France for Henry II of England.
- “But With Blood” (4/17/1981) An account of the abolitionist John Brown and his involvement at Harper’s Ferry in 1859.
- “End of a Queen” (5/11/1981) The last days of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI, and the beginnings of the French Revolution.
- “Mata Hari” (10/2/1981) Story of a Dutch dancer and courtesan who was convicted in France of being a spy for Germany during World War I.
- “Sleeping Dogs” (10/9/1981) The story of Colonel Martinet in the service of Louis XVIth army, and where the term “Martinet” originated.
- “Death Will Not Silence Me” (11/16/1981) A chronicle of the lives and descendants of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln.
- “The Silver Mirror” (12/28/1981) Deals with not only the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but the murder of David Rizzio, the musician of Mary Queen of Scots in 1566.
- “To Be an Empress” (1/26/1982) The story of Catherine the Great, and her journey in becoming Empress of Russia.
- “The Good Ship Aud” (2/1/1982) Story about Sir Roger Casement, an Irishman who was executed in 1917 for service against England in attempting to establish a free and independent Ireland.
- “In the Cards” (3/26/1982) The stormy marriage of Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine.

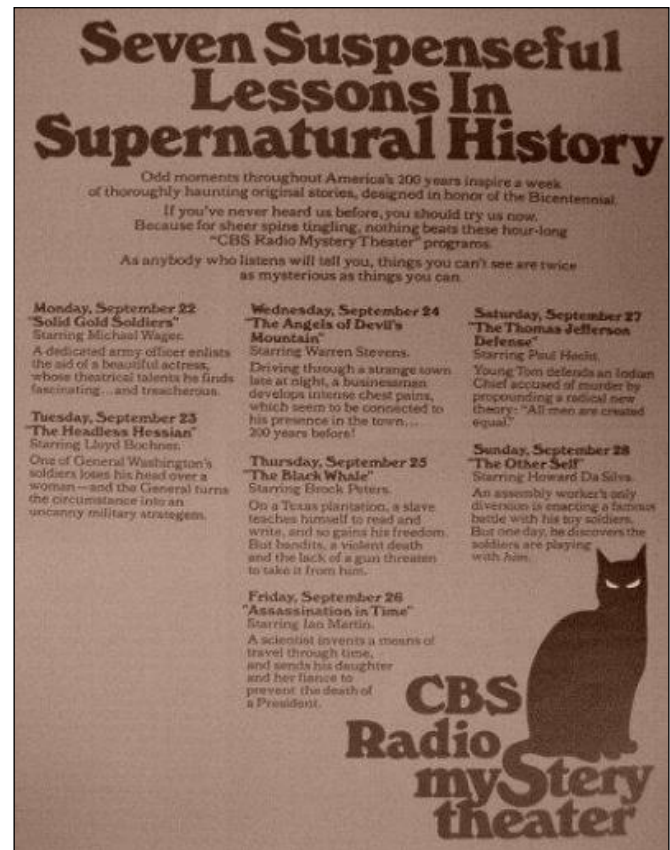


Fig 4: Advertisement for Bicentennial episodes, Fall 1975.

- “I Am the Killer” (3/31/1982) Dr. Ignatz Semmelweis and his revolutionary efforts in antiseptic policy and the reduction of childbed fever.
- “His Fourth Wife” (4/12/1982) and “Murder by Decree” (8/5/1982) two stories illustrating the wives of Henry VIII, and the involvement of several historical figures in the king’s court.
- “Adolph and Eva” (7/27/1982) The last days of Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun at the end of WWII.
- “Pursuit of a Dream” (9/22/1982) The life of Nobel Prize winner Madame Marie Curie.
- “The Abraham Lincoln Murder Trial” (10/6/1982) One of Lincoln’s early cases as an attorney for the defense in a murder trial.
- “Last Days of a Dictator” (10/20/1982) The last days of Benito Mussolini, Italian fascist dictator.
- In illustrating more recent history, the series also represents by its adult story lines a first-hand experience of what it was like to live in the 1970’s and 80’s. Subjects like pollution, (“Masque of the Red Death” 1/10/1975) overpopulation, (“A God Named Smith” 6/2/1977) and the energy crisis (“Through the Looking Glass” 4/17/1975) which were concerns of the times (as they still are today) were used often as subject matter in certain episodes. Even more sensitive issues such as abortion, (“The Phantom Lullaby” 5/29/1974 and “The Ghost Plane” 9/12/1975) sterility, (“The Bullet” 1/8/1974) women’s liberation, (“Blizzard of Terror” 2/18/1974) and homosexuality (“Fallen Angel”, 6/9/1975 and “Carmilla” 7/31/1975) were touched on in storylines.

- *Mystery Theater* also showed its foresight in developing stories about subjects which now concern us today, such as virtual reality, ("The Land of Dreams" 9/18/1981) artificial intelligence, ("A.L.I.C.E." 7/15/1981) and global warming ("Is Venice Drowning?" 2/6/1981).
- Those recordings of episodes with CBS News still attached before or after the episode also allow the listener to hear actual reports about Watergate, Patty Hurst, the Viking Probes landing on Mars, as well as news regarding the Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan Administrations. Those episodes with commercials still included for chuck steak at 59 cents a pound on sale at ShopRite supermarkets, and Public Service Messages from the Ad Council about the importance of driving 55 further illustrate this experience [4]. General knowledge, bits of chemistry, medicine, astronomy, physics and other sciences are also spread throughout the storylines of the series. A few random facts taken for examples include:
- Severe pains in the right side of the upper abdomen is often symptomatic of a patient having gall stones, sometimes mistaken for appendicitis. A hardened cyst on the skin, often removed by a strong blow or application of force is referred to as a wen. "A Very Old Man" (1/22/1974)
- Pathology is the study in medicine of diseases and their causes. A reduced blood cell count in the blood usually results in a condition known as anemia, where a patient is easily fatigued and has a marked lack of energy. "Time and Again" (1/27/1974)
- Aconite, a chemical substance found in types of inedible mushrooms, has been extracted and prescribed as a heart sedative. "Dead Ringer" (2/1/1974)
- In medicine, when an organ, appendage, etc. starts to disappear or dissipate, it is called attrition. "Men Without Mouths" (4/16/1974)
- In geology, a type of soil which is rich in calcium and has a rather chalky texture is known as calcareous soil. "Snake in the Grass" (7/14/1974)
- A series of metal alloys and ores from which they are derived which contain a large percentage of iron are known as ferrous metals. "The Deadly Process" (7/22/1974)
- At one end of the solar color spectrum, there are infrared waves, and at the other are ultraviolet waves. Only a few colors between the ends of the color spectrum are visible to the human eye. "The Dammed Thing" (12/10/1974)
- Kaolin, a fine white clay that is used in the manufacture of china and porcelain has also been used internally in the treatment of digestive and intestinal disorders. "Faith and the Faker" (1/14/1975)
- The part of the human eye that is continuous with the optic nerve and receives the image produced by the lens is known as the retina. "The Rise and Fall of the Fourth Reich" (5/16/1975)
- Planck's Quantum Equation is best expressed as  $E=h\nu$ , one of the most abstruse concepts in theoretical physics. "The Boy Wonder" (4/6/1976)
- A strand of DNA is shaped in a ladder-like formation often referred to as a helix. When a virus makes itself more resistant to treatment, it is said to develop a new strain. "Area 13" (8/26/1977)
- In seismology, the study of earthquakes and geological movement, geophones monitor primary and secondary waves. Rayleigh waves of sufficient strength have the power to resonate around the globe. "Yesterday's Giant" (1/30/1978)
- The study of man's social relations and culture is known as anthropology, whereas the study of past civilizations is known as archeology. "The Avocado Jungle" (4/21/1978)
- In cardiology, a weakening of the wall of an artery or blood vessel within the body, causing it to dilate and eventually rupture is known as an aneurysm. "The Exploding Heart" (12/8/1978)
- The rings around the planet Saturn are composed primarily of ice crystals. "The Long, Long, Sleep" (1/15/1979)
- Several types of acid, such as nitric acid may be neutralized by a common household item such as tooth powder or paste. "The Great Brain" (2/21/1979)
- Black holes in space theoretically have such strong gravitational pulls that even electromagnetic radiation cannot escape them. Our sun is also a star, which is named Sol. "The Hole in the Sky" (5/9/1979)
- Spontaneous combustion is the process of a fire starting seemingly by itself, due to the buildup of gasses in an enclosed area. Chrome green is the base pigment in the manufacture of green paint, along with other shades and hues from this color. "The Eighth Day" (9/26/1979)
- The science of growing plants in a liquid instead of soil is known as hydroponics. "Prisoner of the Machines" (1/16/1980)
- In Einstein's equation,  $E=mc^2$ , the mass of the moving object, theoretically, upon reaching the speed of light becomes infinite. The Voyager 1 and 2 space probes confirmed the existence of the planet Jupiter's 14<sup>th</sup> moon in 1979. The planet itself gives off more magnetic energy than any other planet in our solar system. "Ocean of Emptiness" (9/10/1980)
- A ray of electromagnetic radiation emitted from an atomic nucleus is known as a gamma ray. "The Threshold" (9/17/1980)
- Sodium amytal is a colorless, crystalline barbiturate, used in medicine in the practice of forensic psychology as a sedative. "Hidden Memory" (8/28/1981)
- The Amanita genus of mushroom is among the most poisonous types of inedible mushrooms. "Flower of Evil" (9/14/1981)
- The Xiphoid Process- in medicine, the cartilaginous sword-shaped process of the lower breastbone and/or the sternum. "Diana the Huntress" (11/27/1981)
- Scientists have discovered that it is possible to float heavy objects in hydrogen gas. However the slightest friction would cause everything to burn. "Too Early, Too Late" (12/31/1981)
- In the human heart, the mitral valve controls the flow of blood from the left atrium and ventricle. "A Change of Heart" (2/8/1982)



- In horticulture, McIntosh, Idared, and Gravenstein are different types of apples. “How Do You Like Those Apples?” (8/31/1982)

## V. CONCLUSION, AND FORMAT AS AID IN CREATIVE WRITING AND STORYTELLING

The series, now 50 years since its inception at this writing continues to be an effective educational experience in the aforementioned areas, as well as a form of entertainment. Much like an audiobook, it offers the audience the advantage of multitasking certain kinds of activities while listening. Although we have illustrated some of the vast academic benefits of this series, the creativity it may inspire can be even far more impressive.

Himan Brown often stated in interviews about what he called “The Theater of the Mind” [6]. That this type of presentation could create pictures within the audience’s mind far better than any film or visual representation could ever aspire to. That the words, which would be the writing itself in concert with their delivery by the actors and the participation of the audience makes the experience more immediate, as if it is happening at that moment [7].

It was the writing as well as the acting that accounted for the series longevity. The three-act format, and commentary throughout the episode enabled the listening audience to become intrigued within the first few minutes, and quickly immersed into the storyline. This layout continued to produce quality stories for almost a decade. They had to be good enough to not only hold a listener’s attention for one evening, but seven nights a week for nine years. [1]

It is also suggested that the repeated experience of this format may also serve in learning and developing skills in storytelling, and also in identifying quickly what worked in a story and what didn’t within a very broad expanse of subject matter. As a result, the series is also virtually a writer’s paradise in the opportunity to observe how to set scenes, create dialogue, and learn the correct pace in keeping an audience interested while climbing the arc in creating a story. It also enables the study of a wide variety of story types and writing styles, both by the writers themselves, and the classic tales they adapted for the series while still remaining within the same basic format.

Any aspiring storyteller must begin with the work of others and learn from their styles to develop their own. Through study of this series, it is proposed that balance in storytelling may be more effectively learned than from other forms of media such as movies or television. Without a screen to watch, it is much easier to identify when sex or violence is merely gratuitous, and when it is being used effectively to illustrate the motives or emotional struggles of the characters. [4]

Within this format, the aspiring writer may also learn timing, in what to reveal when, and what specific point they are giving away too much of a character’s insight. It is

always a challenge for any writer to create characters who’s experiences are quite different than their own. However, by learning from the writers of this series, it can enable the student to develop the skills necessary to accomplish this. To base their character’s delmmas on their own personal struggles by placing them in similar delmmas but entirely different settings. This alone may indeed be this series finest quality and asset, as well as its greatest legacy.

*Mystery Theater* has shown impact on writers and recent culture. Writer and director J.J. Abrams of *Lost* fame included a segment from the episode “Love After Death” in his film *Super 8* (2011) which takes place in 1979, the year of this episode’s original broadcast. Author Jack Womack in his 1987 novel *Ambient*, the first installment of what is known as the Dryco Series, includes both a supercomputer named “Alice”, probably inspired by the episode “A.L.I.C.E.” (7/15/1981) along with a prominent character named “Mister Dryden”, quite possibly suggested by the name of prolific *Mystery Theater* actor Robert Dryden.

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