

WHS Book Rationale

Title: “This American Life” Podcast

Author: NPR

- **Intended Audience**

College Prep English 10

- **Brief summary and educational significance**

Embedded within the common core career and college readiness standards are the standards of speaking and listening. The common core encourages teachers to use a wide range of digital and media literacies within the classroom. In order to meet this standard, engage students, and promote critical thinking, NPR’s podcast series “This American Life” would be appropriate. “This American Life” is a weekly public radio program and podcast which chooses a theme or idea and puts together different stories around that theme. “This American Life” focuses on journalism, but an entertaining kind of journalism that’s built upon plot. The show is heard by 2.2 million listeners each week on over 500 public radio stations in the U.S. Some popular podcasts that will be used are Serial and S-town.

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**

These podcasts provide students with unique, challenging assignments which promote critical thinking and discussion. We will listen, analyze and comprehend the podcast similar to a class novel. Throughout using the podcasts, the students will be participating in individual, small group and large group discussions centered on relatable, real-world topics. Their ability to assimilate evidence by listening and develop a well-formed opinion improves their critical thinking skills as well as their ability to write and discuss argumentatively.

- **Potential problems**

The Serial and S-town podcast’s story is based upon a murders and includes occasional profanity. Neither of these are used for the sake of vulgarity, but to accurately reflect the alleged events that occurred over the course of the story.

- **Addressing potential problems**

A permission slip could be sent verifying the parent’s approval and encouraging them to listen along with their child. Alternate assignments can be given to students who do not have parental approval. Also, “clean versions” of the podcast with no profanity can be obtained by muting any parts which are inappropriate. The podcast is used commonly at

the high school level, as it is highly engaging and hits a variety of speaking and listening standards. This always tends to be students favorite unit of the year.