## Hear Boxes

**Age:** 5th grade or higher (with opportunity for input from as young as Kindergarten)
**Materials:** Playback devices and speakers, tissue boxes, paper, classroom objects, and computers *(optional, but effective).*

## [Audio Example of Finished Activity](#)

**Outcomes:**
- Students will use their imaginations to turn a description of a sound into an actual sound using the materials around them, as well as whatever music technology is present.
- Students will learn about ***sound installations*** - interactive musical or sonic experiences that listeners are free to walk through at their own pace - and create one themselves around a sonic topic (i.e. Halloween.)

**Overview:**
This activity is a take on the Halloween "Feel Box", in which participants walk around and reach into boxes to feel "gross" things that are actually just normal, everyday things. Students will use their performance and technology skills to record their own Halloween sounds out of everyday things, and create a spooky sound installation for other students and classes to walk through. (Note: this could be done with any concept, though – a holiday, an event, a location, a story – not necessarily Halloween!) This can be a single class presenting ideas for other grades, or a collaboration between grades. This project works best taking place over several sessions.

**Preparation:**
This project might be most effective when paired with music recording/sequencing software that the students already know. If students are familiar with programs like Audacity, SoundTrap or GarageBand – anything that allows them to capture and manipulate sounds through a microphone – they will be able to realize Step 2 of this project easily. If students are not familiar with a sound recording program, it is recommended that one be introduced before doing this activity OR the teacher record the sounds themselves. (This will rule out manipulating the sounds, which is quite a lot of fun, but could still work well.)
There are 3 steps to this project:
1. Idea Generation – students decide what their sounds should be (10-20 minutes)
2. Sound Creation – students create their assigned sounds using classroom surroundings, computers, etc. (30-60 minutes)
3. Installation Presentation – sounds are presented in a room for students (and other classes) to hear. Experiencing the installation can become its own listening and reflecting activity. (10-20 minutes)

### Step 1: Idea Generation (10-20 minutes)
    a.  As a warm-up, play "The Sound of" around the topic of spooky sounds (or whatever topic you'd like the installation to focus on.) In this game, someone shares "The sound of ____" and the rest of the group makes sounds related to that idea with their voices and bodies.

    b.  Have students write down a sound and draw a picture to go with that sound on a half-sheet of paper.

    c.  (optional) Students can write down ideas on the back of the paper about how to use their voices / bodies / objects in the classroom to make that sound.

### Step 2: Sound Creation (30-60 minutes)
    a.  Students can begin with their own sound, trade sounds, or pick at random.

    b.  Using their immediate surroundings and computer software, they must create a 10-30 second version of their sound. They can use voices, bodies or objects, and are encouraged especially to manipulate them (slow down, speed up, reverse) or add effects (echo, reverb,     distortion) in order to make their sound as spooky as possible.

### Step 3: Installation Presentation (10-20 minutes)
    a.  **Setup** - The final "installation" can take a number of forms, but should essentially consist of several "stations" with speakers playing looping sounds for the students to walk around to. Some possibilities for creating these stations include:
- Sounds being played from several MP3 players, covered up by tissue boxes. (These could be decorated, or covered in black construction paper.)
- If each student has their own computer, the computers could be set to play their sound(s) on loop, and covered up with a cloth, box, or decorations.
- If only a few playback options (computers, mp3 players) are present, sounds can be combined in the form of looping playlists, so that each "station" has multiple sounds in a row.

Each station should be relatively separated from the others, so that the sounds can be distinguished from one another.

    b.  **Sharing** - The students themselves can serve as the "audience" or other classes may be invited in to listen. Students might go around to each station with a pencil and paper, writing down the sounds they hear. Older students might enjoy also guessing HOW the sounds were made. These thoughts and ideas can be shared in a reflection afterwards.

### Notes on organization:
When I did this project, I had Kindergarten through 2nd grade do Step 1, because I knew that I wanted them to be the audience for the final result and I didn't want them to get too frightened (it was easy to assure them by saying "Remember, the sounds you're about to hear are sounds that YOU came up with!") – Their "buddies" in 6-8th grade then got their sound descriptions to realize in Step 2. For Step 3, each grade's sounds were realized on individual listening stations (4 total speakers, with 10-20 sounds on each). I brought each class into the installation individually, split up into 4 groups – each group spent 3-4 minutes at a station with a notebook and pencil, writing down the sounds they heard, and then they rotated to a new station.