

But Why? A Podcast for Curious Kids

Flynn Student Matinee Series Study Guide



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About the “But Why?” Podcast:

Born right here in Vermont, “But Why: A Podcast for Curious Kids” started in 2016. Award-winning journalist Jane Lindholm wanted to create a podcast that both kids and adults could enjoy, so along with producer Melody Bodette, they launched this podcast with a mission to celebrate the diversity of childhood experience and encourage lifelong curiosity.

The format of the podcast is unique, with every episode starting from [a question submitted by a curious kid just like you!](#) The questions come from kids all over the world and with the help of an adult, kids can record themselves asking a question about any topic, including animals, science & technology, the human body, arts & culture, and current events.



Podcast creators Jane Lindholm (left) and Melody Bodette (right)

Since the podcast began, they’ve received thousands of questions from kids in every U.S. state and territory and more than 90

countries. It’s grown to become one of the top kids’ podcasts in the world, and the podcast is supplemented with other materials including a book series, school curriculum, video episodes, and live multimedia shows – like the one you’re about to see at The Flynn!

The show even tackles big, difficult to answer questions, including about racism, death, and gender. [As Lindholm says](#), “We don’t shy away from questions that are challenging.” [Bodette agrees, saying](#), “When I’m listening to the questions that come into our inbox, the ones that I love are the ones that make me want to Google for an answer immediately...but the serious questions also surprise me, kids want to talk about the hard stuff.”



The podcast met this robot dog, made by GlobalFoundries in Essex Junction

After they choose a question to focus an episode on – which they usually pick based on a topic they get a lot of questions about – the makers of “But Why” get to work finding interesting people to help them tackle the question, from scientists to writers to historians to artists... even [the engineers who made a robot dog!](#)

Some recent podcast episodes include...

[Who created math problems?](#)
[Why do some people like spicy food?](#)
[Why do we need to use sunscreen?](#)
[Why do walruses look so weird?](#)
[What are taxes and tariffs?](#)

And that's not all! Every two weeks they also put out a short video series called [But Why Bites](#), where they answer one curious kid's question in the form of a video.



Some of the steps in the process of making a record, the subject of a recent episode called ["How are records made?"](#)

Live Show: Emotions

The live show you'll get to see is all about emotions! We humans have big feelings, and sometimes that can be overwhelming. Host Jane Lindholm will guide the audience through the science behind our emotions and explore how we can navigate and harness our big feelings. Heads up, this show will be interactive, so be ready to engage and help out during the performance!

Joining Jane Lindholm is renowned cellist [Zoë Keating](#). Zoë will play music throughout the show on her cello, and explain how she uses the power of music to draw out emotions in the music she makes for movies, video games, and her own albums. Zoë Keating's self-produced albums have made it to #1 on the iTunes classical music charts and her music has appeared in countless documentaries, radio shows, in tens of thousands of online videos, and in movies and theater. In 2021, the music she co-composed for the movie "Oslo" was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Music for a Television Movie.



Cellist Zoë Keating

This isn't the first time the The But Why? team has tackled the subject of the science of emotions. Last November they made an episode about [anxiety](#), the feeling of worry or fear about something that could happen in the future. In this episode, listeners get to understand anxiety and how to deal with it with the help of a clinical psychologist known as Dr. Friendtastic. Check out [Dr. Friendtastic's website](#) for fun, interesting, and useful information for kids about making and keeping friends.

A 2023 episode of the podcast tries to understand [why we like being scared](#). With the help of the co-director of the [Recreational Fear Lab](#), listeners learn surprising facts about fear – including the fact that moderate and controlled fear can actually have benefits on our mental health! Fear is



A person participating in a study at the Recreational Fear Lab

one of the most studied human emotions, and researchers think that a bit of playful fear can help people when they later encounter an actual scary situation.

How Does a Podcast Get Made?

Podcasts are like a radio show that you can listen to anytime you want. Podcasts can be about anything – some follow the news, others are educational, while others are just for fun. Sometimes they're made by journalists, sometimes by artists, and everyone in between!

In the mid-1990s in the U.S., independent musicians had a very hard time reaching audiences, while a lot of radio stations were being taken over by large corporations. This meant that local news and variety of programming was becoming more difficult to find on the radio. This was also in the early days of the internet, at a time when most devices that played music couldn't connect to the internet. As the internet grew and file sharing became more widely available, people began discovering ways to share music and radio more freely. By the year 2000, entrepreneurs and audio technicians figured out a way to share audio as single files, and by the year 2005 podcasts were becoming well known to wider audiences.



"But Why?" host Jane Lindholm getting ready to record an episode of the podcast!

These days it's very easy to make a podcast. Anyone who wants to share their ideas can do it without a whole lot of expensive equipment and without needing an editor or publisher to make it happen. All that's needed to make a podcast are an idea, a way to record it, and a voice to bring it to life.

In an ["Ask Me Anything" that creators Lindholm and Bodette hosted on Reddit](#), listeners asked some great behind-the-scenes questions about the

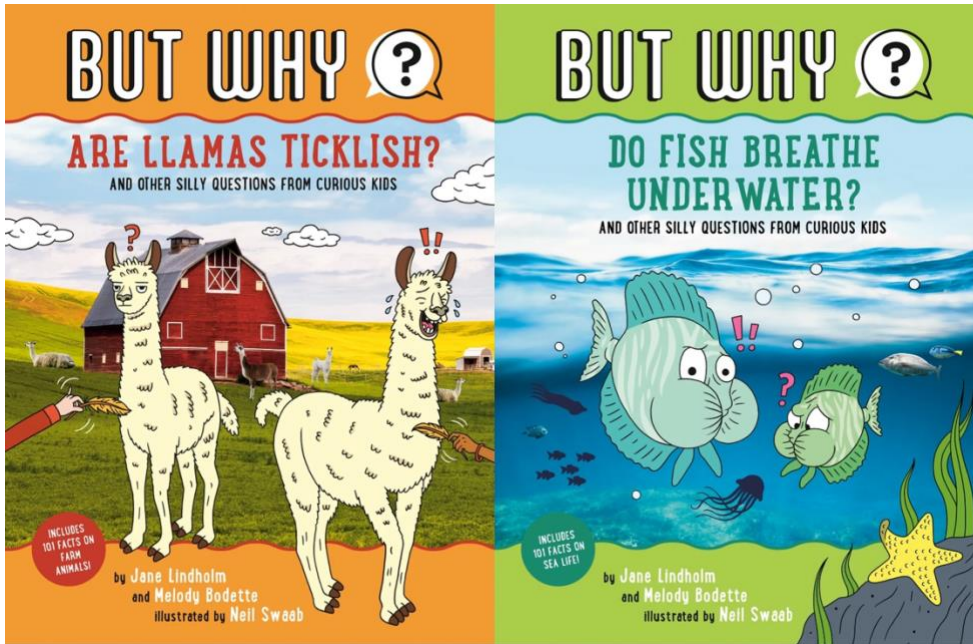
making of their podcast. Here are some tips they shared about how to make your own podcast:

*"You might want to make a show that's **just you, sharing your thoughts or telling stories**. Or you might want to make **a fictional show where you get your friends to act out the characters**. Or you could **interview other people** (like we do). There are a million different ideas and they're all great. Once you've done your recordings you usually have to use some software to help you produce your show – **add some theme music**, etc. And then you **put your audio file online**. There are companies that do what's called 'hosting' your podcast. That's basically a place where the podcast lives online, and that's how it gets into Apple Podcasts or Stitcher or NPR One etc. And **then people listen to your show!!**"*

Yep, it's that simple!

Beyond the Podcast: Videos, Education & More

With the huge success of “But Why?” the creators decided to launch additional initiatives to support the work the podcast is doing. In 2022 [they published two books](#), co-authored by Jane Lindholm and Melody Bodette.



Are Llamas Ticklish? explores lots of kids’ questions about all kinds of different farm animals – both serious and silly!

Do Fish Breathe Underwater? explores questions from kids about the ocean and the animals that live there!

They also publish an awesome series of [educational YouTube videos](#) that add more to the conversations explored on the podcast.

In 2023, they started [“But Why: Adventures!”](#) a new initiative offering in-depth dynamic educational materials for the classroom. The first installment is a series called “Northeast Nature” which explores the science behind what goes on in the northeastern U.S. landscape each month. Along with the videos, this series offers teacher resources, project suggestions, and activity guides for the classroom, all geared towards students in 3rd through 5th grade.



Reflection Questions:

Here are some example questions to prompt deeper engagement from your students, both before and after the show:

Before the Show:

- Have you ever been to a theater before? What are some ways an audience is expected to behave in a theater that are different from how you behave in other places you go for entertainment, like a movie theater?
- Have you ever listened to a podcast before? If so, what was it about?
- If you could ask a question for the “But Why?” podcast, what would it be?
- If you could make your own podcast series, what would it be about?
- How many emotions can you think of? Why do you think it’s important to learn about emotions?
- Have you ever experienced an emotional reaction to music? What was the music, and how did it make you feel?

After the Show:

- How did the show make you feel? Was there a specific moment when it caused an emotional reaction in you? How did it do that? What did the show make you think about?
- If you were to write a review of the show, what would you say? What stood out to you? Would you recommend it to other people? Why?
- What did you learn about emotions that you didn’t know before?
- Did you learn any new tools for navigating difficult emotions?
- What did you feel while you were listening to the cello music?

Resources

- [Welcome to “But Why?”](#)
- [When Did Podcasts Start? A Brief History of Podcasting](#)
- [“But Why?” AMA on Reddit with Jane Lindholm and Melody Bodette](#)
- [Cellist Zoë Keating](#)
- [Recreational Fear Lab](#)
- [Dr. Friendtastic: Friendship Advice for Kids](#)