

## LESSON PLAN

### Teaching Media: The Frame as Storyteller

This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.



**LEVEL:** Grades 1 to 6

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** By Elizabeth Verrall, adapted with permission from the Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario (FWTAO) Curriculum Insert 1994 Vol. 12 No. 5. Toronto, Ontario, May/June 1993.

#### Overview

In this lesson, students explore the ways in which the media frame is used to tell stories.

#### Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- understand that media products can tell a story
- recognize that characters, mood, setting and plot are part of a media story
- tell or re-tell a story using different media
- appreciate that there are different ways to tell the same story
- identify television stories
- compare/contrast TV stories with other stories
- construct a storyboard

#### Preparation and Materials

- Prepare to project or distribute the handouts:
  - *Framing: What's in the Picture?*
  - *Framing: Whose Point of View?*
  - *Framing: What Moment are we Seeing?*
  - *Framing: What Gets our Attention?*
  - *A Simple Story*

- Prepare to distribute the handout *Which panels do you need to tell the story?*
- *Optional:* Have paper, scissors and glue on hand for the Which panels do you need to tell the story? activity

## Procedure

### FRAMING SCHOOL

Start by showing students how to make a “frame” with their hands, like the picture on the right.

Have students hold the “frame” right up to their eyes so that they are only looking through the space between their fingers. Tell them to turn and look around the room — around them, up and down, closer and further from things on their desks

— and pay attention to what is and isn’t in the “frame.” What do they see the frame is pointing at different things, or closer or further from different things? What do they *not* see?



(Photo: Depositfiles)

### FRAMING MEDIA

Explain to students that when we see or hear media, we usually think it’s like looking through a window. But all media works are actually inside a *frame*. This frame is what the media makers *choose* to show us.

Display or distribute the handout *Framing: What’s in the Picture?* and explain that the frame controls what we see and what we don’t. If we only saw the first photo, we might think the lion was in the savannah; with the wider frame in the second one we can see that it is in a zoo.

Next, display or distribute the handout *Framing: Whose Point of View?* and explain that the frame can “look” in one direction or another. The first picture, looking towards the front of the stadium, makes it seem like the rally is full of people; the second one, pointing at the back of the stadium, makes it look empty. Neither of these is the “reality”: only by seeing both

of them together do we see that the stadium was about half-full.

Point out to students that *whose* point of view we see things from can also affect how a story is told. Ask them to think about how the story of a typical day in their home might be told differently from the point of view of themselves, a sibling, parents or guardians, one of their pets, or a visiting space alien! (The lesson [Once Upon a Time](#) explores this idea in greater detail.)

Now display or distribute the handout *Framing: Which Moment are We Seeing?* and explain that the frame controls time by showing us just some moments but not others. When we see a photo or video of someone shooting a basket, we don't know whether they got it on the first or the hundredth time. Explain to students that every moment in a film or TV show is filmed many times, and that the director then chooses which of these "takes" to use in the final product.

Point out to students that a story can also be frame by the *order* in which the story is told. Media makers often don't tell you everything right away, then "flash back" to show you events from earlier in time.

Can students think of examples of flashbacks in media?

What media *techniques* are often used to show that a scene is a flashback? (For example, a blurry transition from the previous scene in video; a caption such as "Five years earlier"; a shot of a character looking thoughtful before the flashback.)

Now display or distribute the handout *Framing: What Gets Our Attention?* and explain that framing can be used to show you when something is important. Which of these shots tells you that the keys are definitely important, and which one tells you that they *might* be important?

Ask students to think of other media techniques that tell us that we should pay attention to something. Some possible examples include how long we see something for, whether music or sound effects play when we see something, and where in the frame something is.

## OTHER FRAMES

Ask students: What are some other things that *frame* media?

Here are some examples to prompt their thinking:

- Sound is often added to video. Even when you see people talking in a



movie or TV show, what you're hearing may have been recorded later.

- Music also “frames” a story by telling us how a scene should “feel”: light, bouncy music tells us a scene is fun and funny, while loud, brassy music tells us it's exciting.
- Computer graphics, special effects and filters are added to pictures and video or used to change them.
- Some media, like cartoons and video games, don't start with a real image at all! Everything is the result of the media maker's decisions.

Now ask: is it possible to be “inside” a frame in real life?

Museums and amusement parks “frame” what you see and hear to give you the best experience. Grocery stores do that too: companies pay to have their products put in places where shoppers will notice them. That's why cereal for kids is always on the bottom or middle shelf, where kids will see it.

### **FRAMING: WHAT TO INCLUDE AND WHAT TO LEAVE OUT?**

Now distribute the handout *Which panels do you need to tell the story?* (You may wish to read through it with younger students.)

Have students work in pairs or small groups to choose which panels are needed to tell this (very simple) story and which could be left out. Depending on time and materials available, you may choose to have students cut out the panels and paste the ones they chose onto another piece of paper, or have them cross out the panels they conclude are *not* necessary.

When students have finished, have them explain their choices.

Next, project or distribute the handout *A Simple Story* and compare it to students' choices. Did they make the same choices about which panels to include and which to leave out?

# TEACHING MEDIA: THE FRAME AS STORYTELLER

## Framing: What's in the Picture?

Is this lion in the wild? Or in the zoo? It depends on how much of the picture you see.





# TEACHING MEDIA: THE FRAME AS STORYTELLER

## Framing: Which Point of View?

Is this rally full or empty? It depends on which way the camera is pointing.



# TEACHING MEDIA: THE FRAME AS STORYTELLER

## Framing: Which Moment Are We Seeing?

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Did this player make the basket on the first try or on the hundredth?





# TEACHING MEDIA: THE FRAME AS STORYTELLER

## Framing: What Gets Our Attention?

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Which set of keys is important and which isn't? How do we know?

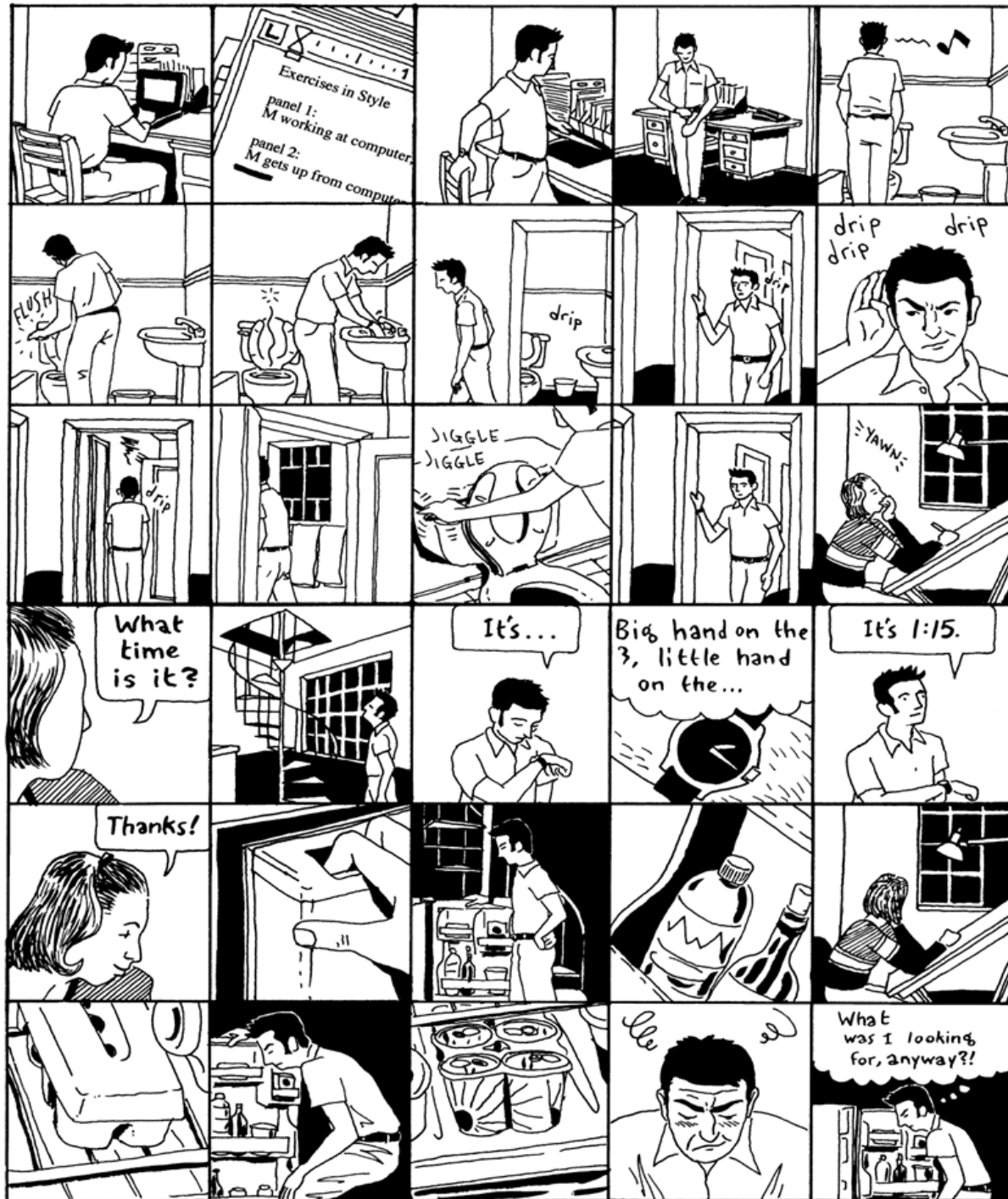




# TEACHING MEDIA: THE FRAME AS STORYTELLER

Which Panels Do You Need To Tell the Story?

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# TEACHING MEDIA: THE FRAME AS STORYTELLER

## A Simple Story

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