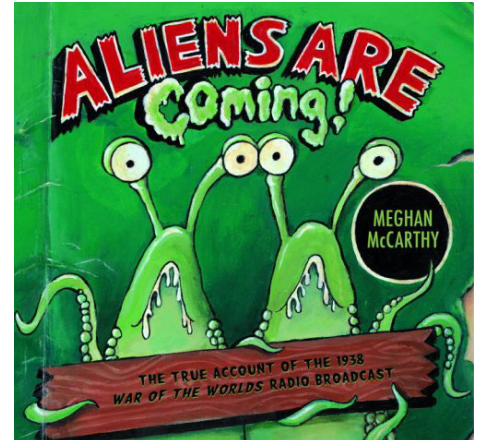


Aliens Are Coming!: The True Account Of The 1938 War Of The Worlds Radio Broadcast by Meghan McCarthy

Book Synopsis: This hilarious book tells the true story of the infamous 1938 “War of the Worlds” radio broadcast which falsely reported aliens had landed in the United States. Using actual excerpts from the radio program, this book also shares the importance of radios in households in the 1930s.



Connection to Iowa History

The original radio production of “War of the Worlds” was made to sound like a real news broadcast, including eye-witness reports and bulletins. Although it made an exciting production, it also misled some people into thinking the fictional story of an alien invasion was real if they missed the introduction

at the start of the program. Following the broadcast, U.S. Senator Clyde Herring of Iowa – also a former governor of Iowa – proposed federal legislation that would require the Federal Communications Commission to review broadcast scripts for “frightening” content. His proposal failed to gather support and bill was never introduced.

Storytime Activity

After reading the book, [listen to the original broadcast](#) and try your hand at making your own radio sound effects at home. Since audiences could only hear a radio program and had to imagine the action, sound effects needed to be created to mimic and enhance the story. The sound effects below were commonly used during radio programs.

Try to recreate the sound effects listed below and then explore your surroundings to see if you can find anything else that can produce noises. If you have access to a phone or computer, you can also record your sound effects.

Creating Classic Radio Sound Effects at Home

Thunder: To create the sound of thunder, use a sheet of aluminum foil, roughly 12 to 16 inches in length. Hold the aluminum foil sheet tightly between both your hands, and create waves by moving your hands up and down. The movement will create the sound of thunder.

Rain: To create the sound of rain, grab a handful of rice and sprinkle it onto a metal pie plate or sheet pan. The rice hitting the metal will sound like rain falling. For a different and tastier method, the sound of bacon frying also sounds like rain.

Fire: To create the sound of a fire burning, take a small piece of cellophane or plastic wrap and form it into a small ball. Place it within your hand, and move it around in your hand making sure the plastic rubs against itself. The cellophane or plastic wrap crinkling will resemble the sound of fire.

Snow: To create the sound of someone walking on snow, fill a small ziplock bag with cornstarch. After removing all the air from the bag, close the bag tightly. To create the noise of someone walking on snow, lay the bag down on a flat surface and gently hit or shake the bag.

Grass: To create the sound of someone walking through tall grass, cut some newspaper into small strips. Place the shredded newspaper into a plastic bag, and then gently shake the bag.