

# The Facts-Checker behind the Radio Show

A two-hour class activity to be done on two consecutive days

## Teacher Preparation

1. Reserve the library and/or Internet-access laboratory as needed. Ask the librarian to reserve Texas history and black history resources for your class. Review materials available in your library in order to better guide students.
2. Print out the Facts-Checker Guide page and make photocopies for all students.
3. Prepare classroom sets, one for each class doing this activity.

Print out the African American *LIFETIMES* episodes from the Web site [www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads](http://www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads). Print one counterfeit script for each class. Scripts are printed two to a page to save paper; cut pages in half to distribute. Prepare a classroom set of scripts for each class you teach.

The Web site has 40 episodes aired over the past few years on the Institute's radio program, *LIFETIMES: The Texas Experience*. (Although we are no longer creating new episodes, *LIFETIMES* continues to be aired by KKYX and a few other radio stations in Texas.) In an effort to prevent student talk from spoiling the fun for afternoon classes, there are six repetitions of the counterfeit script, each with a different title and "alias."

*Busy student researchers may well find inaccuracies in these episodes as daily radio programming is often prepared hastily. In addition, sources disagree on some "facts." In some cases, stories do not lay claim to absolute factuality but rather rely on local legend, as in "Death Music on the Brazos." As much as researchers take care to insure accuracy, errors persist. This activity will help students understand some of those research problems and provide insight into historical debates and uncertainties such as the "How Did Davy Die?" controversy. The counterfeit script adds challenge and fun to the research day and gives one student a "pass" on the presentation day.*

Obtain a microphone on a stand for student use. It may be live and connected to a recorder or simply an "unplugged" prop for reading the radio scripts.

## Day One—Reading and Research Assignment

### **Introduction—15 minutes**

Say: "The Institute of Texan Cultures has asked us to check some facts in their radio program for them. I am going to give each of you one radio script to check.

“I know that at least ONE of these scripts has incorrect information in it, and maybe more of them do. Let’s see if we can find out which have errors that we can correct.”

(Hand out scripts.)

Ask students to read the script they receive. Allow two minutes.

Optional: Ask if anyone wants to trade in their script for another. Take up and redistribute unwanted scripts. Do this once more, but warn that they must keep the script they get this time. (This ploy insures that some balking students at least read about three different persons/topics.)

Pass out the Facts-Checker Guide; go through the search requirements and the rubric. Students may use *The New Handbook of Texas* and other resource books, vertical files, encyclopedias, or an Internet search engine and black history pages (see our Webliography) to verify dates, locations, and other facts.

### **Research: 30 minutes**

Allow 30 minutes for research. Even the person who discovers an error must continue to check other facts in that story. Students who find no false facts early on should continue checking; give examples of errors which you have seen in movies, books, newspapers, perhaps your own textbook.

Say: “Underline names, dates, and other facts to be verified. Place a check in the margin or above the dates and names found to be correct and make changes where errors are found. If a sentence is unclear or misleading, rewrite it. Write between the lines and in the margins—just like those last-minute changes on the radio show!”

### **Closing: 5 minutes**

Require students to replace books and chairs to their places, reset all computers to the proper homepage, then return to classroom.

## Day Two: Reports

Say: “Today we will be reading aloud the scripts you worked on yesterday. If you found errors in dates or names, read the *corrected* version of your script.

“Remember, these are radio programs, so read with expression and clarity. I’m going to call on students to come forward to the ‘microphone’ and read their scripts in approximately the order in which the stories occurred in history, beginning with Estevánico. Who has that script?”

Use a timeline on the chalkboard to locate events in time and to intermittently note changes in lifestyle, attitudes, and frame of reference. Ask each student if they found factual errors in their text and what changes they made to the script.

Thank each student and proceed quickly, attempting to hear all scripts in one class period. Intermediate grades with flexible schedules may wish to report half of the scripts one day and half the next.

### Teacher Follow-Up

Use the rubric to determine grades for student worksheets. Write numeric ranges (90-100) or letter grades in the rank column. Discuss the criteria with students and post in an accessible location.

### Rubric for Facts-Check Sheet

Rank: Description of work:

<b>4</b>	<b>All important facts were identified and listed, then verified or disproved utilizing one or more resources. Facts which could not be verified were nonetheless researched and reasons given for their possible validity or falsehood.</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Most important facts were identified, then verified or disproved using a variety of resources overall. Some facts difficult to verify were listed and attempted.</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Several facts were identified and some effort made at verification or disproof. Some important facts were unnoticed or ignored. A few, but not all, were accurately verified.</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Only a few names or dates were listed, and verification was inadequate, inaccurate, or not completed.</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>No facts listed or verified.</b>