

LESSON PLAN

Break the Fake: What's in the frame?

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: Kindergarten to Grade 2

DURATION: 20-30 minutes plus time for the optional assessment/evaluation and extension activities

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Overview

In this lesson, students are introduced to the idea that what they see in media can be deceptive. They explore the idea that media are “framed” by their creators and consider what parts of the world are left out of the frame.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Learn that not all online content is reliable
- Understand media literacy key concepts:
 - Media are constructions
 - Each medium is a unique aesthetic form
- Create a critical media text

Preparation and Materials

- Prepare to show the video [House Hippo 2.0](#)
- Prepare to present the slideshow [What's in the Frame?](#)
- Photocopy the *Inside the Frame* handout
- If you are doing the optional *Framing a Story* extension activity, you will need a camera (a cellphone with a camera will do) and a hand puppet.
- If you are doing the optional *Playing Inside the Frame* extension activity, prepare to show the video [Basic Puppeteering: Using a Monitor](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hBfb1MtZ9s&feature=youtu.be&t=153) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hBfb1MtZ9s&feature=youtu.be&t=153>)

Procedure

HIPPO 2.0

Begin by showing students the video *House Hippo 2.0*. Pause the video just after the narrator says “It looks like Canada has a house hippo problem.”

Ask students: Is this video real? *Could* it be real? Let them discuss for a few minutes without giving a firm answer.

Show the last part of the video and explain to students that the video was made to show how easy it is to be fooled by what we see.

Ask students how they think the video was made. Most will probably say “computers” or “CGI” (computer-generated imagery). Don’t give a specific answer yet, just let them suggest different ways that the video could have been made.

Explain to students that while computers, animation and other special effects are a big part of what makes things onscreen seem real, there’s an even more basic tool that’s also used: the camera frame.

WHAT’S IN THE FRAME?

Show the first two slides of *What’s in the Frame?* Explain that slide **2** is what we usually see when we watch something on a screen (whether it’s a TV screen, a movie screen, a computer or a phone). Does it look like a real conversation happening in a real kitchen?

Now show slide **3** and ask students what they can now see *outside* the frame:

- Cameras and camera operators
- Lights
- Microphones
- The tops of the “walls”
- Also, now that we’ve seen outside the frame we know that some things that looked real – like the leaves outside the window – are fake.

Point out that besides what’s hidden by the frame, we also can’t see anything that the camera isn’t pointed at (for example, we can’t see the person who took the picture. We also can’t see that there is an audience sitting behind the person who took the picture.)

Show slide **4** and ask students what they think they might see if the camera pulled back and we saw outside this frame.

Now show slides **5** through **7** and highlight that each pair of images is from the same moment.

Ask students:

- How are the images different?
- How do they feel different?
- How do the differences between the images affect how they make us feel?

Show slide **8** and ask students: How would the video be different if you only saw the first part?

Next, watch the *Hippo 2.0* video again.

Ask students: how was it different to watch the video now that you know how it was made? Was it still hard to believe the hippos weren't real?

FRAMING LIFE

Explain 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*. The frame is what the media makers choose to show us.

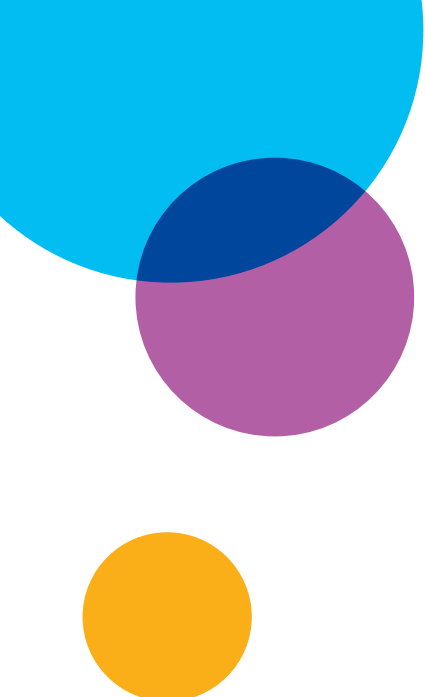
Ask students:

Frames control *space* by showing us just part of something. How do the frames in the different images control what we can see?

Slide 4 shows us just the hippo peeking out from behind the door, so we don't know it's a puppet. Slide 5 shows us more, so that we can see the puppeteer. But this picture is framed too! There might be all kinds of things we can't see around them.

Frames control *time* by showing us just some of what happens. How does the house hippo video frame time differently from the slides?

The video includes just a few moments of the hippo puppet at a time, to make it more believable. Although each of the slides is just a still image, the slides show you more parts of the "story" of how the video was made.



How does the video in the last slide use framing to control space and time?

Framing space keeps us from seeing the person who is actually dropping makers into the pitcher. On the other hand, framing time to show us that person lets us see how the “trick” of the video was done.

Give each student a copy of the Inside the Frame handout and have them cut out the centre portion. Have them hold it up in front of them and look around the classroom, observing how much (or how little) they see when they can only look through the frame.

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): FLIPPING THE FRAME

Have students tape their *Inside the Frame* handout to a blank piece of paper so that it can open and close like the cover of a book.

Have them do a drawing on the blank page where something important is hidden by the frame, so that lifting the frame makes you see the picture differently.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY ONE (OPTIONAL): FRAMING A STORY

Tell students a short story you know well (for example, a fairy tale such as *The Three Little Pigs*) using a hand puppet.

Using a tripod or student volunteer, film yourself telling the story with only the puppet in the frame.

When you've finished, show students the film of the puppet.

Ask: How was it different watching you in person and watching it on screen?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY TWO (OPTIONAL): PLAYING INSIDE THE FRAME

Show students the video *Basic Puppeteering: Using a Monitor* twice.

Tell them to try to watch just the puppeteer and the “real” puppet the first time. Point out that when they're performing, the puppeteers themselves have to watch the monitor so that they know what will be seen on screen.

Have students watch just the puppet on the screen the second time.

Ask: How was watching it different the two times? Did you sometimes forget about the puppeteer when you were watching the second time?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY THREE (OPTIONAL): WACKY MEDIA SONGS

Ask students: What kinds of choices do you think people make when they make media, like filming a movie?

Next, show the video [*Wacky Media Songs: Frame It!*](#)

After the video, ask:

- What's the difference between looking out a window and seeing something framed in media?
- How can the media frame sometimes be misleading?

