Windows and Mirrors
Active Learning through Reflection

SINGLE LESSON – Project Development Guide with Templates and Examples

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Customize the template on the next page for your students’ needs. Review the examples on pages 4-5 for ideas.

Reading literature (or viewing other art and media) helps students make sense of the world, build empathy, and demonstrate compassion. The Windows and Mirrors strategy provides a structured lens for thinking about literature that helps students practice a crucial skill: making the text-to-self, or text-to-world connections that are the foundation of relevant learning experiences.

**Window**: If students read or view something that helps them see and understand experiences, circumstances, or worlds outside their own, then it is a window.

**Mirror**: If students read or view something that is a reflection of themselves or their experiences, then it is a mirror.
IMPLEMENTATION SUGGESTIONS

● Remind students that it’s possible to connect to many things beyond more obvious similarities or differences: characters, settings, events, speakers, themes, language, images, experiences, motivations and more.

● Provide additional sentence starters to students who struggle with making connections that move beyond simple similarities and differences.
  ○ ______ is a mirror for me because _______. It feels familiar because _______.
  ○ ______ is a window for me because _______. I didn't consider this before because _____.

● Take time to reflect: Students may benefit from reflecting on their experiences and circumstances before trying to make connections and find mirrors. Similarly, encourage students to reflect on the experience of reading or viewing texts that are windows. The following questions can be used before or during the activity.
  ○ What makes a text or other media a mirror for you?
  ○ Which mirrors are most important to you? Why?
  ○ What matters the most for you when identifying a mirror?
  ○ Why is it important to examine texts that act as windows?
  ○ Interacting with material that acts as a window can be hard. What strategies do you use to keep an open mind?

● Set aside time for feedback, either as part of peer feedback/group discussions, in individual conferences, or in a written response. Consider how your feedback can affirm students' reflections and/or encourage them to expand or challenge their thinking.
Windows and Mirrors Activity

**Directions:** After you read the [insert title of text], reflect on your experience while reading and describe a mirror or window connection. Write [insert length or other content requirements] to explain your window or mirror connection. [Insert any additional content or skill specific learning goals and objectives.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MIRROR</th>
<th>WINDOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This text mirrors aspects of my identity, experience or perceptions. I connect to...</td>
<td>The text is a window into other people's identity, experiences, or perceptions. What stands out to me is...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**EXAMPLE**

Windows and Mirrors Activity

**Directions:** After reading and reflecting on *Buen Esqueleto* by Natalie Scenters-Zapico, describe a mirror or window connection. Then, write a short reflection that includes textual evidence from the poem that supports your viewpoint.

<table>
<thead>
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EXAMPLE

Windows and Mirrors Activity

**Directions:** Now that we've read and discussed The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, examine this *painting* by Kehinde Wiley that was inspired by the text. Reflect on your experience viewing the painting and describe a mirror or window connection. Write a short reflection that explains your connection, making sure to reference specific detail or elements from the painting.

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This painting mirrors aspects of my identity, experience or perceptions. I connect to...</td>
<td>The text is a window into other people's identity, experiences, or perceptions. What stands out to me is...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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