

PODCAST[®] MAGAZINE

BEYOND THE MICROPHONE

**TOP 10
BUSINESS
PODCASTS**

WHO NEEDS
AN MBA?

ALEX KINGSLEY

LOVES *THE STENCH
OF ADVENTURE*

MELISSA K NORRIS

IS A TRUE
**PIONEERING
WOMAN**

RACHEL MUNIZ
REPPIN' LATINX
& LATINOS
OUT LOUD

*FINDING
MASTERY*

LEARNING FROM
**EXTRAORDINARY
PEOPLE**

SPI'S

PAT FLYNN

INSPIRING *BY EXAMPLE*

*"I watched money
and fame go to [other
podcaster's] heads. It
made me realize that I
never want to go to the
dark side."*



THE STORY SEEDS PODCAST

**Where Kids'
Ideas Blossom**

Sandhya Nankani has always been fascinated by kids' story ideas.

"I wanted to create The Story Seeds Podcast to explore what imagination means and why creativity needs to be nurtured, honored, and preserved."

Before she started her studio, Literary Safari, 12 years ago, Sandhya worked in educational publishing and children's media.

"My background includes print journalism, and in the course of my career, I once was the editor of a magazine for kids called Writing Magazine. We had a lot of innovative projects, such as the



Weekly Writer. We invited a famous writer to start a story and asked kids to submit ideas and choose the next paragraph. It became a collaborative story of sorts. Although it was a one-off project, the concept stayed with me.

“A couple of years ago, my studio team and I did a project for a client who produces books for the school market. They gave us story ideas and had us commission trade authors. The result was a collection of leveled readers. One of the books was written by Jerry Craft, who’s now a Newberry Medal-winning graphic novelist.

“I was struck by the thought that we had built relationships with authors, and we could bring kids with great story ideas and authors together on a podcast.”

Sandhya took the leap and did just that. From the beginning, she and her team felt it was imperative to have a diverse group of kids. “We wanted children hearing the

show to feel like they were represented, seen, and heard.”

The concept revolved around creating a 30-minute audio-first experience.

“I wanted to have the type of soundscape that allowed kids to hear real conversations without too many bells and whistles. It seemed like the Nickelodeon type of sound was prevalent, but for some children, that might become a little overwhelming. When I listened to podcasts with my daughter, I noticed that there were certain kinds of shows she just wouldn’t listen to because they were too produced.”

Host Betsy Bird sets the tone for an insightful yet fun-filled experience. A librarian and author in her own right, when she joined the *Story Seeds* team, Betsy was already co-hosting the *Fuse 8 n’ Kate* podcast with her sister. In it, they read, discuss, and review books together.

Sandhya refers to Betsy as “*The Uber Librarian.*”



Story Seeds host Betsy Bird

“She’s prolific. I knew her when she was in New York, working as the librarian at the New York Public Library. She is now the Collection Development Manager at Evanston Public Library in the Chicago area. When I worked at Scholastic, I followed her blog on the School Library Journal website and invited her to consult on a literacy project. I was generally impressed whenever I heard her speak. I like her style of talking to adults and kids. I feel like she’s not sugary sweet—she can be kind of sarcastic, and she’s definitely down-to-earth... a perfect fit for the overall sound of the show.”

The podcast has hit the right note with listeners. It helps kids to build confidence in their writing and/or become interested in reading. Children are invited to submit a seed of a story that they would like to grow on the show, and they are inspired to go off on their own imaginative adventures.

“We decided the format of the podcast would work best if we ask the authors to start a story and allow the child in their pairing to take it in their own direction,” Sandhya explained. “Authors seem to really love the collaborative nature of this format, because they get to talk through the story idea and work closely with the young person.”

What’s more, bonus episodes feature interviews with the authors, allowing them to reflect on their experience. Betsy delves into their writing process and gives listeners a look at the inner workings of a writer’s mind.



SANDHYA

listens to



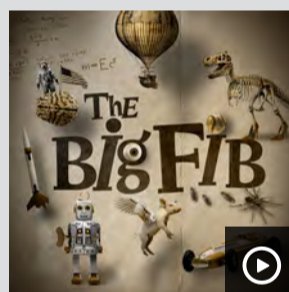
LIKE YOU: MINDFULNESS FOR KIDS

Breathing, affirmations, music, and imagination to explore feelings, relieve anxiety, encourage self-esteem, and grow empathy, all while having fun!



A KIDS BOOK ABOUT: THE PODCAST

A kids’ podcast about the things that matter, like racism, body image, and belonging.



THE BIG FIB

Each week, a kid interviews two ‘experts’: one is a genuine, credentialed expert, the other a liar. Kids learn to ask insightful questions, weigh the evidence, and trust their gut.

“We wanted children hearing the show to feel like they were represented, seen, and heard.”



Story Seeds brings authors and children together to weave a story all their own. Episodes have featured (clockwise from top left): Cici, age 7 and Aram Kim; Hannah, age 11 and Dan Gutman; Zarana & Siri, age 10 and Carlos Hernandez; Jasper, age 13 and Chris Grabenstein; Irthan, age 12 and Jason Reynolds

“She is genuinely excited to chat with the authors and has a knack for getting them to share valuable insight. They are usually equally eager to talk to her, because she is a public figure—she’s also hosted a lot of panels at conferences with authors. For many of them, having a chance to talk to Betsy was a bonus.”

Synergies between the author and child are quite common, as well. *“In some instances, they both have had experiences that are similar to the ones in the story ideas, or they may have similar personalities. Pre-COVID, it was often fascinating to see these second- and third-layer connections between adult and child as they sat together. I think for young people, this is very empowering, whether done in-person or virtually. This one-on-one experience can also be motivating and inspiring for a writer.”*

The show, too, has formed a partnership that will broaden its reach. Listenwise has entered into a licensing arrangement with *The Story Seeds Podcast* to fill a gap in their English Language Arts content. This educators’ platform creates lessons around audio, mostly using short NPR stories. They have taken *Story Seeds* episodes from the first season and spliced them into shorter segments to make it easier to create lessons based on the literary content.

The producers of *The Story Seeds Podcast* are always open to exploring additional ways to deliver opportunities for the audience, so listeners can try activities

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that interest them most. Podcasting apparently tops the list, and the *Story Seeds* team has realized that podcasts are ideal launchpads for fostering curiosity while building public speaking, writing, reading, listening, and artistic skills. And so, the Summer of Podcasts camps, led by educators, were born. During August’s Intensive Camp, nine- to 14-year-olds will learn the nuts and bolts of what it takes to make a podcast, from ideation to scripting, recording, and editing.

What better way to ensure the future of podcasting is in good hands! There’s no doubt *The Story Seeds Podcast* will continue to spur creativity and serve as a much-needed educational resource. 🎧



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