

Two Activities: Using Visuals to Increase Understanding of Texts Media Project #1

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Purpose: The first activity (Freytag’s Pyramid Poster) helps students to visualize the plot of the text by forcing them to see not only how it can be mapped against a framework such as Freytag’s pyramid, but to create visuals that correspond with the plot points they have mapped. The second, shorter activity (4-Panel Partner Character Sketch) can be an excellent jumping off point for discussion around points of view, reader perception, and character development. By utilizing a visual and textual literacy, students are engaging in a multimedial way with the text they are presented with. This allows for greater freedom of expression in how students may interact with and respond to certain texts.

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Activity #1:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

The Lady or the Tiger Freytag's Pyramid Poster

You have been asked to read *The Lady or the Tiger* and now your assignment is to plot it out using Freytag's Pyramid in an artistic form. On one side of the paper, state what position it is: *Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Denouement*. Then you will explain, in your own words, your findings and you can use the text as evidence (use quotations and page numbers). On the other side, you will draw out the scene and colour it in. It's a creative piece! Let's have some fun with it!

Category	1	2	3	4
Elements of the Diagram	Significant Errors in the plot diagram. Does not understand.	Makes some errors when plotting the elements on the diagram (missing 2) Missing evidence	Can plot most of the elements on the diagram while only missing 1 element and has some evidence	Accurately and completely fills in diagram with strong evidence from text to support stance
Art to Text	Difficulty relating graphics to diagram	Explains how the graphic relates to the text	Accurately portrays each graphic to the text	Accurately explains each graphic to the text and determines whether each graphic agrees with the information
Creativity and Originality	No colour was used. Just basic figures	Some colour was used. Some graphic portrayal of the scene is there	Vibrant colour is used. Graphic shows creativity in their scene/display	Vibrant and exuberant colour display and the graphics of each scene are creative and original

The Lady Or The Tiger?

By Frank Stockton

In the very olden time there lived a semi-barbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and untrammelled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing, and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but, whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semified was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valor, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheater, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena, a structure which well deserved its name, for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

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When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheater. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the enclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased; he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him and tore him to pieces as a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided, doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts, wended slowly their homeward way, mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects, and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family, or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection; the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately, and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers, and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side, and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

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This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady; he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate: the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty, and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it or not. There was no escape from the judgments of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus, the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no charge of unfairness against this plan, for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most florid fancies, and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye, and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom, and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion, and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of the king. In after years such things became commonplace enough, but then they were in no slight degree novel and startling.

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The tiger-cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena; and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for

him a different destiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and neither he, she, nor any one else, thought of denying the fact; but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took such great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of, and the king would take an aesthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether or not the young man had done wrong in allowing himself to love the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered, and thronged the great galleries of the arena, and crowds, unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside walls. The king and his court were in their places, opposite the twin doors, those fateful portals, so terrible in their similarity.

All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the king, but he did not think at all of that royal personage. His eyes were fixed upon the princess, who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature it is probable that lady would not have been there, but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an occasion in which she was so terribly interested. From the moment that the decree had gone forth that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing, night or day, but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than any one who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done - she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should come from within to the person who should approach to raise the latch of one of them. But gold, and the power of a woman's will, had brought the secret to the princess.

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And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth, should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him; and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought these glances were perceived, and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a brief space; it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there, paler and whiter than any one in the vast ocean of anxious faces about her, he saw, by that

power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based upon the success of the princess in discovering this mystery; and the moment he looked upon her, he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question: "Which?" It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a flash; it must be answered in another.

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Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena.

He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovably upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right, and opened it.

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady ?

The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads us through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded, semi-barbaric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him?

How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!

But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady! How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparkling eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple, and make them man and wife before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned!

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Would it not be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity?

And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked, she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right.

The question of her decision is one not to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door - the lady, or the tiger?

Activity #2:

4-Panel Partner Character Sketch

Objective: Incite students to begin thinking about different ways readers can interpret text. This activity can be used as a scaffolding option for a subsequent activity such as the visual Freitag Pyramid assignment.

Materials: Scrap piece of paper, drawing instrument, short poem (preferably with strong literary imagery)

Process:

1. Students arrange themselves into pairs. Teacher will disperse one piece of paper to each pair.
2. Have students fold their paper in half, and then in half again, emphasizing that all folding should be done with the blank side of the scrap paper showing at all times.
3. Hand out or project or write poem on a white/chalk board for students to read. Read the poem out loud to them or have students take turns reading.
4. Explain to students that their task is to draw a character or a scene on the four different panels of the paper. Split the poem up into sections or, if it is a character from a text, have them start with the head and move down. Students will alternate which panel they draw on with their partner. Make sure the partner drawing draws connection lines onto the next panel so their partner will know where to continue the drawing. Remind them not to look at each others work, as it will be a fun surprise to see what they have created at the end.
5. Once completed, have students open their page to see what they have created. Possible discussion questions could be:
 - Why did your partner draw a specific part of the poem or text the way they did?
 - What parts of the text helped you in drawing your own version of your particular section?
 - Do you think that your whole picture represents both you and your partners views of the textual work? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think readers interpret things differently? Or, perhaps the same?

Process of Media Project:

The idea to present something that engaged visual literacies appealed to each of us on the first day of brainstorming; some of us have an artistic background, and each of us had some experience with presenting visual activities during our practicums. Class discussions around plot-mapping and various plot-mapping tools underscored the relevance of presenting something that would allow students to be engaged with the plot in ways that are multimodal and predominantly visual. Pre-production strategies were largely completed prior to the media project (during Stephanie's practicum), but were reflected upon based on the knowledge gained from experiences teaching similar assignments in our own classrooms. The second activity--a take on the "Exquisite Corpse" game that many are familiar with, arose from a desire to present the class with an activity that they could personally complete, thus demonstrating not only how such an activity would look, but how those completing the assignment (in this case, our colleagues, but it was meant to replicate the experience of students) would respond to the prompt. Following group brainstorming, and once a project had been decided upon, Stephanie provided examples of her students' work as well as an evaluation rubric for the assignment. For the second activity, we agreed upon a poem to present the class with, and Andrew decided how an activity could be designed as a way of illustrating the poem. Post-activity reflections were made by the group, with final analysis and corroboration of ideas written by Jacqueline.

Stephanie describes her process in creating the Freytag's Pyramid assignment as follows:

"The process in which the Freytag Pyramid poster was created was from an English 10 assignment that I have completed when I attended secondary school. I adapted this to my own lesson plan as a way to make students create their own visual interpretation of "The Lady or the Tiger" by Frank Stockton. I had asked students to create these drawings to look at the text from a different perspective. The students were to imagine the world of the characters they were reading and put it in a artistic form of text. They were to pick scenes that were specific to the Freytag pyramid labels and identify them in the text, then draw out the scene. This exercise helped them visualize the story more and were able to pick up on the characteristic of the princess who eventually gives the choice to her lover. They then used the poster to create their creative writing pieces where they were to decide the ending and fate of the characters."

Challenges and Approaches:

The greatest challenge presented by using such activities in the classroom is the possibility that students would feel limited by the inherently visual aspect of it: some students would feel daunted by the task of creating in a medium not typically associated with the English classroom (and one that they may not feel comfortable expressing their understanding in). Stephanie acknowledge this in the examples that she presented: the students were working with a variety of skill levels in visual arts, but they were all able to complete something that followed the rubric for the assignment, as the purpose of the visuals was to demonstrate understanding and effort in application rather than to evaluate artistic ability. In some cases, and depending on the text, it

may be difficult for students to visualize plot structure within a specific framework. The same challenges might be encountered with the second activity, but in a lesser degree as it is an assignment that is not intended to be formally evaluated. It is, rather, an activity used to encourage further thinking around the visuals within a written text, as well as issues that arise when taking a critical approach to visual literacy. Both activities are, overall, very easy to implement in any English classroom as they require little technology and utilize the tools that most classrooms and students have. For the reasons given in our purpose statement, these activities would be an excellent way of bringing visual literacy into the English classroom, and would introduce another level to the texts as students are assessing what is given versus what they interpret.

Works Cited

Stockton, Frank. "The Lady or the Tiger?" *Short Stories*. East of the Web. n.d. Web. 11 July 2013.