

Windows and Mirrors

Active Learning through Reflection

Customize the template on the next page for your students' needs. Review the examples on pages 3-4 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.

[TEMPLATE]

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.]*

MIRROR	WINDOW
This text mirrors aspects of my identity, experience or perceptions. I connect to...	The text is a window into other people's identity, experiences, or perceptions. What stands out to me is...

[EXAMPLE]

WINDOWS AND MIRRORS ACTIVITY

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

MIRROR	WINDOW
This text mirrors aspects of my identity, experience or perceptions. I connect to...	The text is a window into other people's identity, experiences, or perceptions. What stands out to me is...

[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.

MIRROR	WINDOW
This painting mirrors aspects of my identity, experience or perceptions. I connect to...	The text is a window into other people's identity, experiences, or perceptions. What stands out to me is...