

Lesson Plan for *The Really Big Question/NPR*: Why do people make stories about the things that they see?

NPR is coming in to record how our students do this and their impressions of the exercise.

GOAL: Students will synthesize personified stories based on a short video without any personified qualities.

Guiding Question: How do we make stories? Why is it so natural that we make a story about something we see?

Background

Fritz Heider and Mary-Ann Simmel created a short movie with two triangles, a circle, and a box with a "door". The shapes simply move around, but many people interpret the movements as an aggressive larger triangle picking on a smaller triangle.

Do Now: Students distribute netbooks and use Google Chrome or Firefox to go to the project page:

Go to this webpage: <http://heidersimmel.weebly.com/>

The Lesson:

Method:

This will require a few viewings.

1. Students will go to a webpage built for this lesson:

- <http://heidersimmel.weebly.com/>

2. Watch individually on laptops – get the netbooks from Ms. Abounader, our Librarian. Show the video to my students without any previous introduction to get their impressions.

A lot of the visual-based lessons I have given are already focusing on getting them to separate techniques from story elements

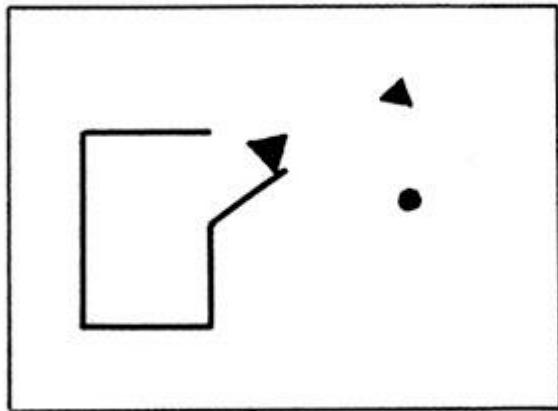


FIG. 1. EXPOSURE-OBJECTS DISPLAYED IN VARIOUS POSITIONS AND CONFIGURATIONS FROM THE MOVING FILM.
Large triangle, small triangle, disc and house.

Process:

1. Watch once – Write & Respond
2. Watch again – Write & respond (most will add details)
3. Discuss in partnerships

4. Discuss as a class

Groups

- Group A watches without being given questions.
- Group B gets questions below to guide their watching.

Students respond to questions on the site:

3. All students respond to the following:

- What did you think?
- Write a paragraph describing what happened in the animation on paper or [email it to Mr. Christiansen](#).
- You may need to rewatch the video to refresh your memory of the details. Watch it as many times as you like.

4. Class and individual discussion around the video.

5. Pair discussions – students from Group A team with a partner from Group B & compare their responses.

6. What did you think? Why? What were similarities and differences? Why?

- Kids use Venn Diagram to compare their stories with Group A & Group B
 - How similar are their stories?
 - Expected result – lots of similarities.

HW: Kids complete their Superhero Projects, due on Wednesday, May 14th.

Independent Reading of *Ender's Game*, as determined in their individual reading groups.

Guiding ideas:

Are these abilities cultivated as we are "thoroughly schooled in the grammar of cinema"? Or "are they endemic to our way of perceiving the world?"

Alterations:

1) Kids watch independently on laptops vs. as a class or group

- a. Write a brief description of what happened in the animation. If you need to rewatch the video to refresh your memory of the details, you can. Just don't read anything about the video before you finish writing your description.

2) Two layers of questions:

- a. Describe the actions
- b. Describe them as human actions

i. Assign character traits to each of the shapes

10 Guiding Questions

- 1) What kind of a person is the big triangle?
- 2) What kind of a person is the little triangle?
- 3) What kind of a person is the circle (disc)?
- 4) Why did the two triangles fight?
- 5) Why did the circle go into the house?
- 6) In one part of the movie the big triangle and the circle were in the house together. What did the big triangle do then? Why?
- 7) What did the circle do when it was in the house with the big triangle? Why?
- 8) In one part of the movie the big triangle was shut up in the house and tried to get out. What did the little triangle and the circle do then?
- 9) Why did the big triangle break the house?
- 10) Tell the story of the movie in a few sentences (Summarize).

Possible expected interpretations:

The circle is fearful, and together the circle and smaller triangle join forces to defeat the large triangle bully. It seems that people naturally applies causes to effects.

The second "was instructed to interpret the movements of the figures as actions of persons." After the screening, the viewers wrote answers to ten questions. Nine followed the example of the first: "What kind of a person is the big triangle?" (Answers included aggressive, warlike, irritable, dumb, stupid, ugly, shy, sly and quick to take offense

A few more logistics:

- Recording would take place the week of May 12th.
- Recording would be 60-90 minutes, including the lesson.
- Two representatives (including the radio show host!) would be present.
- You would be responsible for structuring the prompt and communicating with parents to secure audio/video releases.

Resources:

Experiment Remake

<http://vimeo.com/36847727>

<http://vimeo.com/48908599>

Anthropomorphism.org

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~kiesler/anthropomorphism-org/>

Provides a breakdown of the scene & guiding questions

<http://www.all-about-psychology.com/fritz-heider.html>

References:

TRBQ FB page

<https://www.facebook.com/TheReallyBigQuestions>

Analysis of the experiment

<http://orphanfilmsymposium.blogspot.com/2008/05/national-science-foundation-grants.html>

Possible interpretations

The big triangle (BT) is in an enclosed structure with a door. A little triangle (LT) and a circle (C) come along. They hang around in a sort of confused way until BT comes out. BT and LT argue, with LT first being the aggressor then BT getting really aggressive and bullying/chasing LT. C hides behind the door and watches. When LT runs around the corner and hides, C goes into the building and closes the door. BT runs around a little outside then follows C into the building and closes the door. C is nervous and moves around the room frantically, trying to hide or escape from BT's anger. LT opens the door and helps C escape. They run around a little in confusion until BT comes out to chase them and they run away together. BT goes back into the building and breaks the walls in anger.

The big triangle is a sociopath. The little triangle and circle were the curious searchers whom learned a valuable lesson.

Name

Date

Class

What happened in the video?

1st Viewing: Describe what happened in the animation.

What happened in the video?

2nd Viewing: Watch it again. Describe what happened

You may now rewatch the video as many times as you like to refresh your memory of the details.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Guiding Questions for Video

- 1) What kind of a person is the big triangle?

- 2) What kind of a person is the little triangle?

- 3) What kind of a person is the circle (disc)?

- 4) Why did the two triangles fight?

- 5) Why did the circle go into the house?

- 6) In one part of the movie the big triangle and the circle were in the house together. What did the big triangle do then? Why?

- 7) What did the circle do when it was in the house with the big triangle? **Why?**

- 8) In one part of the movie the big triangle was shut up in the house and tried to get out. What did the little triangle and the circle do then?

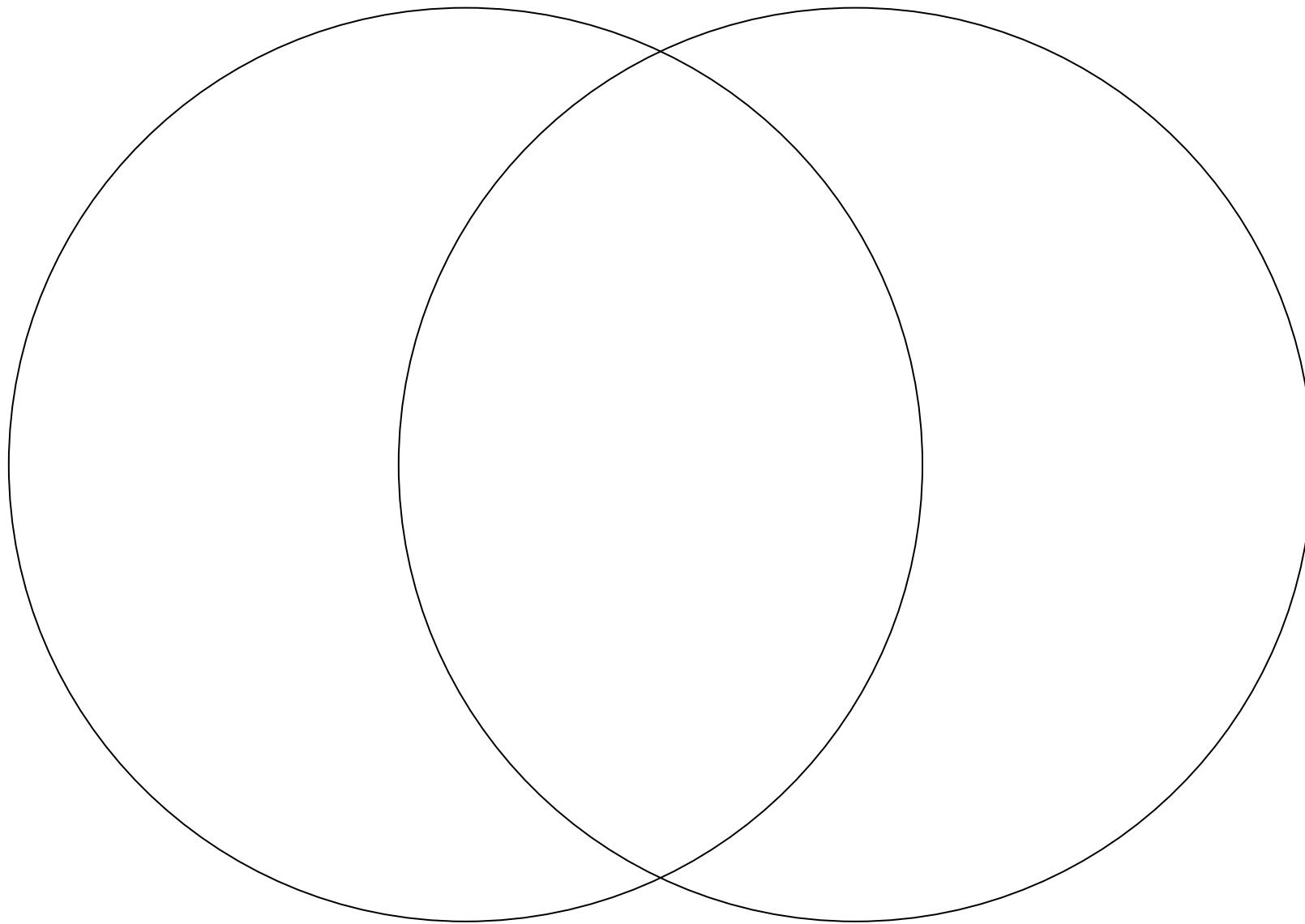
- 9) Why did the big triangle break the house?

- 10) Tell the story of the movie in a few sentences (Summarize).

What story did I make about the Exercise?

Student A

Student B



Similarities in both stories