

FRAMING for BEGINNERS

Grades K-2 (20 minutes that can be easily divided into two 10 minute sessions; add 20 minutes if you choose to do the optional activity)

Students look through and move frames as a hands-on way to introduce them to the concept of framing. Activities, including a read-aloud of Istvan Banyai's book, *Zoom*, help build students' understanding that media makers use framing to shape their messages.

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?" and "What's missing?" can help them link framing choices to message(s).
- In the context of pictures, the phrase "zoom in" means including less in the frame (a close-up) and "zoom out" means including more (a wider shot).

Students will practice

- Making careful observations.
- Linking conclusions to evidence.

Materials: Istvan Banyai's book, *Zoom* (Puffin Books); depending on your choices, index cards & scissors or cameras;
for optional activity: paper & pencil or crayon (or other option for recording observations)

Step 1

Make small physical frames, either by cutting a center rectangle out of the middle of an index card, having students hold their hands in open circles over their eyes (like looking through binoculars), or by using a digital camera (perhaps on a tablet or phone) that they physically move to see the picture change.*

Step 2

Allow students to play with their frame.
Ask: *What do you notice about what is inside or outside the frame?*

Use questions to help them observe details:
How does it change when you move the frame or your head or you move your body to a different place in the room? If you look at something close up, is there more of the room in the frame, or less?

Tell students that

- *When they (the students) control the frame, they can choose what stays inside the frame and what gets left out.*
- *That's what people who make media do. All media makers use frames.*

- *We are always looking (or hearing or reading) through a frame that someone else created.*

Help students understand that their choices can change the message, just like media makers.

Let them practice the concept by prompting them:

- *Move your frame* to make it seem like there is only one person in the room.*
- *Move your frame to make it seem like the room is full of people.*
- Add your own prompts, or even make it into a game inviting the students to suggest prompts.

* For advanced students, introduce how camera features like zooming in or out can replace the need to physically move the camera.

Step 3

Help students connect the use of frames and ethics. Ask: *If I wanted to show your families what our room is like right now, should I choose the frame that shows lots of us or only one or two of us? Neither image is fake or false, but they convey different information. Which would give families the most accurate picture?*

Be sure to prompt for evidence as students provide answers.

End by connecting the decision to the world outside of school, for example: *All the media you use is made by people who make the same sort of decision that you just made. Everything you see or read or hear or play is the result of someone choosing to leave in certain things and leave out other things.*

If you want to divide the lesson into two sessions, this would be a natural stopping point.

Step 4



Reinforce what students have learned about frames and framing with a read-aloud of Istvan Banyai's book, *Zoom* (Puffin Books).

Model and help students practice inquiry by pausing before each page to

ask for educated guesses about what they are looking at. Be sure to follow-up answers with prompts for evidence.

After a few pages, pause to ask: *How is this connected to what we just learned about frames?* If no one offers an answer, review the pages and point out the changing frame (from macro close-up to ever wider frames). Invite students to share how their ideas about what the image was changed as each illustration included more information.

Introduce “zoom” as a vocabulary term and link the nature of the changes in the book’s illustrations to its title.

End with a final reminder that all media makers (including students!) use frames and make decisions about what to include and exclude.

Optional Activity (recommended for 2nd graders):

If your room has large windows, open all the shades/blinds and have students document what they see.

They can write, record an oral description, take a digital picture, or use this as an opportunity to practice science-style observation by drawing relevant information in a journal.

Then close one shade/blind and repeat the documentation process. Together, review what changed about what they could see. Ask: *What’s missing?*

As students share their observations, note that the information hasn’t changed (e.g., the tree didn’t go away just because it’s now obscured by a window shade), but the information that students can access has.

If students don't raise the issue themselves, make a special note of any particularly important information that's now outside the frame. For example, if they were writing a report to inform the community about what's in their schoolyard, but with the shade/blind closed they can't see the basketball hoop, would they have all the information they need to give the people a full, accurate idea of the things they can do on their playground?

Wrap up by helping students connect their window observations to the choices made by the people who make games, videos, TV programs, movies, books, etc. noting that it's impossible for any media maker to include everything. They must make choices about what's most important to include to convey the message(s) they want to communicate to their audience.

With advanced students, you may want to also discuss the meaning of the phrase "window on the world," as in "a book can be a window on the world." Ask: *What does that saying mean? What did you learn from the exercise about the value and limits of windows?*

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Link framing to art by giving a drawing or painting prompt that requires decisions about framing (e.g., draw a picture of where you live; illustrate an important part of the story we've been reading; show something about your school day that would be important for Open House visitors to know). Then invite students to talk about how they made decisions about what was important to include or okay to exclude. Continue to develop awareness of frames by asking questions like, "If I was standing in your picture, what would I see if I looked up, down, or sideways?"

Extend the art lesson by inviting students to look at famous paintings and make educated guesses about what might be outside the frame that the artist chose or how they used the frame (and size and placement of objects in the frame) to suggest to viewers what is important in the painting.

During physical education time (or indoor recess on a bad weather day), play the hokey pokey and invite students to notice what is inside and outside the frame of the circle. (Thanks for this idea goes to teacher John Landis as recounted in Renee Hobbs and David Cooper Moore. *Discovering Media Literacy: Teaching Digital Media and Popular Culture in Elementary School* (Corwin, 2013))

AASL Standards Correlations

- A. IV. 3. Making choices about information sources to use.
- 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.