

Using podcasting to improve close analysis of language in poetry

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Overview

Podcasting requires a computer, a microphone and recording software; with these tools, anyone can be a broadcaster. Carrie McMillan uses them to help her GCSE classes explore the language of poetry in closer detail. Making her students the ‘experts’, she provides them with the technology and a real audience, before setting them off on some in-depth analysis of three poems. The results appear to show pupils talking engagingly, enjoyably and knowledgeably about poetry – often with the increased awareness of language that Carrie is seeking. Especially interesting are Carrie’s observations of the different outcomes of running this project with both Years 10 and 11.

Introduction

Kingsmead Community School is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school of 700 students in rural Somerset with languages and humanities specialist status. The English Department teaches in mixed-ability Year 11 and Year 10 groups. The school is truly comprehensive and consequently these groups contain students with Fischer Family Trust GCSE predictions ranging from F to A*. The two groups that worked on this case study had GCSE predictions between E and A*. Regular work sampling led the department to set a curricular target to improve students’ understanding and explanation of word-level analysis in Literature. While this was a target for improvement with students at all levels, it appeared to be a particularly crucial skill for C/D borderline students. This became the focus for our work on using ICT to tackle a hard-to-teach and possibly hard-to-learn subject.

Project outline and aims

Lesson observations had shown that students in our mixed-ability classrooms were surprisingly comfortable talking about their ideas about Literature. Possible theories for this could form another action research project but in looking into how we could move students on in our curricular target, I felt we could capitalise on our students’ skill and enthusiasm for group exploratory talk. Therefore I decided that the technology we could make best use of would be podcasts – digital audio files, made available on the Internet for download by computer or personal mobile devices. Podcasting technology as a teaching tool I felt could have a number of payoffs.

Firstly, Kingsmead’s local community is fortunate enough to have a lottery-funded local radio station which broadcasts to ten local villages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Unsurprisingly, students are full of enthusiasm for generating content for the radio station. Producing podcasts in English lessons I felt would help us tap into some of that enthusiasm. As a school, we are keen to encourage students to see themselves as user-generators of online and broadcast content, prepared for real audiences with the local radio station. Producing revision podcasts, to be recorded and broadcast first for radio then available on a revision website, I felt would encourage students to take an active approach to creating material helpful to themselves and others.

Secondly, I was keen to capitalise on students’ confident speaking and listening skills to encourage greater depth of analysis of GCSE Literature poetry. I hoped that using the medium of podcasting would help us to raise attainment of all students by focusing their talk on our curricular target of

improved word-level analysis. The 'hard to teach' concept in this case study is what the NATE/Becta document *Entitlement to ICT in secondary English* (2003) terms:

'Responding and interpreting – In English, pupils respond to and interpret literary and non-literary texts in spoken and written language and so develop and demonstrate their understanding and appreciation.'

Specifically we wanted our students to improve at word-level analysis and show that they are able to 'use a wide range of analytical and critical techniques' (*Entitlement to ICT in secondary English*).

Method

The story of this project then isn't entirely driven by the technology; rather it's driven by the desire to improve students' analysis of texts and subsequently, their enjoyment of reading and exploring language. This study isn't entirely centred on the use and creation of podcasts, but the end product of a podcast radio show certainly overshadows everything else that took place.

Initially, this project took the form of very recognisable English lessons, plans for which are attached as [Appendix 1](#). The project began by introducing students to three poems from the AQA English Literature Anthology: Carol Ann Duffy's 'Anne Hathaway', Simon Armitage's 'I've made out a will' and Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 130'.

The first lesson in the sequence focused students closely on word-level analysis, which was modelled by the teacher using an interactive whiteboard to record thinking about key lines. This scaffolded students' analytical skills as they became involved early in discussion of the sub-text of specific words and phrases.

The next lesson saw students grouped by ability within the mixed-ability class to emulate the same detailed word-level analysis with a key quotation from one of the three poems. These discussions were recorded on sugar paper in an effort to mirror the effect of annotating a line on the interactive whiteboard. As an extended plenary, students shared their discussions, having been encouraged to be specific when referring to certain words within their given quotation.

Once all students had worked in groups like this, I introduced the idea of a poetry radio show, to be available as a revision podcast. The third lesson in the sequence discussed with students how this sort of radio show would sound, using a podcast of an episode of Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour' as a starting point for discussion. Students were already familiar with radio show structures from their work to date on the local radio station and so simply needed to refine their ideas regarding the purpose and audience of their proposed programme. When this was agreed, groups of students rehearsed shows in which they, as 'experts', discussed the three poems. They then recorded these onto iPod nanos, using a voice memo device.

What happened next differed between the two groups in the project. I ran the three lessons with a Year 11 group, early in the Spring Term. That group was incredibly motivated by the discussion aspect and by the end-product of a revision podcast. They were less interested in the editing process, choosing instead to simply hand the recordings over to me to deal with. The Year 10 students, however, undertaking the project in the Summer term, were highly enthused by the prospect of tailoring their work towards a teenage audience. Selected students, highly skilled at editing but not necessarily the highest English achievers, began the editing process. In both cases, it was down to me to assemble the

final recordings for broadcast and podcast. This was done on the iMac using iWeb software to publish to a .Mac account (see [Appendix 2](#)).

Description

The outcomes from both groups could not be more different. Generally, the Year 11 group coped better with the challenging material of the poems themselves, making the leap into detailed, explorative analysis of key words and phrases more readily than the younger students. In one podcast (see [Appendix 3](#)), Student B explains of ‘Anne Hathaway’:

the line ‘his touch a verb dancing in the centre of a noun’, this explains that a sentence only needs a verb and a noun to make sense and it also interprets that Anne Hathaway and Shakespeare were incomplete without each other and it also refers back to sex.

For this student, working up to this point at B grade, it was important to recognise that one line could have different interpretations and this brief reference to a challenging line was her first attempt at this.

Year 11 also appeared to cope better with the challenging subject matter of these poems - both the sexual imagery of ‘Anne Hathaway’ and the extended play on imagery of ‘Sonnet 130’.

Student A: Could you explain what you think the poem is about?

Student B: I feel the poem is about love and sex.

Student A: Sex, how do you mean?

Student B: Well, the first three lines ‘the bed we loved in was a spinning world of forests castle, torchlight, clifftops, seas, where he would dive for pearls’. This could easily be about role play. I don’t see why Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway couldn’t have a bit of fun in the bedroom!

The Year 11 podcasts, with their informal, relaxed discussion, showed greater impact on the curricular target than I could have hoped, with students genuinely undertaking insightful, personal analysis of the specific language of these poems, as the transcript extracts show. Their discussions were effective as pieces of work and displayed enjoyment of the process of analysis. Pressure of time meant that the students showed no interest in editing these recordings and as a result, showed only a token nod to the idea of targeting their talk at a specific audience and tailoring it to a specific form.

Interestingly, Year 10 coped less well with the material and produced generally less effective analyses, despite having the same lead-in lessons, although some groups performed better than others. They had only completed two of their three pieces of literature coursework and this project formed the start of their work toward the Literature exam, so it’s possible that they started from a lower analysis skills baseline than the Year 11s. Students from the C/D and A/A* groups showed more progress than the C/B group, with the A/A* group unsurprisingly coping best with the sustained focus on close language analysis (see [Appendix 4](#)):

Student N: The main theme of that poem is pretty much all about sex, so why do you think it focuses on that so much?

Student P: Well, I think it's, well it talks so much, all about bed so I mean, bed as we kind of know, is the intimate place where sex happens. They talk about happiness and love a lot and um, like, fantasy realms where you could expect where they played out their drama. Um, they talk about pairs and like how similar they were, and well, it's just mainly themed around the bed. And obviously the bed is where sex happens.

Student Q: Well there could be many sexual innuendos within this poem, things that relate back to sex. The main one obviously being the bed. And her saying about how he held her – this could be one of the things she remembers being most happy about him. And the intimacy of him, the words 'his touch' implies intimacy and love. And of course the words 'my lover's words were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses'. This implies a certain sense of romance and happiness about the two. When he rhymes, it seems to be, like, about pairs and being similar to each other and obviously refers back to Shakespeare and him being a writer and possibly him being good at sex.

Although generally the Year 10's analysis was less natural and confident than the older students, there was evidence of them having gained confidence as 'experts' on the material and as explorers of text.

For example, Student H in the C/D borderline group (see [Appendix 5](#)) showed that he had learned to link his explanations firmly in the text, something that had been lacking in his earlier Literature coursework:

Student G: Now we're going to analyse how Shakespeare uses language. So H, what do you think Shakespeare means when he says 'if snow be white, why then her breasts are dun'?

Student H: Shakespeare thinks that all normal women should be pale white and pure. He shows this by saying 'if snow be white'. But this woman is tanned and um, (*sound of someone entering room – H pauses, then speaks more quietly*) Shakespeare doesn't like this.

The Year 10 students, however, were much more motivated by the concept of targeting of a teen audience through a radio show. As a result, when groups were given iPods with the looming presence of one solitary iMac at the back of the room available for editing, there was a palpable rush to finish the discussions in order to be first to edit. This naturally led to less detailed analysis and less exploration than I had hoped, as well as lots of errors that made their work unusable as a revision aid. This extract from the C/B grade group (see [Appendix 6](#)) illustrates the problem:

Student L: Yo yo yo this is Student L on Ten Radio. Yeah, I got a special guest today, it's Carol Ann Duffy everyone! (*cheers in background*) Yeah and I've also got our special interviewer, all the way from London, Student M!

Student M: Er, hi.

Student L: Now over to Student M.

Student M: So hi Carol Ann, I've read a few of your poems. So which one's your favourite?

'Carol Ann': My favourite is 'I've made out a will'.

Student M: So what inspired you?

'Carol Ann': basically, it's about a relationship with my husband. He had a heart condition which unfortunately led to a pacemaker.

Student M: So do you fancy reading the poem for our viewers?

'Carol Ann': Yeah sure...'

Nevertheless, the skills with which students used Garage Band software to edit their work with the target audience in mind were beyond anything I had expected. In this respect, the outcome I received from the podcast editing had more to do with students' understanding of how media products target their audience than with how poets use language for effect. Student M's streetwise introduction to the poetry programme shows just how much fun the group were having devising a poetry show that would appeal to teens.

The project is still on-going, with some students' work finished and available as podcasts from the school .Mac account website. Unfortunately, while the sound files are accessible from computers at home, they cannot be accessed and therefore showcased within school. The reason for this is not entirely clear. My first response was to assume this was down to some blocking or filtering on media file content within school, but further investigation indicates that it is simply down to the need to update the school's QuickTime software. Stumbling blocks like these are an inevitable frustration for teachers trying to do something new with ICT. Barriers within the school ICT infrastructures exist for very good reasons but are often inflexible to the point of obstruction.

Fortunately for Kingsmead, we do not have to rely on students accessing the podcasts solely at school. A large majority of our students report that they have broadband Internet access at home and so can access the material there, which is of course a more independent use of the material. But we're doubly lucky in our access to the local radio station. This project will continue when current Year 10 enter Year 11. The intention is for the project group to broadcast their discussion show live for the radio as a pre-mocks revision show. This live broadcast will force students to focus on the quality of their discussions, rather than on the flash and style of their editing. And of course, the material will be available to all without the constraints imposed by the existing school ICT infrastructure.

Key findings

To conclude, this was a small study with findings that suggest podcasting in English can be a valuable tool for teaching the 'hard-to-learn' subject of close textual analysis. This study did find that students are motivated by the concept of creating their own personalised, user-generated material for revision purposes. It further emphasises what English teachers know already, that students regard speaking for a real audience as motivating. Providing opportunities for students to generate real revision content for their peers is a valuable way of giving them an audience. The knowledge that their work would be heard by their peers led to a more serious approach for the Year 11s – they wanted their work to be useful and valued by others.

The editing process can be very motivating for students, as this is the 'magic' by which their classwork is transformed into something professional and mediated. However, it comes with a health warning: the rush to edit can impede the quality of analysis. It is important for the classroom teacher to hold the reins when using this technology, to ensure that students really meet the lesson objective rather than allowing the technology to take over. If the objective, however, is for students to learn how technology

can be used by the media to target an audience, then the editing process is a vital tool. The key is to ensure the technology serves the learning objective.

Finally, with any use of ICT in school, it's important to work closely with ICT technicians and those members of staff responsible for policy and infrastructure. Discussions in advance about what is possible within school, and what should be possible, can save a lot of time and frustration.

Appendices

1. Lesson plans for English Literature exam preparation
2. How to Podcast using iWeb
3. Extract from a Year 11 podcast
4. Extract from a Year 10 podcast
5. Extract from a Year 10 C/D borderline group
6. Extract from a Year 10 C/B group

Appendix 1: Lesson plans for English Literature exam preparation

Kingsmead Community School - English Literature Exam Preparation: 'Anne Hathaway', 'I've Made Out a Will', 'Sonnet 130' - three lessons

Lesson 1

Lesson objective: to make connections between the structure and themes of these three poems.

Starter: Display on board the question 'What is the most important part of the body?' (Available as Smart file on Gateway.) Give think time for pairs to discuss then take responses. Expect responses to generate discussion ranging around heart, lungs, brain (and thumbs!) leading to comments about soul, mind, what makes us human etc.

Read 'I've made out a will' to them. Discuss why the poet/voice wants the heart left alone. How do they know? How does the poet/voice feel about the rest of the body?

Read Sonnet 130. Give pairs key lines and five minutes to explain in their words how the poet feels about his mistress' body. Take feedback and discuss – what are this poet's feelings about bodies/people's attitudes to them?

Finish with a reading of 'Anne Hathaway'. Sum up briefly (the poem's origins in Shakespeare's will, who Anne Hathaway was) then give pairs think time – how does this poem link to the other two? Display on board the line 'my body now a softer rhyme to his' to generate and steer discussion.

Plenary: Take brief feedback then set challenge – structurally what is similar about all three poems?

After 5-10 minutes, collect ideas on the board. Students should have noticed the 14-line structure; some use of rhyme (though inconsistent between the poems); they may notice the roughly 10-syllable beat and the exploration/argument of theme or idea of bodies and love. Point out that all of these poems take the traditional sonnet form.

Lesson 2

Lesson objective: To compare how three poets use metaphor to explore their arguments in sonnets.

Starter: Re-read 'Anne Hathaway' together. Display on board line 'my body now a softer rhyme to his.' Annotate this line together with ideas from previous lesson (example available as Smart file on Gateway). Emphasise appropriate use of metaphor, why Shakespeare's wife would use this metaphor, the difference between hard and soft rhyme etc. To finish, emphasise how heavily annotated just one line from this poem has become, the denseness of metaphor used in this way.

Students should re-read 'I've made out a will' and 'Sonnet 130' to themselves.

Split the class into six groups and give each group a large piece of sugar paper. The following lines should already be written, one to a piece, on the paper:

- ‘My lover’s words
were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses
on these lips;’
- ‘his touch
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun.’
- ‘the loops and coils and sprockets and springs and rods’
- ‘the face, the case, the cogs and the hands’
- ‘If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;’
- ‘And in some perfumes is there more delight
than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.’

To differentiate, give the more able the Duffy lines, the middling H tier the Shakespeare lines and the F tier the Armitage lines.

Groups get ten minutes to make detailed annotations on the use of metaphor and to begin to think about why the metaphor is being used.

Plenary: Groups to present on the board their analysis of the metaphor they were given, to suggest why the the writer has used them and how successful they are. (Could they have thought of a different/better one? Would the line be more effective if it said what was meant straight out?) Everyone to annotate their Anthology for each line. Take in their sugar paper for use next lesson.

Lesson 3

Lesson Objective: to be able to organise a comparison of the methods and themes of three poems.

Starter: display on board these connectives: *whereas, however, although, similarly, in contrast to...*

Discuss what these words are commonly used for. Using AQA Anthologies and displaying their sugar paper annotations, students have three minutes to write a short paragraph about the three poems. They must use at least two of the displayed connectives (or ones of their own). Hear some and discuss the power of the connectives.

Explain that they’re going to make revision podcasts about these poems that could also be used for Ten Radio. Listen briefly to the podcast with Duffy talking about her new poems on Woman’s Hour (it’s not necessary to hear it all!) http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2002_37_thu_01.shtml

Discuss the format: a presenter setting the scene, the poet reading, the presenter asking questions, the poet responding with analysis. Explain that they will be preparing/presenting something similar.

Return them to their original six groups. Nominate a presenter – the rest will be ‘experts’. Give each group a big question as follows:

- The two Duffy groups – ‘How does Duffy use the sonnet form in ‘Anne Hathaway?’ Compare this with two other poems.
- The two Shakespeare groups – ‘How does Shakespeare surprise us in this sonnet?’ Compare this with two other poems.
- The two Armitage groups – ‘How does Armitage use language in this sonnet?’ Compare this with two other poems.

The rules are that both the presenter and the experts need to work in as many comparison connectives as possible – like ‘meeting cricket’! Also display on board the key words/phrases for analysing literature (available on the school’s Gateway network and on yellow coursework sheets).

Groups should use the rest of the lesson to prepare/practise, using their Anthology notes. One additional lesson will be needed to record these on iPods.

All of this can be followed up with a timed writing lesson answering the same question in writing.

Appendix 2: How to Podcast using iWeb

This tutorial assumes you have signed up to a .Mac account. This can be done at <http://www.apple.com/mobileme>.

Step One:

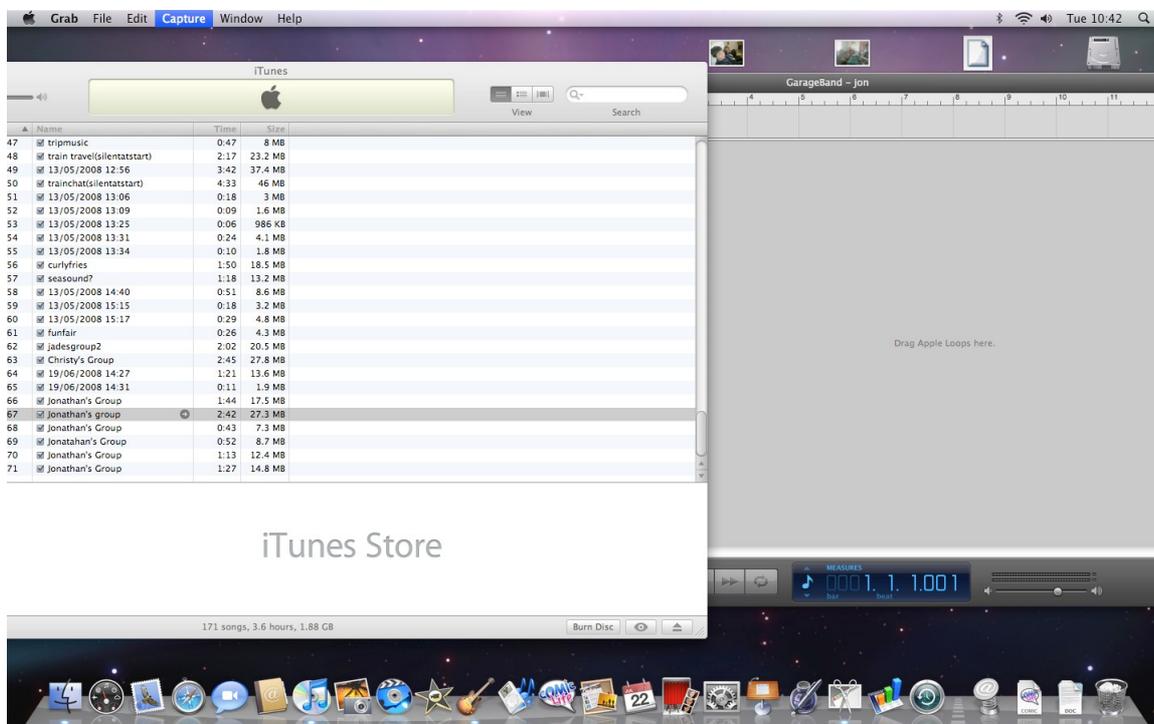
Use iPod nanos with voice memo microphones attached. When the microphone is attached, the menu automatically gives you the option to 'record', 'pause' and 'save'.

Step Two:

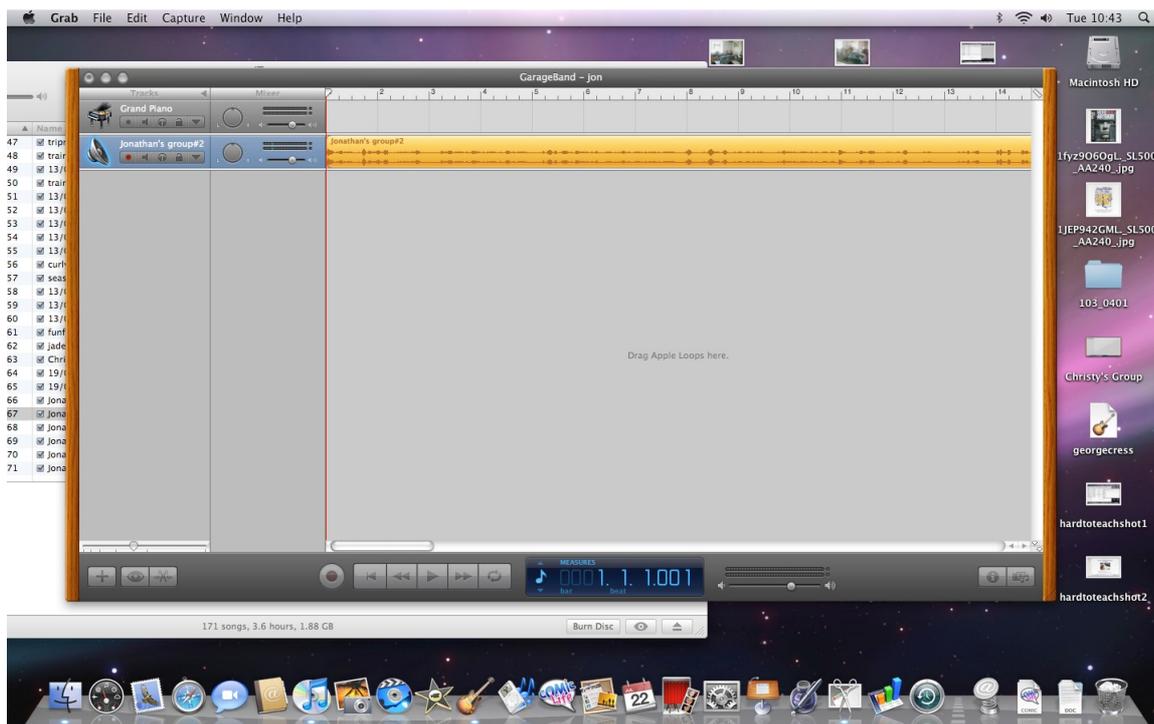
Download the voice memos to the iTunes library.

Step Three:

Open GarageBand. In iTunes, click on the sound file you want to podcast.



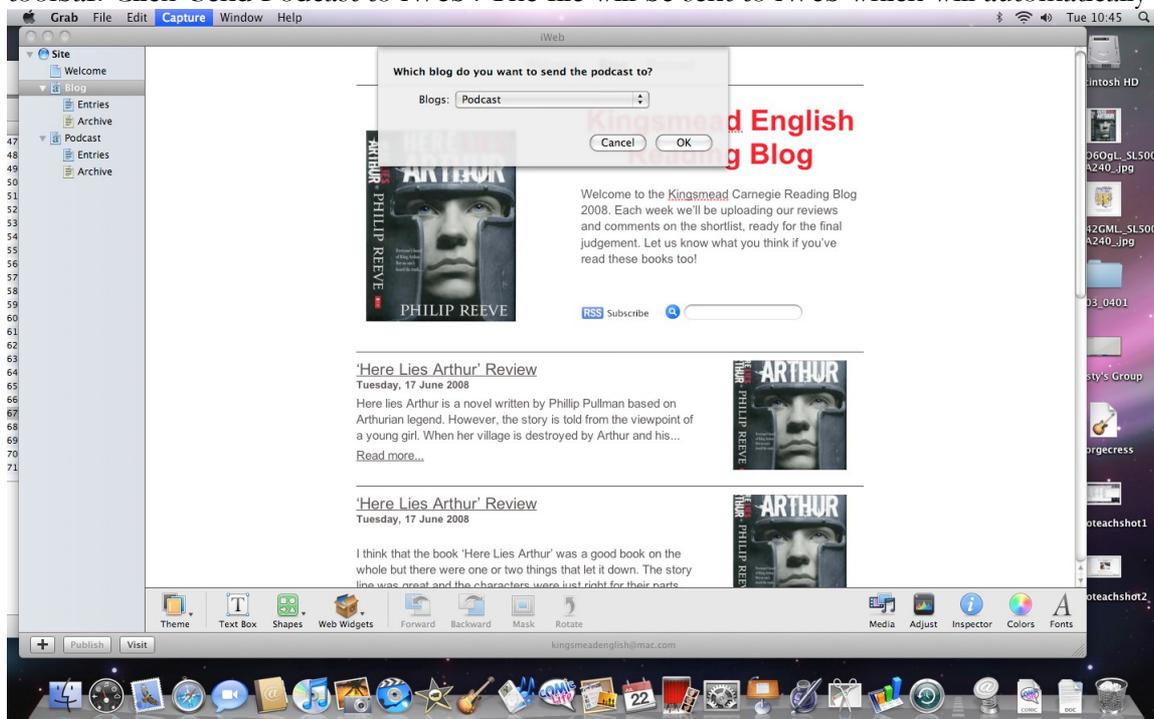
Drag that file into the GarageBand window.



The file will be editable in GarageBand.

Step Four:

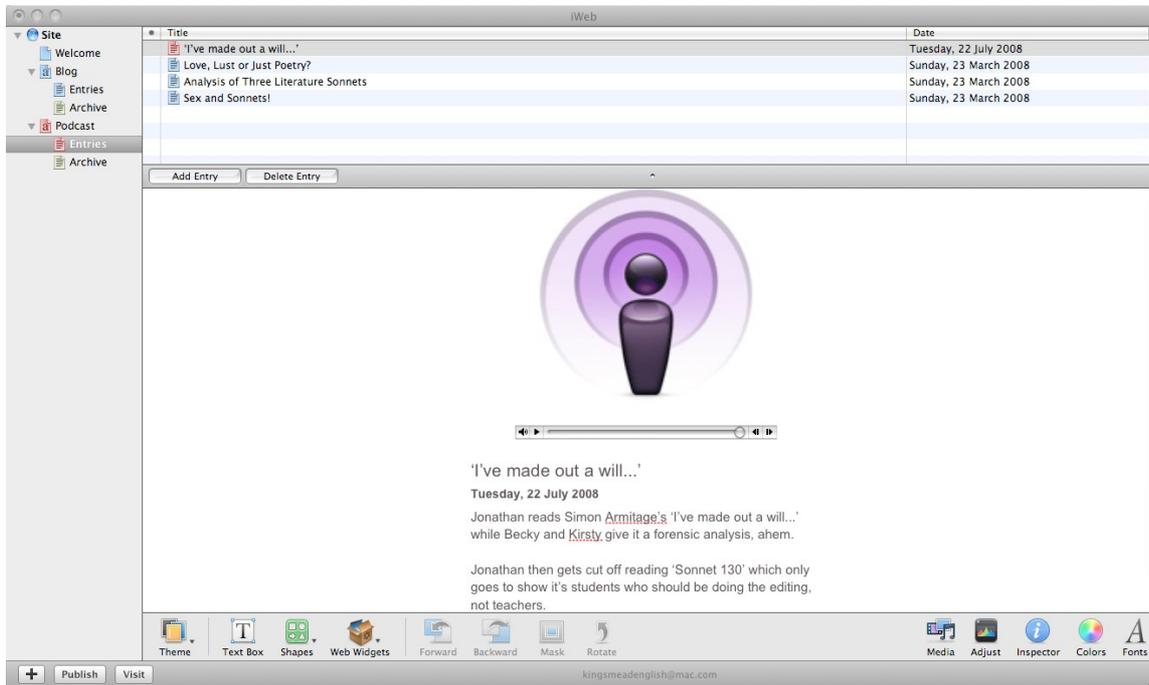
When you are ready to podcast, click on the file to highlight in. Next, click 'Share' along the top toolbar. Click 'Send Podcast to iWeb'. The file will be sent to iWeb which will automatically open.



Choose 'Podcast' from the drop down menu.

Step Five:

Edit the text boxes to give your podcast a title and description.

**Step Six:**

When you are finished and ready to publish, click 'File' on the top toolbar. Select 'Publish All to .Mac'. Your site will automatically be loaded to your .Mac webspace, including your new podcast.

Appendix 3: Extract from a Year 11 podcast

Student A: Welcome to our podcast about poems that will be useful for our GCSE English Literature exam. The poems we are looking at will be ‘Anne Hathaway’ by Carol Ann Duffy, an untitled poem by Simon Armitage which we shall call ‘I’ve made out a will’, and also ‘Sonnet 130’ by William Shakespeare. Here with me I have the top three leading experts on these poets. Please welcome Student B, C and D.

Morning guys, alright?

All: Hiya!

Student A: Firstly I’d like to talk to Student B who is the best expert on Carol Ann Duffy in the UK. Student B has chosen ‘Anne Hathaway’ to analyse in depth. Please would you read it for us?

(Student B reads poem)

Student A: So who actually was Anne Hathaway?

Student B: Anne Hathaway was Shakespeare’s wife, um, Shakespeare left her his second best bed in the will. We’re not too sure why but we believe it was a final wink to her to show their love and Carol emphasises this in the poem. Duffy’s poem was also a clever interpretation of their relationship.

Student A: Do you think they had a close relationship?

Student B: Yes I do, as does Carol Ann Duffy. However, when he was very successful, he left her to move to London.

Student A: Could you explain what you think the poem is about?

Student B: I feel the poem is about love and sex.

Student A: Sex, how do you mean?

Student B: Well, the first three lines ‘the bed we loved in was a spinning world of forests, castle, torchlight, clifftops, seas where he would dive for pearls’. This could easily be about role play. I don’t see why Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway couldn’t have a bit of fun in the bedroom! Also, the line ‘his touch a verb dancing in the centre of a noun’, this explains that a sentence only needs a verb and a noun to make sense and it also interprets that Anne Hathaway and Shakespeare were incomplete without each other and it also refers back to sex.

Student A: Are there any other poems which connect to ‘Anne Hathaway’?

Student C: Yes, Simon Armitage’s untitled poem which is ‘I’ve made a will,’ and Shakespeare’s ‘Sonnet 130’.

Student A: What connects them?

Student C: Well all three are sonnets and they all explain about bodies. ‘Anne Hathaway’ is about her body, it’s about their body, ‘I’ve made out a will’ is about his body, and ‘Sonnet 130’ is about his mistress’ body.

Student A: What exactly is a sonnet?...

Appendix 4: Extract from a Year 10 podcast

Student N: Hey, welcome to the radio station. I hope you've had a banging weekend and thanks for tuning in. The time's ten to eleven and right now we've got three peeps brought to the studio tonight, making up The Poetry Posse.

Student O: And here today we've got the poetry legend, Student P. And now Student Q is going to read us the poem, 'Anne Hathaway'.

(Student Q reads poem)

Student N: The main theme of that poem is pretty much all about sex, so why do you think it focuses on that so much?

Student P: Well, I think it's, well it talks so much, all about bed so I mean, bed as we kind of know, is the intimate place where sex happens. They talk about happiness and love a lot and um, like, fantasy realms where you could expect where they played out their drama. Um, they talk about pairs and like how similar they were, and well, it's just mainly themed around the bed. And obviously the bed is where sex happens.

Student Q: Well there could be many sexual innuendos within this poem, things that relate back to sex. The main one obviously being the bed. And her saying about how he held her – this could be one of the things she remembers being most happy about him. And the intimacy of him, the words 'his touch' implies intimacy and love. And of course the words 'my lover's words were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses'. This implies a certain sense of romance and happiness about the two. When he rhymes, it seems to be, like, about pairs and being similar to each other and obviously refers back to Shakespeare and him being a writer and possibly him being good at sex.

Student R: Some people might have trouble understanding the language as it gets quite hard. Can you do some sub-text?

Student P: The words 'his touch a verb dancing in the centre of a noun' imply many things. 'His touch' could imply his, well ahem, his organ. Or possibly his love. 'Verb' – well a reference to his profession as a writer and a poet. 'A rhyme' being a pair, and similar to each other. The word 'dancing' was also used as a reference to sex in those days. It also implies happiness. A verb and noun are needed for a full sentence. This implies that they needed each other to make themselves whole.

Student N: Alrighty then, and comin' up next 'I've made out a will' read by Student S...

(Student S reads poem...)

Student O: Why do you think he wants to leave the heart where it is and what do you think it symbolises?

Student P: Well I think he may want to leave the heart where it is because it symbolises one of the most important parts of the body. Also, he might have an emotional attachment to it as that's where we symbolise love and that sort of thing with it. (Sounds of mock vomiting in background.) There will also be a safe feeling with having the heart – hearing the sound of the heart makes us feel safe and welcome.

Also, we kind of panic if we can't hear our own heart. Also, we're always being told to look after it. We're always being told to do certain things to reduce our blood sugar levels and to look after the heart, make sure it doesn't get clogged up with fat. Plus it is physically protected for some reason or another by the ribs so that implies it is a very important part of the body. It also keeps you alive and some people may believe that that's where the soul is. And as I said, it also symbolises love or sex. Generally I feel that this is a very good poem and symbolises a lot of things.

Student O: I totally agree. And why do you think teenagers would like this poem?

Student P: Well basically I think that teenagers can relate to this poem as it's quite, kind of, random. I mean, when you seem to think of a poem, you seem to think of Shakespeare and all, like love, and all that romantic stuff. But this one isn't, it's kind of about death which kind of makes it a bit different. Um, also, I think that teenagers could relate to the heart and wanting it left where it is as it may have been broken or damaged too much in the past. I mean I know that most teenagers at some point experience their heart breaking. Plus, at the moment organ donation is a very big issue and you may not be thinking about it right now, but at some point everybody has to die. So it could be kind of guiding you on the way you want to go when you're dead.

Student O: Well thanks for that. The next poem is Shakespeare's poem 'Sonnet 130'. It's going to be read for us today by Jonathan.

(Student S reads poem)

Student O: Wow, a lot of old style language going on there. Can you possibly help us out?

Student P: Well, the overall theme of the poem is that he's talking about his mistress who is at this point his wife 'Anne Hathaway'. Basically he's saying that although she's not really really beautiful, and not perfect, he still loves her. By saying that 'my mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun, coral is far more red than her lips red' well he's saying that she's not perfect, she's not beautiful but he still loves her. He's saying that her voice is not very nice to listen to but he still likes talking to her, that her breath isn't very nice but still he loves her. Back in those days it was really, like, in the fashion to be pure white and by saying that her 'breasts are dun' he's saying that she's slightly more tanned. But he's saying at least he's not lying to her and saying she's perfect when she's not.

Student O: Cool, so basically she's a minger, but he still loves her.

Student P: Yeah, pretty much.

Appendix 5: Extract from a Year 10 C/D borderline group

Student E: Hello, today we're going to talk about 'Sonnet 130'. I'm here with F, G, H, J and K. And the poem's written by William Shakespeare. Here's F to read the poem.

(F reads the poem)

Student G: Now we're going to analyse how Shakespeare uses language. So Charlie, what do you think Shakespeare means when he says 'If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun?'

Student H: Shakespeare thinks that all normal women should be pale white and pure. He shows this by saying 'If snow be white'. But this woman is tanned and um, *(sound of someone entering room – Charlie pauses, then speaks more quietly)* Shakespeare doesn't like this.

Student E: What do you think Shakespeare is implying?

Student J: What's particularly annoying about this poem is that he's implying that women should always be perfect with pale white skin, sleek straight hair and looking amazing in the morning.

Student K: Men are not perfect at all times so why should us women?

Appendix 6: Extract from a Year 10 C/B group

Student L: Yo yo yo this is Student L on Ten Radio. Yeah, I got a special guest today, it's Carol Ann Duffy everyone! (cheers in background) Yeah and I've also got our special interviewer, all the way from London, Student M!

Student M: Er, hi.

Student L: Now over to Student M.

Student M: So hi Carol Ann, I've read a few of your poems. So which one's your favourite?

'Carol Ann': My favourite is 'I've made out a will'.

Student M: So what inspired you?

'Carol Ann': Basically, it's about a relationship with my husband. He had a heart condition which unfortunately led to a pacemaker.

Student M: So do you fancy reading the poem for our viewers?

'Carol Ann': Yeah sure...