

2017 BADIE Grand Prize and First Place Award Winners
(Benefits of Audio Description In Education)

Abby Moreno – Grand Prize Winner
Lowell High School-San Francisco, CA

Are people with visual impairments getting their monies worth when it comes to watching block buster movies and trendy videos online? This is a very important question that quite frankly, has been avoided for far too long. In today's day and age where technology fulfills such a major role in all of our lives, everyone longs for the ability to interact equally, despite individual differences. Regarding members of the visually impaired community, this kind of equality just might be found through audio description.

In FAITH, MY STORY ABOUT BEING CONFIDENT, a short film that can be found on the American Council for the Blind's website, tells the sweet and encouraging story of a young girl who learns to overcome her stage fright by entering an Australian songwriting contest and winning. This particular video, among thousands of others is audio described from beginning to end. Through my observations on this film, I am able to say that most of my feedback is positive, which I must admit took me by surprise. One particular aspect of the audio film that I had initially worried about was whether or not the description would interfere with the voices of the featured individuals.

My experience in the past with voice adapted videos has always failed to meet my expectations on this important detail. Yet, the description of this video impressed me on a few unexpected levels. For one, I highly applaud the fact that common visuals such as the credits at the end are read aloud, and even a detail as small as a lightbulb being shown in the background are verbally explained. As well as the descriptive voice speaking with smooth clarity, outstanding details, and neat precision. Additionally, no matter how many times I went back to listen to this video clip, I really could not find any moment where the voices of the individuals featured in it and that of the audio description clashed with one another. Therefore, I highly applaud this short film on these audio described highlights.

Despite the positives this film offers for visually impaired viewers, there is some negative feedback I feel obliged to share. My one criticism would be that the voice on this audio described video is a bit on the robotic side. Yes this is common for most audio adapted videos, however, I think it would be a more natural and appealing approach if a standard human voice was used instead.

Obviously, this may take more money, technical training, and time, but could definitely be worthwhile. Speaking from my own experience with audio described films and not having been much of a fan for most of my life, I feel that this adjustment would make the optional service more inviting overall.

As a whole, I learned that not all audio described videos and films are the same. And with some adjustments here and there, the adaptation can actually be quite enjoyable. I feel that making audio description more available for the blind should be taken seriously, and be put into effect globally so that all can enjoy the Big Screen luxuries life has to offer. Personally, I'll definitely be thinking twice about using audio description the next time I sit and relax with a blockbuster classic and a buttery bucket of popcorn.

Senior Category (ages 16 to 21):

First Place – Breck Morrissey

Flower Mound High School-Highland Village, TX

While watching “Sherlock”, I was fortunate to find that Audio Description was a feature available to me. The description was great especially when it came to the small details. I believe that as a visually impaired person who has some vision, the best part was how accurate the description is. If I could change one thing about the audio description is the larger details and some background information. It does not describe as much background detail as I believe necessary for the individual watching. In all, I believe that the description is great however, there could be some improvements to the larger details.

Junior Category (ages 11 to 15):

First Place – Abby Moreno

Lowell High School-San Francisco, CA (see above)

Sophomore Category (ages 7 to 10):

First Place – Audrey Mattingly

WV School for the Blind-Romney, WV

My class and I watched three videos. Our first video, “The Magic School Bus”, had a voice that interrupted the people speaking. The voice was a man on the TV show. The next one we watched was “Astroblast” it had a better voice that blended in with the characters. The voice got in to more details which I love. The last video was called “Bizkid\$”. I like the video because it told us the names of the characters before they spoke. I like his voice because it was not very strange.

My favorite TV show out of the three we watched was “Bizkid\$” because it was about money. When the audio description was not describing what was going on, the characters were giving the description. They talk about bartering and I thought it was cool. I like bartering because you can trade without money. I trade with my friends all of the time.

I need audio description so I know what is going on the screen. I am blind and I cannot see a lot. I can see dark colors and light. Audio description tells me what is going on and it describes what the characters are doing so I do not get confused. I love audio description it helps me. If audio description was not around I would not know what was happening on the TV show or the movie. When I am at home I listen to the TV and sometimes the characters stop talking and I do not know what they are doing.