

## SOUNDBITES ACTIVITY #7

# STORYTELLING

# FINDING STORIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

## SET-UP:

**GUIDING QUESTION:** How do journalists find great stories?

## TOOLS:

- Something to write with and something to write on
- Internet connection
- Smartphone or computer and speaker to play audio/video
- Optional: A discussion partner, either in your household or over the phone, such as a parent, sibling, friend, or anyone else!

## VOCABULARY:

- **Story structure:** How a story is organized, or the basic framework of a story. Stories have a beginning, middle, and end, although not necessarily in that order.
- **Story focus:** The central point of the story. You can identify the focus by asking, “What is this story really about?”

## INTRODUCTION

Do you want to report on your community, but you don't know where to start?

We are all surrounded by stories, we just need to know where to look! In this activity, we'll identify the elements of a great story. Then we'll draw “Identity Maps” to generate story ideas from our own lives and communities.

This activity is adapted from the [Radio Rookies DIY Toolkit](#).

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## ELEMENTS OF A GREAT STORY

Let's begin by figuring out what makes a great story in the first place.

Take a moment to think about one or two of your favorite stories. Maybe you love the stories an older relative tells about your family's history. Or maybe you have a favorite book or movie.

### REFLECT:

*You can write your answer down, discuss it with a partner, or think through it in your head.*

1. What makes you love the stories you love? What makes you want to keep watching, reading or listening?

**Your reflection may have included some of these elements of a great story:**

- A clear **structure** and **focus**
- Relatability, even if you haven't had the exact same experience
- Interesting characters with clear goals
- Obstacles that stand in the way of the characters' goals
- Character growth or change
- Action
- Tension, conflict, and (sometimes) resolution
- Humor
- Specific details
- Passion and a unique storytelling voice

## HOW TO REPORT YOUR OWN STORY

So now we know some of the elements of a great story. But how do we find great stories in our own communities? What stories are we in a unique position to tell?

To answer these questions, let's watch a video about how to report your own story from [Radio Rookies](#). Radio Rookies is a New York Public Radio initiative that provides teenagers with the tools and training to create radio stories about themselves and their communities.

> **WATCH:** [Radio Rookies DIY Toolkit: How To Report Your Own Story \(4 min\)](#)

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## IDENTITY MAPPING

Now we're going to give identity mapping a try! Take out a piece of paper. Take about five minutes to make a map of your world, community, and identity. You can include communities/groups of people you're connected to, hobbies, religion, background, and more.

Your map could be a literal map of your neighborhood and the important people and places in it. Or maybe it's a map of your apartment. Or it could be a chart like the one drawn below. Maybe your map takes the shape of a body, where the head represents your values and beliefs, the heart represents your interests and passions, the hands represent your hobbies and activities, and so on. Your "Identity Map" can take any shape. Be as creative as you want!

**Use these questions to help guide you as you draw your map:**

1. What's important to YOU?
2. What have you experienced that you now have a UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE on?
3. What parts of your IDENTITY do you want others to understand?
4. What PROBLEMS do you see in your community?
5. What AWESOME things do you see in your community?
6. WHO is in the best position to tell this story?

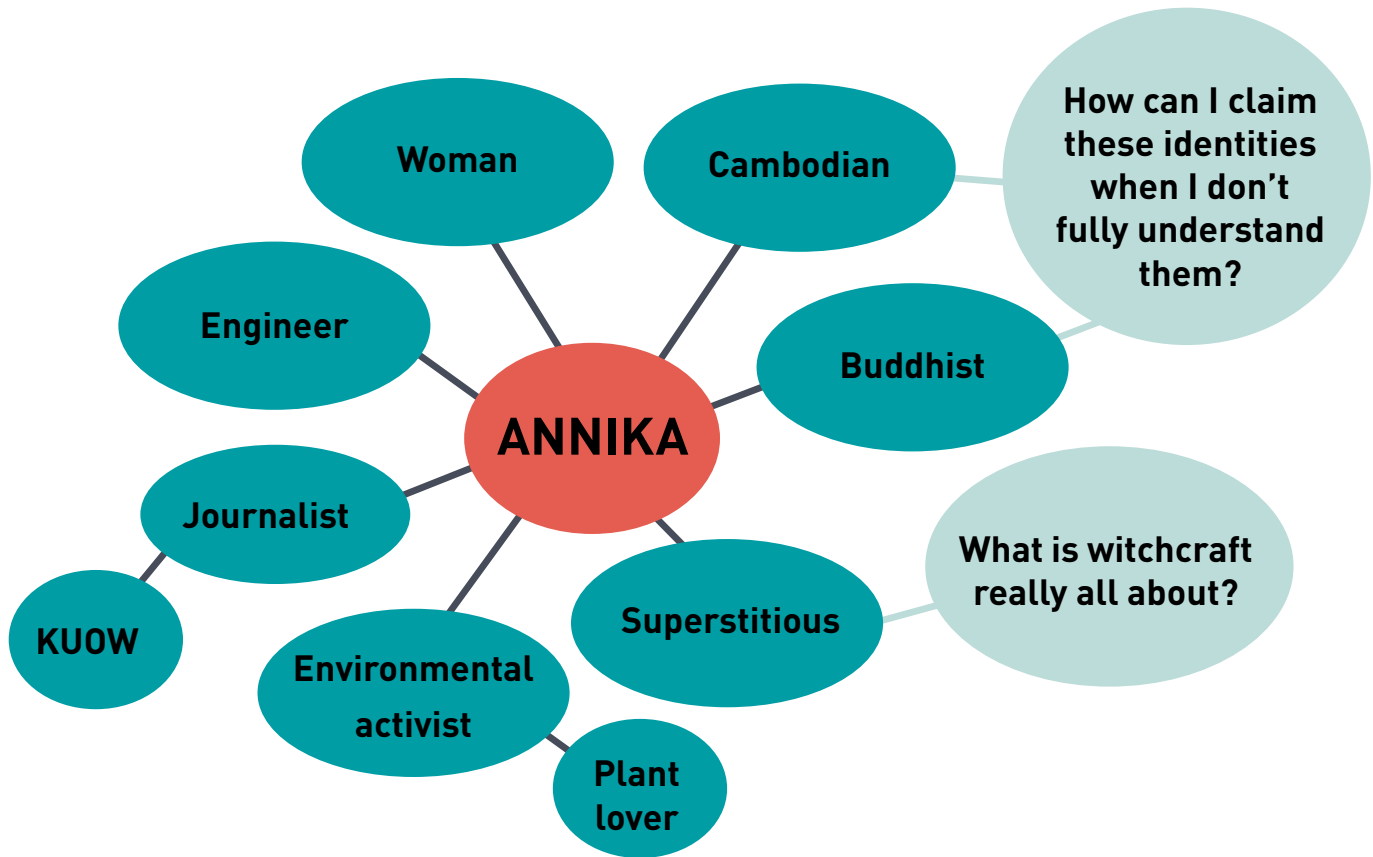


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### EXAMPLE: FINDING STORIES USING YOUR IDENTITY MAP

Now that we've drawn our maps, how do we use them to come up with story ideas?

A great example comes from RadioActive youth producer [Annika Prom](#). Annika came up with two story ideas using the Identity Map below, and her ideas both became radio stories!



Annika's Cambodian and Buddhist identities led her to ask the question, "How can I claim these identities when I don't fully understand them?" She explored this question in her 2018 RadioActive feature story:

> **LISTEN:** [How this young Buddhist monk uses Instagram to connect with Khmer youth](#)

Annika's Identity Map also highlighted her interest in witchcraft, which she explored with two other producers, Enya Garcia and Acacia Niyogi, in their 2018 RadioActive podcast:

> **LISTEN:** [Using Wicca as a gateway to feminism](#)

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## FINDING STORIES USING YOUR IDENTITY MAP

Now it's your turn! Use your identity map to come up with at least two story ideas.

**Ask yourself:** What parts of my map connect or intersect in interesting ways? What questions come up when I look at my map? What parts of my map represent trends (things other people are experiencing), and what parts are unique to me? What parts of my map am I most interested in learning more about?

**For each story idea, discuss:** How could you tell your story using the qualities of a great story we identified earlier?

Once you've identified a few ideas, see if you can fit a story idea into the Seven Sentence Story Structure from [Soundbites Activity #1](#). The Seven Sentence Story structure can help you identify those important aspects of story, like a main character, a setting, and a challenge to overcome.

## SHARE YOUR IDENTITY MAPS WITH US

Share your Identity Map and story ideas with us! Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @KUOWRadioActive and using #RASoundBites. If you send us a photo of your identity map, we'll share it on our pages!

## MORE ON FINDING STORIES

- [Radiolab Scavenger Hunt](#) (Radiolab, 2019)
- [Three simple ways to find story ideas](#) (NPR Training, 2016)