

FRAMING and STORYTELLING

Grades K-4 (15 minutes for K-1; 30 minutes for grades 2-4)

Students will examine and discuss real world examples of framing by media makers, including puppet shows, news photos, and a clip from an educational film. These provide an opportunity to consider how framing is useful for storytelling and when framing shifts from improving to distorting communication.

Students will learn that

- All media makers use frames and make choices about what to include and exclude.
- Frames can be used in ways that change the message (which means people can use framing to mislead).
- Asking questions such as “What do you notice?” “What’s the purpose?” and “Who might benefit?” can help them link framing choices to message(s).
- There’s a difference between being fooled for fun or entertainment (like, say, a magic trick or puppet show) and “misinformation,” when people use framing to intentionally mislead us into believing a lie.
- The word “intentionally” means “on purpose” and the word “cropped” means cutting off edges of an image

Students will practice

- Making careful observations, including compare and contrast
- Discussion & listening skills
- Linking answers to evidence

Materials: A way to show images and videos to the group

Images

[Close-up of Bert & Ernie](#) – Slide #2

[Bert & Ernie with puppeteers](#) – Slide #2

[University of Arizona football game crowd cropped](#) – Slide #5

[University of Arizona football game crowd not cropped](#) – Slide 5

Videos

[Thang Long Water puppet theater](#) (1:30 min.) – [link also on Slide #3](#)

[Vietnamese water puppet show “behind the scenes”](#)

(start half way in and run until attention wanes – no more than 6 min.) – [link also on Slide #4](#)

[Cosmic Voyage clip](#) (1:05-1:55) – [link also on Slide #6](#)

Show image of Bert & Ernie and state the obvious: *This is what we see on TV or video.*



Then explain: *This is what we would see if the director chose to show us more of what is happening in front of the camera.*



This image also has a frame.

The photographer chose not to show the audience (us) everything in the room.

Ask: *What else do you think is in the room that makes it possible for us to see Bert and Ernie on*

TV?

Be sure students understand that cameras, lights, microphones and the people operating them must be present to record the performance so that we can see the show on TV or streamed on our tablet or phone.

Step 2

Ask if students have ever seen a live puppet show. Could they see the puppeteers during the show?

If needed, remind them with clips from this pair of videos that show a modern-day performance of a traditional Vietnamese form of puppetry and what it's like behind the scenes:

[Thang Long Water puppet theater](#) (1:30 min.) – slide #3

[Behind the scenes](#) of a Vietnamese water puppet show (start half way in and run until attention wanes – no more than 6 min.) – slide #4

Fill in basic information about Vietnam as needed to provide context and prompt

students to pay attention to what the audience can and cannot see.

After viewing, explain that framing has been used in the performing arts (theater) and the fine arts (painters) for centuries. Typically puppeteers and other things that might be a distraction from a performance happen backstage, out of sight.

Today, we also have cameras and we can use cameras to create frames. Every time students watch a video or a movie they are seeing the result of choices made by a media maker (or team of media makers) who decided what would be in and outside the frame.

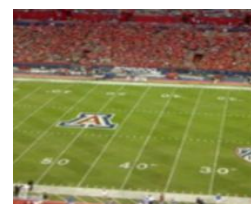
As time allows, invite students to talk about what they've just seen and learned about frames.

For the youngest students, end the activity here.

Step 3

For older students (grades 2-4), continue by asking: *Is the use of framing in a puppet show a form of misinformation?*

Explain that misinformation isn't just fooling us for entertainment (like a magic trick). It is used intentionally to mislead us so we'll believe something that's not true or take an action we wouldn't otherwise take. (Be sure that everyone knows that "intentionally" means "on purpose" – people who spread misinformation know what they are doing). Allow time for brief speculation and then invite students to explore this question further with the next compare/contrast example:



If this is what you saw, would you say the crowd for the game was large or small? What's your evidence?

Then show the full original. *What's different about the framing? Now what do you think about the crowd size? What makes you say that?* Introduce the word “cropped” and invited a student to draw with their finger on screen how the first picture is a cropped version of the original.



Source:
<https://arizona.sbnation.com/arizona-wildcats/2011/10/20/2503972/photo-arizona-stadium-vs-ucla>

Briefly ask: *Why might someone share the first picture instead of the second? Who could benefit from people thinking that there was a large crowd at the game?*

Take a few answers and prompt for evidence, but keep the discussion short. Asking these questions at this point is mostly to model the habit of inquiry.

Spend more time discussing this question: *Is the first picture an example of “misinformation?”*

Then show a short clip from the 1996 film *Cosmic Voyage* 1:05-1:55 – slide #6



Ask for general reactions. Then ask: *How did the media makers combine framing and editing to fool our eye?*

Show clip again if needed

so students see that the film starts with a shot of real plane in the sky, then cuts to a closely cropped shot of the model on the ground before zooming out to show that we are looking at a model airport and city.

Tell students that the purpose of the video is to explore our concepts of size and ratios. Ask: *Is this clip misinformation or a great use of framing to convey a message (or both/neither)?* Don't forget to follow responses with probes for evidence.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Connect to art, theater, and video production by having students make puppets, perform a puppet show, and record (video) the show.

Connect to math by exploring the use of ratios and relative size in the film *Cosmic Voyage*. Help them identify examples of size-related “special effects” in movies or TV shows they have seen. See if they can figure out how big a cardboard planet would need to be to make their model spaceship look small, or how big their block tower needs to be to make their stuffed toy look like King Kong holding on to the top.

Let students experiment with making their own photos or videos that use juxtaposition or unusually-sized props to fool the viewer into thinking that something is larger or smaller than it actually is.

AASL Standards Correlations

A. II. 2. Adopting a discerning stance toward points of view and opinions expressed in information resources and learning products.

A. VI. 2. Understanding the ethical use of information technology and media.

A. VI. 3. Evaluating information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context, and appropriateness for need.

C. I. 1. Interacting with content presented by others.

C. II. 2. Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed.

D. I. 3. Enacting new understanding through real world connections.

D. III. 1. Actively contributing to group discussions.

D. VI. 3. Inspiring others to engage in safe, responsible ethical and legal information behaviors.