What makes a good podcast?  
Tutorial assignment and final rubric

This assignment occurs in our first tutorial meeting. In preparation for tutorial students are expected to do the following:

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| 1. Listen to the 3 podcast episodes below.  2. As you listen, answer these questions (prepare to discuss in tutorial):  - How does a podcast differ from a reading or a video, especially as a homework assignment? - What are 3-5 elements needed to make a podcast engaging and worth listening to? Write down specific instances of these elements in the assigned podcasts.  1. This American Life (episode 162 - two sections: "Moving" - "Prologue" and "Sleeping in Mommy and Daddy's Room" - 28 minutes)   * <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/162/moving>   2. Home on the Dot (episode 5: "HomeWork Machine" - 26 minutes)   * <https://blog.nus.edu.sg/homeonthedot/2018/08/30/homework-machine/>   3. 99% Invisible (episode 359: "Life and Death in Singapore" - 33 minutes)   * <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/singapore/> |

During tutorial, students work first in small groups to discuss the answers to their questions. Then I call on one group at a time to share one element at a time, going around the room until we exhaust all ideas. I expect a specific instance from the podcasts with each element. At the end of each tutorial I photograph the whiteboard (or if done in Zoom, I screenshot the page I’m sharing) and later combine the findings into a master set (see next page).

The purpose of this exercise is:  
1) to expose students to podcasts, especially important if they are not familiar with podcasts

2) to help students recognize and articulate what they find memorable or valuable in podcasts

3) to let students collaboratively create the rubric I will later use to mark their final podcast

By letting students identify what makes a good podcast, I am giving them ownership over the final rubric, which helps minimize later student questions and confusion about what is expected for the final project. Throughout the semester I remind students that they already know what is expected in the final podcast, and that *they* developed those expectations.

Podcast rubric (what makes a podcast worth listening to)

GET1003: Home

A/P Chris McMorran

During our first tutorial I asked everyone to listen to some podcasts and think about what made a compelling podcast. During tutorial I listed many of the elements you suggested, and I informed you that through the exercise you helped construct a kind of rubric or set of guidelines for the assignment. You helped identify the elements I will be looking for—and you should be striving toward—in your podcast. Here is that list:

* **Good tempo and organization**: a story broken into parts, with a clear structure and natural breaks (not non-stop talking, which can be boring). Remember, pauses provide a break for the listener to digest information and think about what you are sharing.
* **A variety of voices**: speakers of different ages and (sometimes) languages, doing a combination of both *scripted* narration and *unscripted* interviews. In other words, it should not feel too fake or planned like a CNA report. It should also be largely free from *jargon.* You could also use short clips from YouTube of politicians or other people talking about something that relates to your object/place. Overall, you all highlighted the importance of a **conversational tone**, like a friend speaking in your ear, and **authentic voices**, so the listener gets a sense of the *authentic,* *local* sound of language used in that place. Some people also mentioned the value of character development – following a single person throughout the episode. Finally, some groups liked have an authoritative, trustworthy voice who serves as the guide for the listener.
* **A variety of sounds**: sounds that give the listener a sense of the atmosphere of a place (one student put it this way: “It forms a visual image in my mind”). These could be background sounds, like the noisy scraping sounds you hear at a hawker center, or the object itself. For instance, in Season 2 of Home on the Dot we did an episode about Ya Kun Kaya Toast, and we included sounds like a spoon stirring coffee and the cracking of an egg. The aim is to record sounds that spur an image or make listeners feel like they are there. You may include music, too, but since you are not musical composers, this is not necessary. If you include background music, I suggest recording yourselves playing instruments, since so many of you have musical talent.
* **A hook or a twist**. Finally, all groups mentioned the importance of a hook or a twist. This is a contradiction, or a problem, or a paradox, or just a really compelling question that attracts the listener and keeps them interested. Some tutorial groups mentioned a **drama**; something that needs to be resolved by the end of the podcast. Tell a compelling story. And many of you mentioned the value of unforced, authentic **emotions**.

**Also** remember that there are audio-editing guides in LumiNUS (for Garageband and Audacity).