

## Chapter 2: Experimentation, Integration, Play: Developing Digital Voice Through Audio Storytelling

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### 2. “The Empty Barn” by Paige Efting

Paige tells the story of showing and selling animals at a 4-H fair using music, poetic narration, animal sound effects, and silence.

#### Transcript

*[Rooster crows, animal noises play with polka music throughout]*

The Empty Barn, by Paige Efting.

Background sounds were used under the public domain. Background music is by NIGID called “Happy Bird Polka.”

Just seven days ago, it was full of life, full of the sound of lambs bleating, roosters crowing, and laughter. Full of the sweet scent of molasses and sweat. Full of dust and straw that you could feel in your lungs when you breathe deep. This is a place that I, an eight-year-old girl go to play with the animals that were meant for the barn. It was first year raising animals to take to the 4-H fair, and I was raising them for other people to eat. At the time, I didn’t know what it would feel like to have an empty barn.

Five months were spent training these animals that had over 50 pounds on me to trust me and learning how to show them properly. I struggled to set up the lambs so the muscles bulged in just the right places and to keep the animal between myself and the judge. I did it all on my own, from picking them out just weeks after they were born, feeding them, bathing them, and cleaning up after them, to shearing their wool. In the end, it all paid off. I did so well at the fair. I took third place in showmanship and second in market. It was my first taste of real responsibility... and loss. I had named them and knew each of their personalities. It didn’t matter how many times I were told these animals were not pets. I still fell in love.

The morning of the auction I remember waking up extra early to feed the lambs. There was so much to be done that day. I washed them with soap that stung my hands, but was told it was the best and to stop complaining by the older, more experienced 4-H’ers. Then I took the clippers and shaved their wool again. It was itchy and you could never really get the oils off of your clothes. The morning was spent preparing the lambs and making them look their best.

When it was our turn, I led my lambs in front of the auctioneer without a harness. They trusted me and would do what I asked of them. I didn’t understand what the auctioneer was saying. He spoke too quickly in a jumble of words. But I smiled at the blur of faces surrounding us. Everyone clapped, and my lambs and I got our picture taken with a stranger. It all happened so fast, so much energy, that by the end I was out of breath.

*[Music stops.]* That night I didn’t say goodbye. Now the barn is empty except for some dirty straw and a check for 623 dollars and 58 cents.