

Capstone Series

This is a full classroom podcast project plan for “**Capstone Series**” — a culminating, multi-episode production that blends **ELA and Humanities** content into one creative, research-based final project. This plan emphasizes interdisciplinary synthesis, critical thinking, and media production skills. It’s formatted cleanly and ready for classroom or digital use.

Focus: Interdisciplinary Synthesis in ELA and Humanities

Project Type: Multi-Episode Research, Writing, and Production Project

Length: 3–4 weeks (6–8 class periods)

Product: Multi-episode podcast series (each 6–10 minutes)

Mode: Group or small-team production (3–5 students per team)

Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. Integrate English Language Arts and Humanities knowledge through thematic research and creative production.
2. Synthesize literary analysis, historical understanding, and rhetorical techniques in original media.
3. Develop advanced communication skills—research, writing, speaking, and collaboration.
4. Apply technical, editorial, and storytelling skills to produce a cohesive, multi-episode series.

Standards Alignment (CCSS):

- W.11-12.7 – Conduct sustained research projects to answer complex questions or solve problems.
 - SL.11-12.4 – Present information clearly, concisely, and logically through multiple media.
 - RL.11-12.2 / RH.11-12.2 – Determine central ideas or themes across texts and contexts.
 - W.11-12.1 – Write arguments or informative texts to convey complex ideas.
 - SL.11-12.1 – Engage effectively in collaborative discussions.
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Project Overview

Capstone Series serves as a culminating podcast project uniting skills from English Language Arts and Humanities courses. Each group designs and produces a **multi-episode show** centered on an original theme such as:

- **Power and Protest** – The language and legacy of resistance movements
- **Voices of Resistance** – Authors, activists, and artists confronting injustice
- **The Human Condition** – Literature and philosophy on morality and meaning
- **Cultural Crossroads** – Encounters, exchange, and identity in global history
- **Freedom and Expression** – The struggle for rights through art and language

Each episode functions as a **case study** combining literary, historical, and rhetorical analysis with creative storytelling. Students draw from primary and secondary sources—novels, speeches, letters, poems, artworks, or archival materials—to explore how words and ideas shape society.

The series culminates in a digital “Season Launch” event, where student teams publish or present their complete episodes.

Project Sequence

Phase 1: Proposal and Planning (Days 1–2)

Goal: Develop an original theme, episode plan, and research question.

Activities:

- Review models of thematic podcast series (e.g., *Throughline*, *Code Switch*, *You’re Wrong About*).
- Brainstorm broad themes connecting literature, history, and civic issues.
- Draft a **Series Proposal** including:
 - Series title and tagline
 - Central theme and driving question
 - Proposed episode list (2–3 episodes minimum)
 - Preliminary sources and focus texts
 - Target audience and tone (academic, narrative, journalistic)
- Conference with the teacher for feedback and approval.

Example Proposal Excerpt:

Series Title: *Voices of Resistance*

Question: How have writers and activists across time used language to challenge systems of oppression?

Episodes:

1. “Letters from the Struggle” – Civil rights and abolitionist correspondence
 2. “Women Write Revolt” – Feminist essays and manifestos
 3. “Poetry as Protest” – Verse from Harlem to hip-hop
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Phase 2: Research and Scriptwriting (Days 3–5)

Goal: Conduct research and write scripts combining analysis and narrative.

Activities:

- Collect primary and secondary sources from literature, history, and art.
- Annotate readings for thematic connections (tone, purpose, audience, impact).
- Divide tasks among group members (researcher, writer, host, etc.).
- Draft scripts following a narrative-analysis structure:
 1. **Hook:** Engaging opening question or story.
 2. **Context:** Historical background or author introduction.
 3. **Analysis:** Literary or rhetorical close reading with examples.
 4. **Connection:** Modern relevance or legacy.
 5. **Reflection:** Insights, implications, or unanswered questions.

Example Excerpt:

Host: “Today on *Power and Protest*, we’re revisiting the words that ignited change— from Frederick Douglass’s 1852 address to the poetry of Audre Lorde. How does language become a weapon for justice?”

Speaker 2: “Both authors faced systems that silenced them. Their words were more than protest—they were survival, art, and strategy.”

Phase 3: Recording and Production (Days 6–7)

Goal: Record, edit, and produce professional-quality episodes.

Activities:

- Record using devices or software such as **Soundtrap**, **Audacity**, or **GarageBand**.
- Emphasize clear enunciation, balanced sound levels, and consistent pacing.
- Include short quotations or dramatic readings from primary texts (in compliance with fair use).
- Add brief music or soundscapes for tone and transitions.
- Each episode should be **6–10 minutes** in length and align with the series theme.

Suggested Opening Line:

“Welcome to [*Series Title*], where we explore how stories shape history—and how history shapes us.”

Phase 4: Launch and Reflection (Days 8–9)

Goal: Publish, present, and reflect on learning outcomes.

Activities:

- Host a “Podcast Launch Day” featuring listening stations or live introductions.
 - Peers complete a **Series Feedback Form**, offering notes on clarity, evidence, and impact.
 - Each team writes a **Capstone Reflection**, addressing:
 - What did we learn about the power of language and ideas?
 - How did our collaboration and research evolve?
 - What civic or cultural questions remain unresolved?
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Group Roles

Role	Responsibilities
Executive Producer	Oversees creative direction, ensures cohesion across episodes
Lead Researcher	Gathers and verifies primary/secondary sources
Scriptwriter	Crafts engaging narrative and analysis for each episode
Host/Narrator	Delivers content and maintains tone and pacing
Editor/Engineer	Handles recording, sound design, and technical production

Suggested Themes & Source Pairings

1. Power and Protest

- Texts: *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois), *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (King), *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels)
- Topics: Inequality, resistance, reform movements

2. Voices of Resistance

- Texts: *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan), *Ain't I a Woman?* (Truth), *Sister Outsider* (Lorde)
- Topics: Feminism, intersectionality, identity

3. Words That Moved the World

- Texts: *Common Sense* (Paine), *Gettysburg Address* (Lincoln), *I Have a Dream* (King)
- Topics: Democracy, justice, and the language of leadership

4. Culture and Migration

- Texts: *The Joy Luck Club* (Tan), *The Namesake* (Lahiri), immigrant letters and oral histories
- Topics: Diaspora, adaptation, cultural exchange

5. Art, Literature, and Revolution

- Texts: Romantic poetry, *The Communist Manifesto*, Harlem Renaissance art and music
- Topics: Creativity as political expression

Assessment Rubric (25 points total)

Criteria	Excellent (5)	Proficient (4)	Developing (3)	Beginning (1–2)
Thematic Depth	Strong, cohesive theme linking all episodes	Clear theme with some variation	Theme present but uneven	Weak or unclear theme
Interdisciplinary Integration	Seamlessly blends ELA and Humanities content	Clear use of both disciplines	Some integration but limited depth	Focused on one discipline only
Research and Evidence	Uses multiple credible and diverse sources effectively	Includes several accurate sources	Limited or repetitive sourcing	Minimal or missing research
Storytelling and Delivery	Engaging, professional, and emotionally resonant	Mostly clear and organized	Uneven pacing or delivery	Disorganized or hard to follow
Collaboration and Reflection	Excellent teamwork and thoughtful reflection	Strong collaboration	Uneven participation	Minimal contribution or insight

Extension Options

1. **Public Archive or Exhibit:** Publish all student episodes as a digital exhibition on class website or community platform.
2. **Cross-Curricular Collaboration:** Partner with History, Civics, or Art teachers for joint production credits.
3. **Capstone Symposium:** Present episodes live with panel discussions or Q&A sessions.
4. **Writing Connection:** Develop a companion essay or “producer’s statement” explaining rhetorical and creative choices.
5. **National Submission:** Submit select episodes to student media contests or digital humanities showcases.

