

What is the Moth Radio Hour?

Live storytelling in front of an audience recorded at story slams across the country. Stories align with a theme and range from hilarious to heart-wrenching.

And the month before the trip, I had the brilliant idea. I was going to learn how to swim from YouTube.

"Take a Deep Breath," Ishtier Chaudhary

And then, it occurred to me that maybe Jim didn't realize that he was dying...

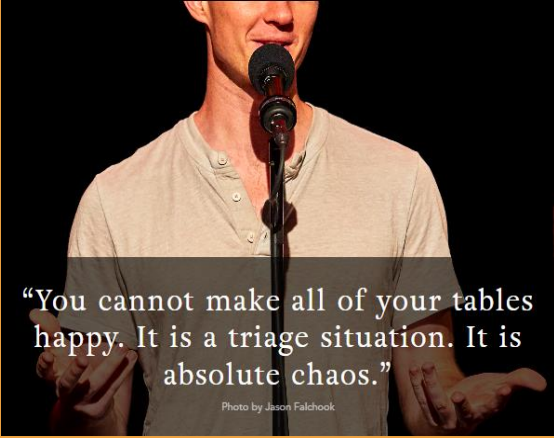
"I Don't Like Lima Beans," Elizabeth Fritzler

... am I about to have, like, a fight with this small, elderly Russian woman, and we're both naked?

"The Bath House," Sofia Stefanovic

So, we make our wishes and we're throwing in our coins and we're tossing and we're like maniacs and we're laughing. I look at her and I fall in love with my mom. I have not had a chance to be with her my entire life and I have her. I don't even need to make any more wishes.

"Call me the Rock, or call me Colombia," Alexandra Rosas



"You cannot make all of your tables happy. It is a triage situation. It is absolute chaos."

Photo by David Rodriguez

"I know that this woman isn't even going to tip me. I'm not going to even - I don't benefit at all from this. I know I should. I should apologize and say sorry and walk away, but I snapped and I thought, I'm going to sell this woman the most expensive bottle of wine on the goddamn menu. The Bodega Noemia Malbec, which is a \$450 bottle of wine..."

No Peaches, Otis Gray

THE MOTH



Like a moth to a flame

30 narratives from 6 episodes

So, love. Love is so beautiful, but it can get you killed. So, I'm about to do the craziest thing I have ever done in my life.

"My Crush Almost Got Me Crushed," Gary Yimenez



Melissa Rich
Michigan State University

Why all the flutter?

Rationale for analyzing the Moth Radio Hour

Engaging material
Rich source of authentic language and expression
Integration of skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing
Translanguaging potential with multilingual narratives
Storytelling skill applicable to variety of contexts

Set List

Episode themes and narrative titles

Late Night: April 15
-My Crush Almost Got Me Crushed
-No Peaches
-Fireworks
-Strip House

Lemon Pepper Wings All Flats Wet: May 20
-The Bathhouse
-Hello Darlin' ...and Goodbye
-Hey Buddy
-Driver's Ed Confessional

Life's a Mystery: June 3
-The Craigslist Broker
Call Me The Rock, or Call Me Colombia
-Not So Sweet
-The 1943 S Double Dye

Green: June 10
-Take a Deep Breath
-What Grew Instead
-I Don't Like Lima Beans
-Finders Keepers
-The Pash Dash
-Reject

Oh, Brother: July 8
-The Last One to Know
-Pandemic Pillows
-Cowboys Catharsis
-Half a Brother
-Histamine and The Exorcist
-Love of a Little Brother

Defining Moments: July 29***
-Motley Crew Wilderness Canoe Trip
-Fabulously Average
-Plaster of Paris
-Toyota Tercel
-Clubbing in Retirement
-Books for his Birthdays

***Titles assigned by Rich, M. because they weren't published.



Idioms and puns

like a deer in headlights
ready to beg, borrow, or steal
steer this ship into the iceberg
love is blind
the golden ticket
against all odds
my heart was racing
thick skin
right off the bat
shit has hit the fan
trail of tears
"I'm sitting there with a stew, stewing."
"Instead of having a mommy, she's gonna' have a mummy."
Like hitting the lottery

Lexical bundles

AntConc was used to create a corpus from the 30 narratives, then analyzed for lexical bundles using the N-Gram search function. From the small corpus size, the four most common lexical bundles are listed below. Frequency refers to how often the phrase appears, range refers to the number of narratives that contain the bundles.

I'm going to
frequency 16 – range 9

I don't know
frequency 15 – range 9

And I was like
frequency 14 – range 5

And I'm like
frequency 6 – range 4



*What is a callback?

callback, noun

A joke that references an earlier joke, popularized by the TV show Arrested Development. *UrbanDictionary.com*

In comedy, a callback is a joke that refers to one previously told in the set. It is also known as an internal allusion, a literary device that helps give structure to the piece of writing. *Wikipedia*

Something (such as a comment, image, or character) that evokes an earlier instance. *Merriam-Webster.com*

Callback Example 1

J's partner of 9 years becomes obsessed with a guy. He doesn't return the affection, but the relationship ends. The ex and the guy both owned **Toyota TerceIs**.

Later she spots him going into a coffee shop. She follows. He points out a **Toyota** to the woman he's with. "They call that Voodoo Bue. **Toytotas** have weird names for the colors of their cars." And I'm like, This is the guy?!"

Later at the grocery store, "I see him pull up in his **Toyota** (audience laughs)...Now's my chance to get some answers..."

"Toyota Tercel," Jean Cardeño

Callback example 2

A's mom is in hospice and she brings her to Lake Michigan to sit on the pier. She has to be carried, and A's husband asks how she did it. Her son says, *Did you forget she's **Colombian**?*

Colombian is used to show strength, for herself and her mother.

*Now, growing up **Colombian**, I got to see what that meant. My mother was an immigrant. She had six children. She was a single mother. She worked three jobs to give us everything. But because of that, she was hardly home, and I missed her and I wanted her and I wished for her. But she was working. My mother is in hospice, because her kidneys are failing. The doctor says that maybe because of her age, we'll have her for three more months, maybe six. But he forgets she's **Colombian** too.*

Lacr, A's mom's condition worsens.

*I asked the nurse how long my mother will have after the morphine starts. She says, "Two days." Six days later, my mother is still with us, because why does everyone keep forgetting we're **Colombian**?* (audience laughs).

"Call me the Rock, or call me Colombia," Alexandra Rosas



Will it fly in the classroom?

Practical applications for classroom learning

Verb tense: Storytellers often switch from past tenses to historical present. Students could examine when this happens and its impact on the narrative.

Modals: Students could notice modals and their communicative meaning. A teacher could assign one modal per student to analyze in a jig saw activity.

Superlatives: Have students categorize the way storytellers express sarcasm, exaggeration, and understatement.

Time-focus: Students could examine what language is used to express event order and move the narrative along.

Emotional language: How does the speaker convey emotion and garner audience sympathy?

Analyze the cohesion of the narrative by identifying the callbacks used by the narrator.

Multiword units: Students might identify unknown idioms and research their meaning and usage.

Suprasegmentals: Students can listen and identify the role word and sentence stress plays in conveying meaning.







Genre analysis unit

Additionally, have students analyze the narratives as a genre. Scaffold multiple listenings with guided questions that allow students to discover the rhetorical moves used in the personal narratives. Then have students plan and write their own! Host a story slam for students to perform their narratives. Though Moth stories are told live and usually without notes, students may find their notes or outlines to be useful for their presentation. Practicing with peers before the story slam can help build confidence and comfort in their narratives.

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