

Framing Main Ideas and Essential Details to Promote Comprehension

**By
Edwin S. Ellis**

This article was adapted from The Framing Routine published by Masterminds, LLC. This book provides a variety of specific instructional strategies for using a highly versatile graphic organizer called the “Frame.” The book provides a wide array of ways the Frame can be used at the beginning, middle, and end of instruction to make content-area learning more motivating and meaningful. The book also provides many suggestions for using the Frame to develop literacy and thinking skills. The appendix contains black-line masters of various versions of the Frame graphic organizer.

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Framing Main Ideas and Essential Details to Promote Comprehension

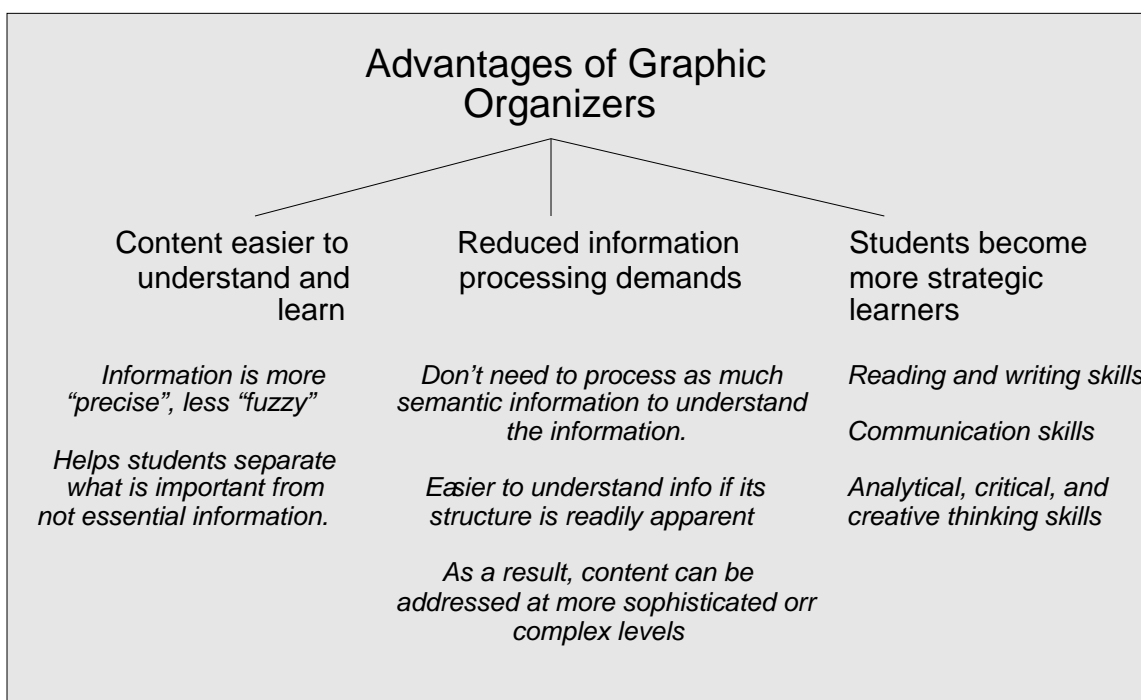
Abstract

This article focuses on the use of “The Frame” graphic organizer to help students understand and main ideas and essential details associated with the general education curriculum. Use of the technique can be a powerful way to help all students in inclusive settings, and especially those with learning disabilities, understand important information. The device is also an excellent tool for developing reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Framing Main Ideas and Essential Details to Promote Comprehension

Graphic organizers are communication devices that can be particularly beneficial to many students with learning disabilities, as well as most individuals, because they show the organization or structure of concepts as well as relationships between concepts (see Figure 1). For example, the graphic organizer depicted in the figure below will help the LD-ONLINE reader follow this discussion, and allow the reader to review the essence of the rationale for using graphic organizers later by just looking back at the graphic.

Figure 1



One reason why graphic organizers are powerful teaching tools is because the devices make it more clear to students what it is they are expected to learn. Information depicted on the graphic usually represents essential knowledge that all students are expected to learn, thus graphic organizers allow students to focus on what is important. Each item on the graphic can serve as a link to remembering related information discussed in class, but not noted on the graphic. Thus, the information students remember when graphic organizers are used when teaching is often much more than sum of the items depicted on the graphic.

Graphic organizers can be powerful teaching tools because they also reduce the cognitive demands on the learner. In the absence of visual aids like graphic organizers, the learner has to both comprehend the information and determine how it is organized. By showing (as opposed to just telling) students how the information is structured, you can often teach information at much more sophisticated and complex levels than you may have anticipated. Graphic organizers clearly show how the information is organized, so the learner does not have to process as much semantic data to understand the information.

A third reason why graphic organizers are particularly useful for students with learning disabilities is because they clearly serve as effective tools for developing literacy and thinking skills. For example, when students identify main ideas and supporting details from text they are reading and list them on a graphic organizer, comprehension of the written material tends to dramatically increase. Research shows that reading assignments that require students to complete graphic organizers in lieu of answering traditional study guide questions can significantly increase reading comprehension as well. Such assignments increase students awareness of information structures and their semantic cues associated with them.

Likewise, when students use graphic organizers as “Think Sheets” for planning their writing (see Ellis article elsewhere on LD-ONLINE titled “*The PLAN Writing Strategy Think Sheets*”), the quality of the students writing tends to improve not only in organization of ideas, but also in fluency and in other areas such as writing mechanics (punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc.). In one study, middle school students with LD wrote an average of 97 words more on their posttest writing samples after they had learned to use the Frame graphic (discussed below) when planning their writing (the control group wrote an average of 5 words less!).

When students learn to organize information using graphic organizers, they are also basic information processing skills as well as analytical thinking skills. In short, graphic organizers can help students with LD become strategic learners when use of graphic organizers becomes second nature to them. For example, to construct graphic organizers, students have to engage in powerful information processing and higher order thinking skills such as using cues to recognize important information, making decisions about what is important or essential, consolidating information and identifying main ideas and supporting details, and making decisions about the best way to structure the information.

After the information has been effectively organized on graphics, very powerful higher order thinking instructional activities can follow. Organizing information onto the graphics allows you to implement a variety of robust activities that otherwise might not be possible. For example, when

the information is clearly organized, a wide array of instructional activities can be employed to extend students' understanding of important concepts. These include engaging in in-depth discussions, debating the importance of various points, drawing conclusions, making connections to other ideas, forming inferences, predictions or forecasts, and creating generative statements.

Graphic organizers can contribute to increasing both classroom and achievement test scores (see Figure 2). Classroom test scores (i.e. weekly tests, unit tests) often improve for several reasons. First, the graphics help students understand and learn the subject. Second, they help students focus their energies on studying the essential information. Third, they serve as effective devices for helping students focus on the relationships between main ideas and details, main ideas and other main ideas, and so forth. Thus, the focus of study is how it all fits together rather than on just memorizing isolated, decontextualized bits of information.

Figure 2

<i>If</i> graphic Organizers are used effectively....	<i>Then</i> test scores will go up	<i>Because</i> the content instruction is more effective
Depicting complex concepts via graphics	Improved performance on classroom test scores	Graphics help students understand and learn the subject.
Scaffolding student use of graphics <i>Teacher ->Class->Groups->Individuals</i>	Improved performance on basic skills standardized test scores (reading & writing)	Focus students' energies on studying the <i>essential</i> information
Using graphics to facilitate reading, writing, & thinking skills		Eases information processing demands
Using graphics to promote think ahead, during, and after instruction reflections		Focus on the <i>relationships between main ideas and details</i> main ideas and other main ideas, etc.
		Focus of study is <i>how it all fits together</i> rather than on just memorizing isolated, decontextualized bits of information.

Research shows that increased performance on classroom tests will be almost immediate for many students, whereas increased scores on standardized achievement tests occur more gradually as students gain skills using graphic organizers strategically.

To summarize, graphic organizers like the Frame graphic are powerful tools for facilitating learning of content area subjects, and they are powerful tools for developing literacy and thinking skills. These tools should be viewed as part of an overall package of pedagogical tools and routines that improve learning and performance.

THE FRAMING GRAPHIC

A visual device called the Frame graphic is an example of a graphic organizer designed to dramatically improve the success of students with LD in content-area classes. It is used to promote understanding (and recall) of the key topic and its essential features. The graphic can also be used in conjunction with literacy-development assignments in reading and writing.

In content-area classes, Frame graphics are co-constructed by the teacher and students, who simultaneously fill in information on blank copies of the form. An example of a blank Frame graphic is presented in Figure 3 (below) and variety of completed versions are presented further below.

Figure 3

The diagram shows a blank Frame graphic organizer. It is a large rectangle with a light gray background. At the top, there is a box labeled "Key Topic" followed by "is about...". Below this, there are three boxes labeled "Main idea". Under each "Main idea" box, there are four boxes labeled "Essential details". At the bottom, there is a large box labeled "BIG IDEA (What is important to understand about this?)". Small circles or bubbles are placed next to the "Main idea" and "Essential details" boxes.

Sections of a Frame graphic

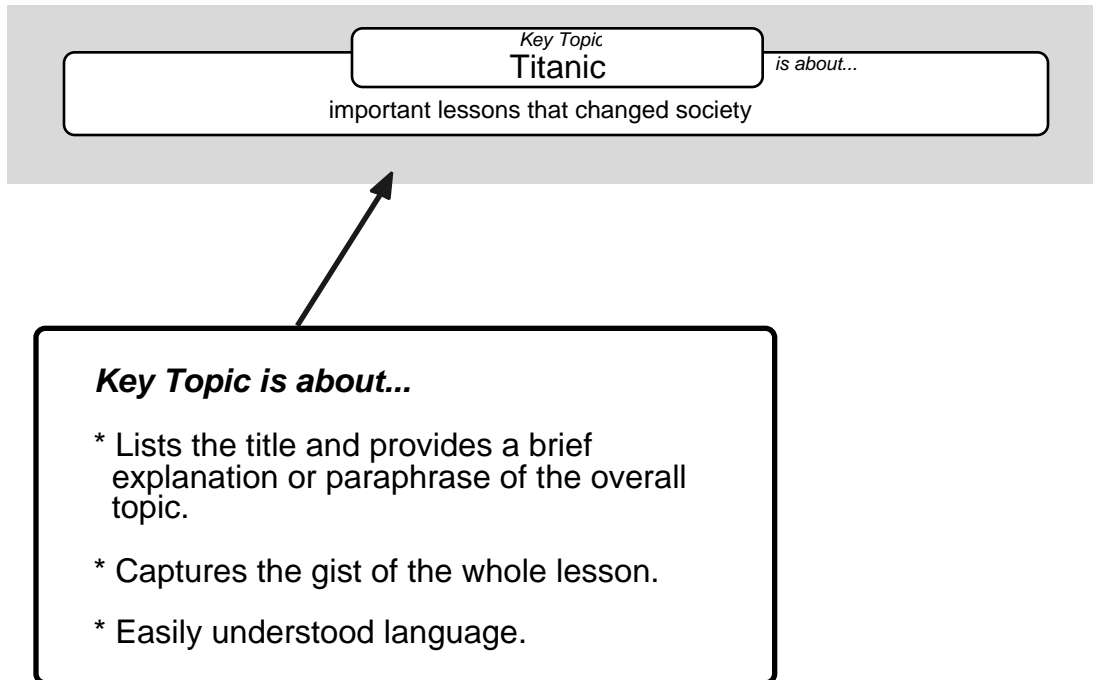
A Frame graphic has five major sections. Four of the sections provide spaces for recording key information necessary for understanding the meaning of the key topic. The fifth component is the small circles, or bubbles, that appear next to many of the boxes on the graphic. Below, an example of each section of the Framing Graphic is provided, and the type of information

recorded in each section of the organizer is defined. These examples are from a unit about “*The Titanic*.”

Further below, a completed Frame graphic is provided showing how the various sections come together to form a whole.

SECTION 1: *The Key Topic is about...*

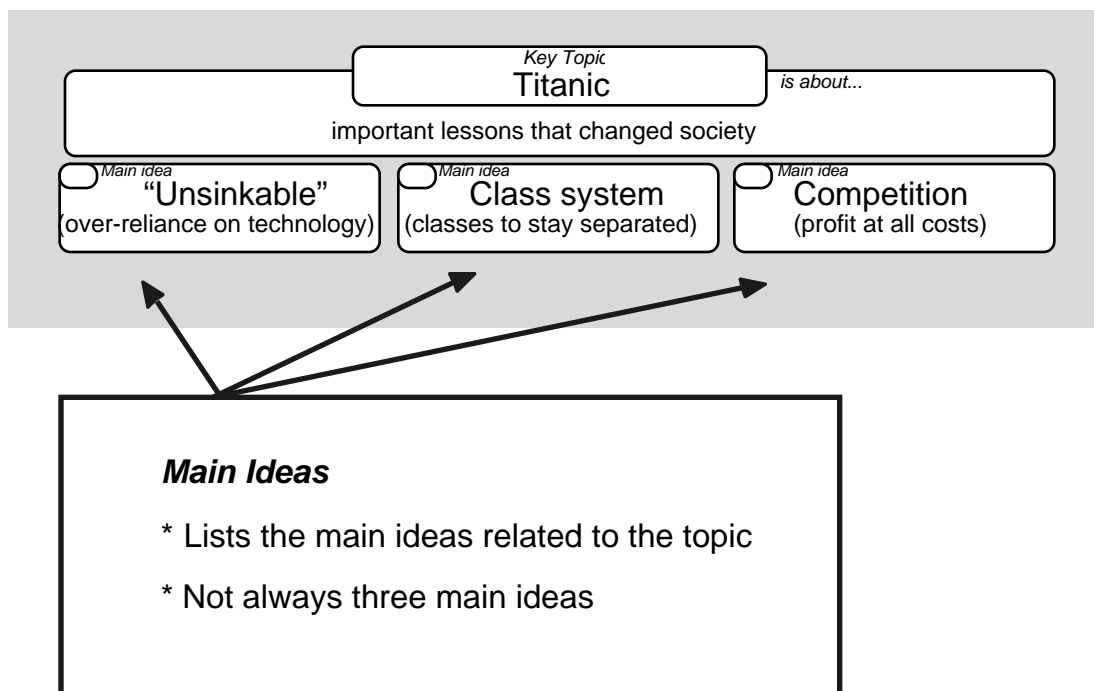
Figure 4



The first component of the Frame graphic consists of two overlapping boxes at the top of the form (Figure 4) . The title of the key topic is noted in the smaller box. A brief explanation of what the topic is about is noted in the long horizontal box.

SECTION 2: Main Idea boxes

Figure 5

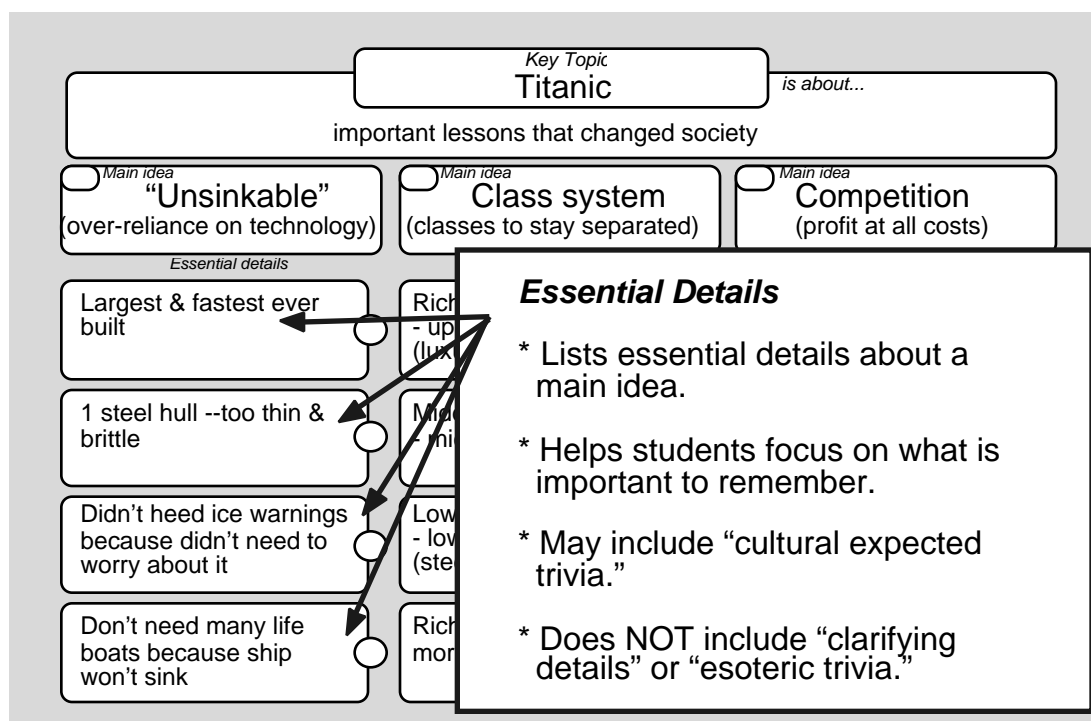


Most information can be organized into a hierarchical format. For example, a key topic is often composed of a series of smaller, parallel components called main ideas (Figure 5). Each main idea, in turn, can be further analyzed and broken down into essential details. Hypothetically, each detail could be further analyzed and subdivided again into even more discrete pieces of information. This organizational pattern is hierarchic because the information can be organized into a hierarchy of levels (key topic, main ideas, essential details).

The second component of the Frame graphic provides spaces for noting various main ideas about the overarching key topic. The Frame graphic depicted in Figure 1 provides spaces for three main ideas. However, there are not always three. Sometimes, a key topic may only have two significant main ideas, whereas at other times, there may be four or more (in cases where there are more than three main ideas, you may want to combine two Frame graphics so that all of the main ideas can be depicted). Most key topics, however, usually have only three major main ideas that are *really* important.

SECTION 3: *Essential Details boxes*

Figure 6



Once the main ideas have been identified, *essential details* about each main idea are noted under each main idea (Figure 6). Information about only one detail is noted in each space. Noting only *essential* details is very important because it helps students focus on what is important to remember. This does not mean, however, that during your discussion, you should not include additional information about each main idea, as it is the peripheral information that often makes the lesson interesting to students.

Important to note is that there are spaces for recording only four essential details for each main idea. There may be times when you believe there are more than four details for a specific main idea you are addressing, and you can always adapt the Frame graphic to accommodate more details. However, it is **often better to limit the breadth** of what you are teaching (i.e., teach fewer specific details), and **focus more on facilitating depth of understanding**. The result will be that students understand the content better and remember more of it. Thus, it is often important to resist the temptation to add more than four essential details per main idea.

SECTION 4: *The BIG IDEA (What's important to understand about this?)*

Figure 7

Key Topic
Titanic *is about...*
important lessons that changed society

Main idea *Main idea* *Main idea*

The BIG IDEA (What's important to understand about this?)

May be...

- * An overall summary of the topic.
- * Information connecting topic to a real-world context or problem to be understood or solved.
- * A metaphor or simile related to topic
- * A statement identifying applications or implications of the topic.
- * A generative idea or “basic truth.”

BIG IDEA What is important to understand about this?

A great disaster can cause society to examine its values and practices so improvements can be made

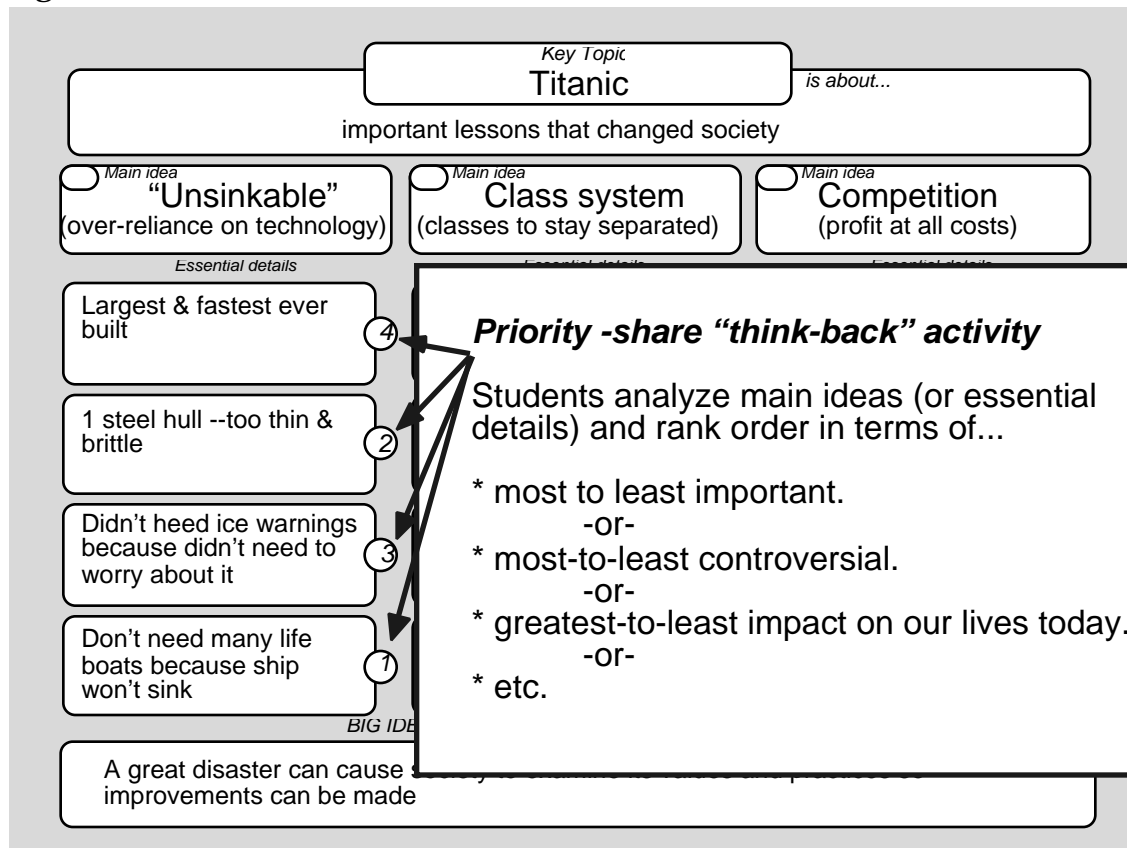
The fourth component of the Frame graphic is the large horizontal box at the bottom of the form (Figure 7). This space is reserved for recording information designed to extend students' understanding of the topic.

Information recording in this space can take many forms, including:

- * An overall summary of the graphic.
- * Information connecting the key topic to a real-world context or problem to be understood or solved.
- * A metaphor or simile related to the key topic.
- * Information connecting the key topic to other key topics in the unit.
- * A statement which identifies applications or implications of the topic.
- * A generative idea, or a “basic life truth.”

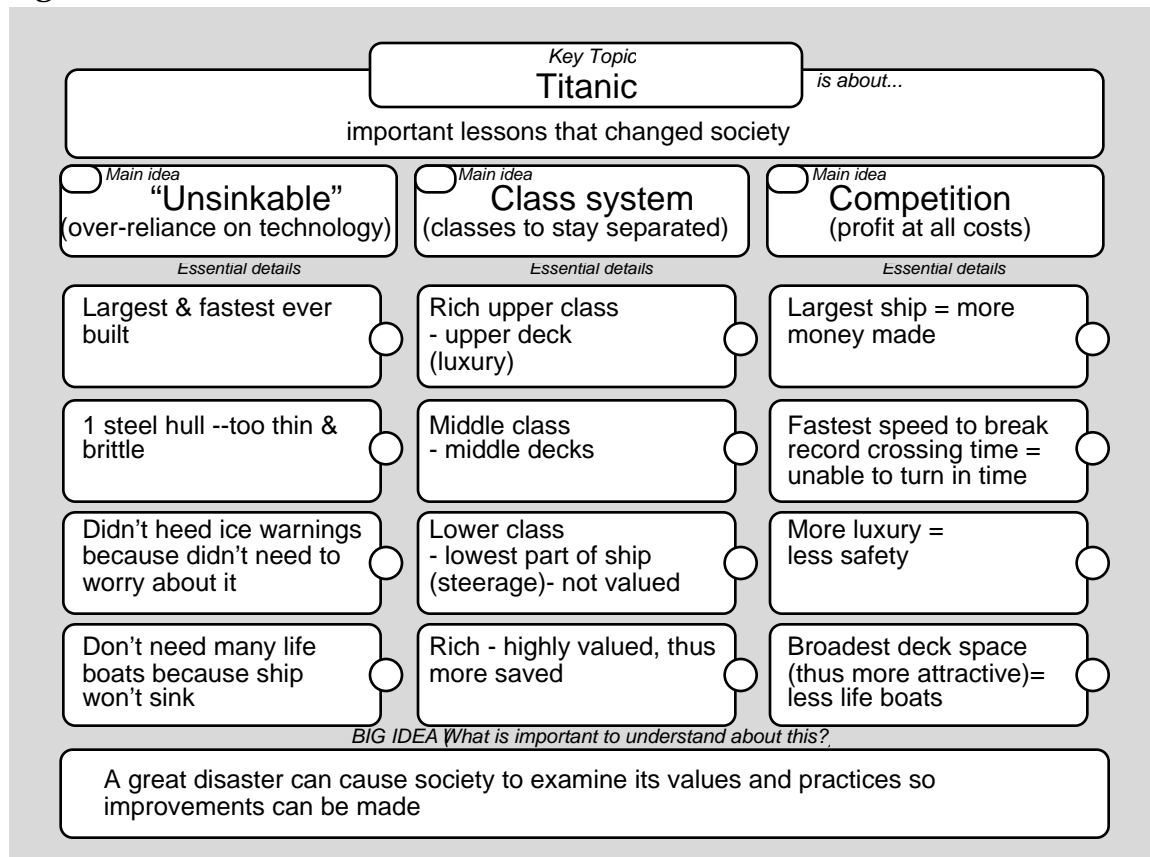
SECTION 5: bubbles connected to idea boxes

Figure 8



The last component of the Frame graphic is the set of bubbles attached to each of the Main Idea boxes and Essential Detail boxes (Figure 8). A different kind of information is recorded in these bubbles. These bubbles are used in conjunction with a variety of activities designed to promote students reflection about the content being explored. For example, students can consider the various main ideas presented and then indicate in the bubbles a ranking that they feel shows the relative important of each main idea. Similar "reflective rankings" can be performed on each set of essential details. Figure 9 shows a completed version of a Frame for a lesson about the Titanic.

Figure 9



Variations on the Frame

The one-main idea option

The Frame can be adapted so that it depicts only one main idea. One-main idea Frames are advantageous when working with younger or less developmentally sophisticated children, or with many students with learning disabilities when Frames are first being introduced. Later, as students become familiar with the basic hierarchic structure, you can begin using Two-main idea Frames (see further below), and eventually to the traditional three-main idea Frame depicted throughout this article. Figures 10-12 show several examples of how the One-main idea Frame can be used.

Figure 10 Example of 1-main idea frame

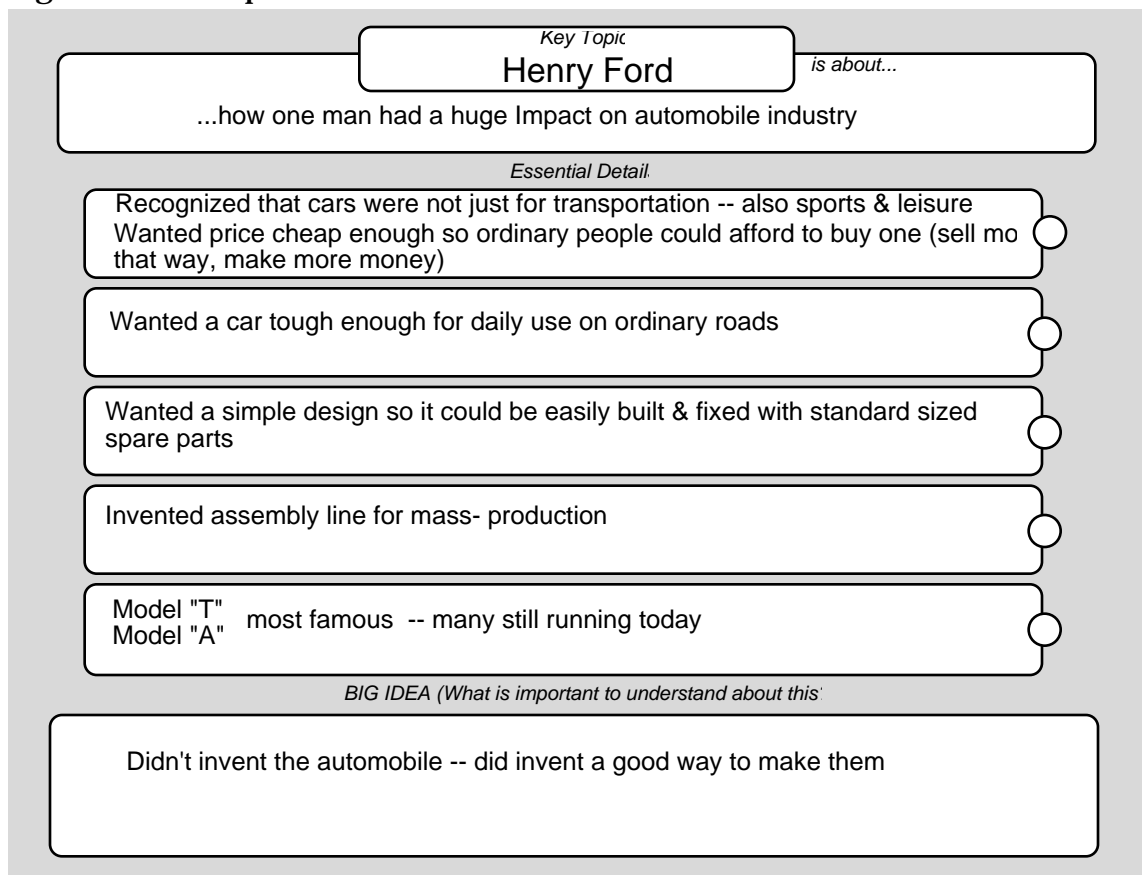


Figure 11: Adaptation of 1-main idea frame for use to analyze characters from literature...

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Key Topic
Mrs. Whitlaw (Dragon Wings) *is about...*

...a women in the story who everybody hates and then loves

Essential Detail

Looked like	Prim and proper Fancy clothes Always frowning	Hair in tight bun Very tall & thin Long straight nose	
Acted like	Holier than thou Stuck-up Superior to everyone	Stingy Superior intelligence	
Relationships to others	Nobody liked her, no friends Very bossy		
How changed	Earthquake causes mass destruction, many injuries. Mrs. Whitlaw rolls up hersleevesand tries to help. Turns her beautiful home into a hospital.		
Importance to Story	Whitlawcharacter used to show differences in classes/society at turn of century.		

BIG IDEA (What is important to understand about this?)

You don't get respect by demanding it -- you get it by earning it.

Sometimes what you see on the "outside" of the person is not at all like who they really are on the inside.

Figure 12 Adaptation of 1-main idea frame for story grammar analysis

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Key Topic
The Dog of Pompeii
 by Louis Untermeyer

is about...

...how a dog saves the live of a Greek boy

Essential Detail

Setting	Ancient City of Pompeii (Greece) near volcano on seaside, A.D. 19 August, 24 (about 2,000 years ago)
Characters	Tito (boy) Bimbo (his dog)
Story Set-up	Tito doesn't have many friends to play with- gets Bimbo and they become close friends who do everything together.
Problem	Volcano erupted and earthquakes began -- everyone trying to save themselves -- Tito can't see, doesn't know where to go, gets knocked out
Resolution	Bimbo bits Tito to wake him up -- by pulling on his clothes, leads Tito out of city to waiting rescue ships on the shore. Bimbo dies looking for food for Tito

BIG IDEA (What is important to understand about this:

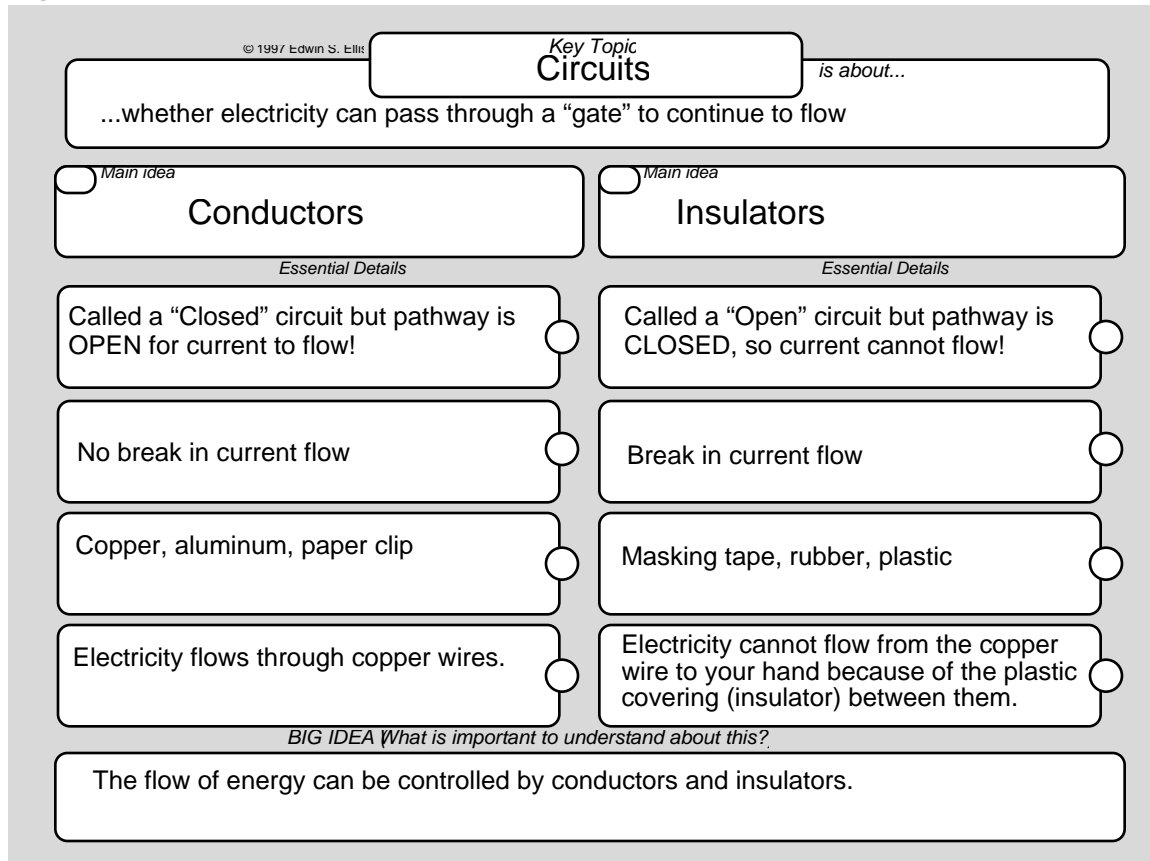
You always have loyalty in a true friendship.

Self-sacrifice to help others in times of great need -- a true friend will give up something important in order to help.

The two-main idea option

As students become familiar with hierarchic structures of information, you can expand use of the Frames from one- to two-main ideas. An example of a completed two-main idea Frame is provided in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13



The multiple-main ideas option

The multiple-main ideas Frame is best used when there are numerous categories of data to be recorded. For example, this Frame might be used when noting several different categories of features concerning a character from literature or it might be used when making observations about a variety of different categories of data when observing an experiment or describing an object. An example of this type of application is provided in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14

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Key Topic
Scrooge

is about...

describing how Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol" looked and acted

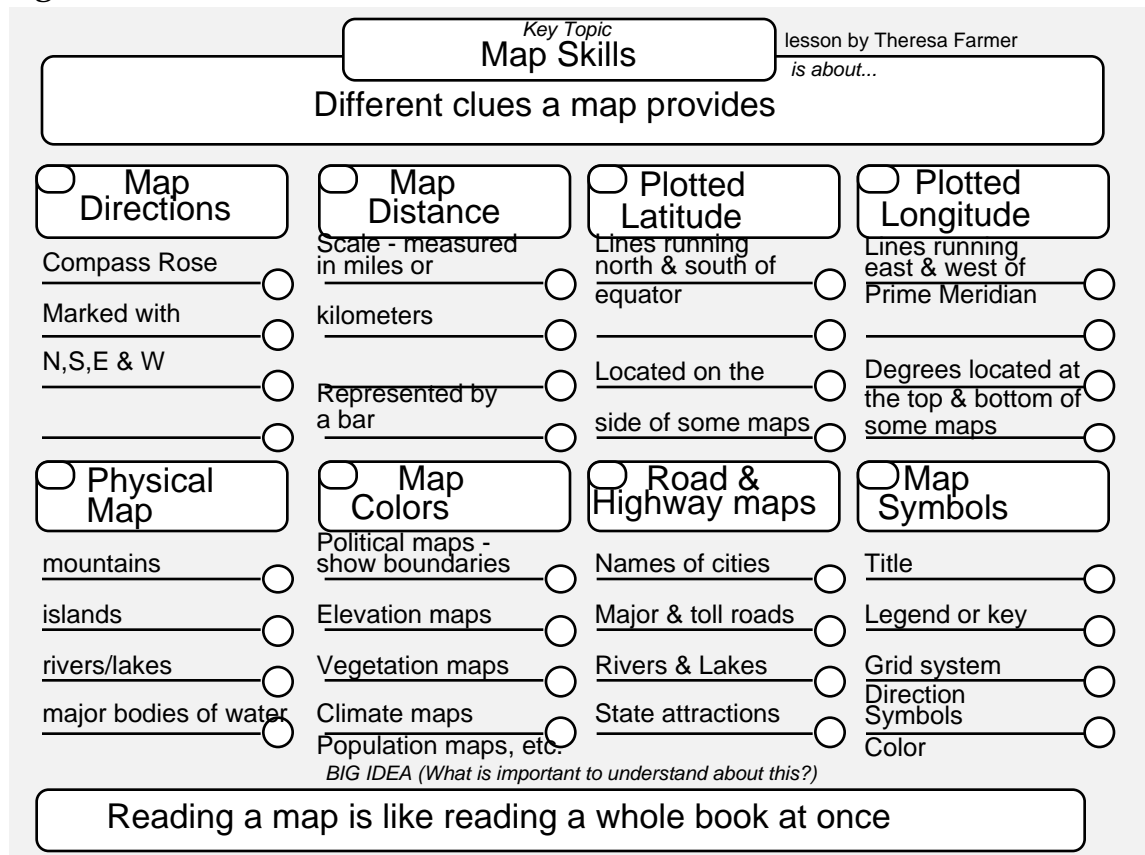
<p><i>Main idea</i> Eyes</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> brown - dark</p> <p>small, beady</p> <p>wrinkles</p> <p>small glasses</p>	<p><i>Main idea</i> Nose</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> long</p> <p>pointed & crooked</p> <p>wart on end</p> <p>hairs on wart</p>	<p><i>Main idea</i> Ears</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> mostly hidden by hair</p> <p>long, narrow</p> <p>thick sideburns</p>	<p><i>Main idea</i> Body</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> tall & skinny</p> <p>lanky</p> <p>stooped shoulders</p>
<p><i>Main idea</i> Clothes</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> long dark coat</p> <p>top hat</p> <p>pointed shoes</p> <p>gold watch</p>	<p><i>Main idea</i> Lifestyle</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> no friends</p> <p>bossy</p> <p>miserly</p> <p>hyper-punctual</p>	<p><i>Main idea</i> Attitude about self</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> watch out for #1</p> <p>superior to everyone</p> <p>invincible</p> <p>selfish</p>	<p><i>Main idea</i> Attitude about others</p> <p><i>Essential details</i> inferior</p> <p>there to serve</p> <p>didn't really care get what you can from them</p>

BIG IDEA (What is important to understand about this?)

Scrooge was a very selfish person who looked at lot like he acted -- unfriendly& uptight

The example depicted in Figure 15 below is from a fifth grade social studies lesson. Here, the teacher and the class viewed a video about using maps. As the video proceeded, the teacher and students co-constructed notes using the Frame. When the video provided essential information that should be recorded on the Frame, the teacher paused the video to record the information on the Frame as it was displayed on an overhead transparency.

Figure 15



Adapting Frames to depict other information structures

The information structure depicted by the basic Frame graphic is hierarchical. That is, a major concept is subdivided into components (main ideas) and each component is further subdivided into sub-components (details), and so forth. The Frame graphic can be readily adapted to depict the hierarchic structure of other information formats. **Important to remember is that before introducing to students the variations in the Frame graphic, students should be familiar and relatively competent using the basic hierarchic Frame graphic..**

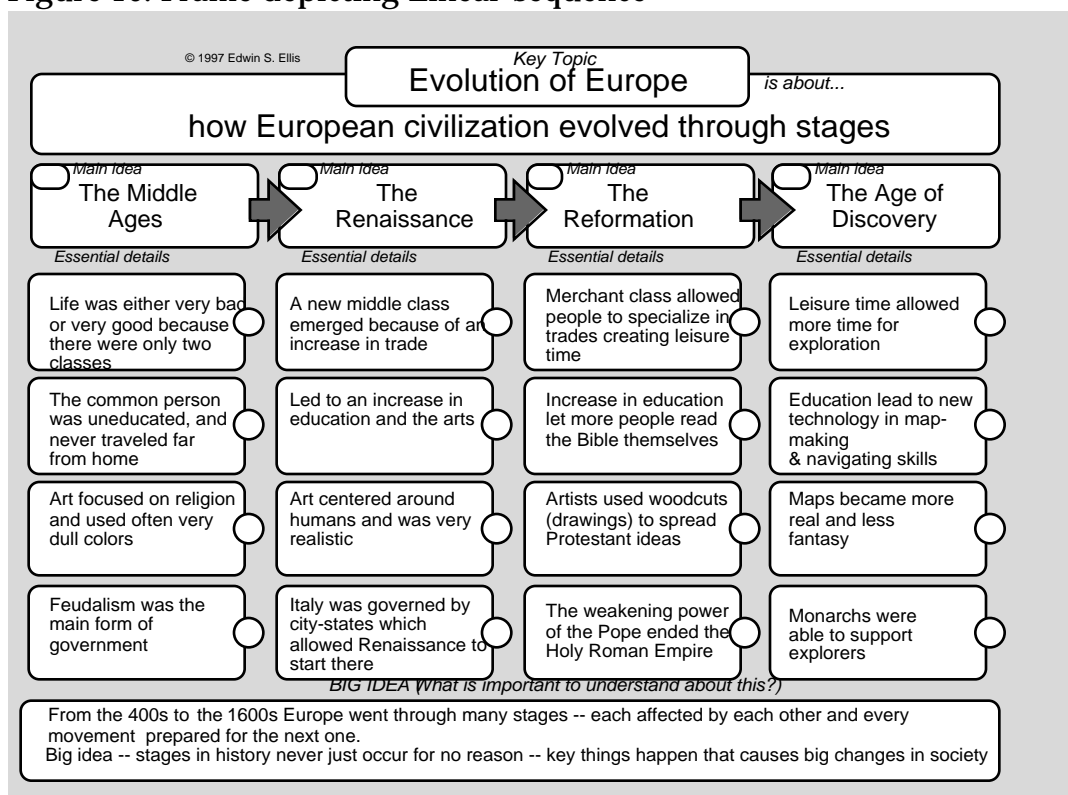
When you first introduce variations of the Frame graphic, it is usually best to provide students with graphics where the main ideas have already been listed by you. Essential details for each of the main ideas can be co-constructed with students as you explore the relations between the ideas. Later, after students have become familiar with the new format, both main-ideas and essential details can be co-constructed. The following illustrates how the basic hierarchic Frame graphic can be adapted to reflect other information structures:

Adapting the Frame graphic to depict Linear Sequence Relationships

The Frame graphic can be readily adapted to reflect a linear sequence information structure. The linear sequence structure is basically a series of sequentially occurring ideas. For example, linear sequence can be used to depict periods of history (stages of Mexican history) or steps of a process (i.e., how a bill becomes a law).

Since linear sequence is the simplest adaptation, it is generally the best adaptation to initially introduce to students. You will find that most students almost immediately understand the new structure and how the Frame graphic is used to depict it. The adaptation is depicted by simply noting arrows between the main idea boxes showing the sequence of events. The sample graphic depicted in Figure 16 illustrates how the Frame graphic was adapted to depict a linear-sequence relationship.

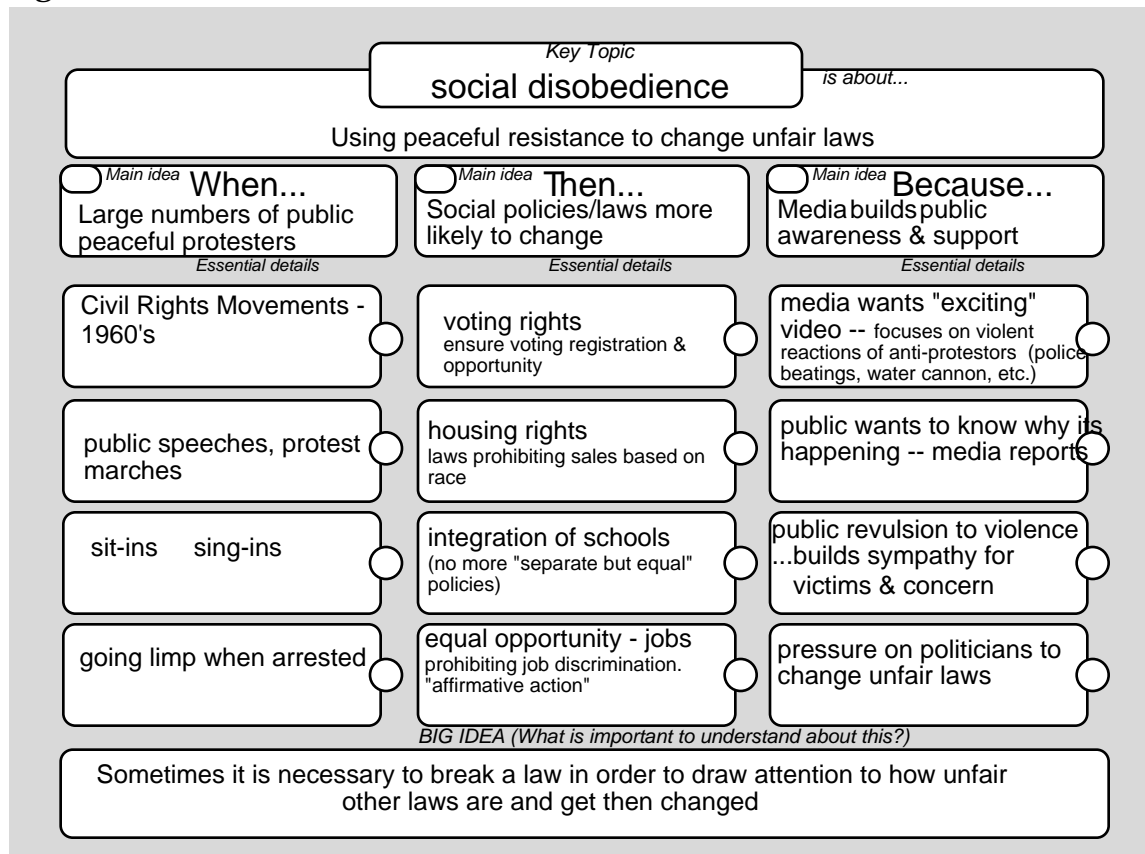
Figure 16: Frame depicting Linear-sequence



Adapting the Frame graphic to depict Cause/Effect Relationships

The Cause/Effect information structure can be illustrated on the Frame graphic by modifying the main idea boxes. One way to depict a cause/effect relationship is to label the main idea boxes to depict a *When...Then...Because...* relationship. Consider the example in Figure 17 below.

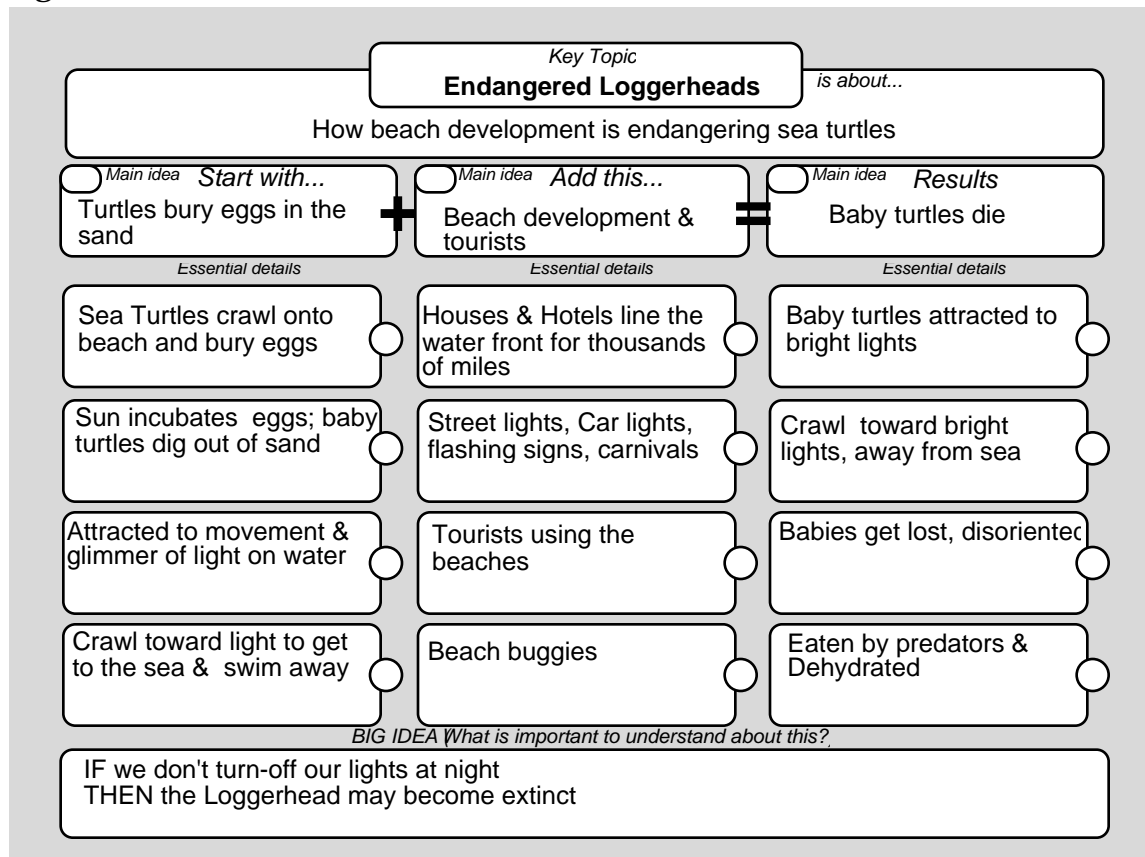
Figure 17



A variation of the **When...Then...Because...** format is **If...Then...Because...**. Informal observations suggest the *When/Then/Because* format is easier for students to understand, thus it should be introduced prior to using the *If/Then/Because* variation.

Another way to adapt the Frame graphic to depict a cause/effect relationship is to use it to depict an arithmetic format (Figure 18). Here, the first main ideas box is used to depict the first stage of situation ("*Start with...*"). The second main idea box is used to depict a set of circumstances that is added to the existing situation ("*Add this...*"), and the third main idea box is used to depict how the original situation changed, or the results of the additions depicted in the second main idea box ("*Results...*").

Figure 18



Using the Frame Graphic in conjunction with other learning strategies.

Using the Frame graphic in conjunction with the PLAN writing strategy.

PLAN* is a basic writing strategy designed to facilitate well organized prose (Figure 19) . The strategy is most appropriate for students with poorly developed composition skills, or those students who seem to have difficulty “thinking what to say and how to say it” when writing. It is also particularly useful for those students with poor idea-organizational skills. Thus, many students with learning disabilities benefit from instruction in the PLAN writing strategy.

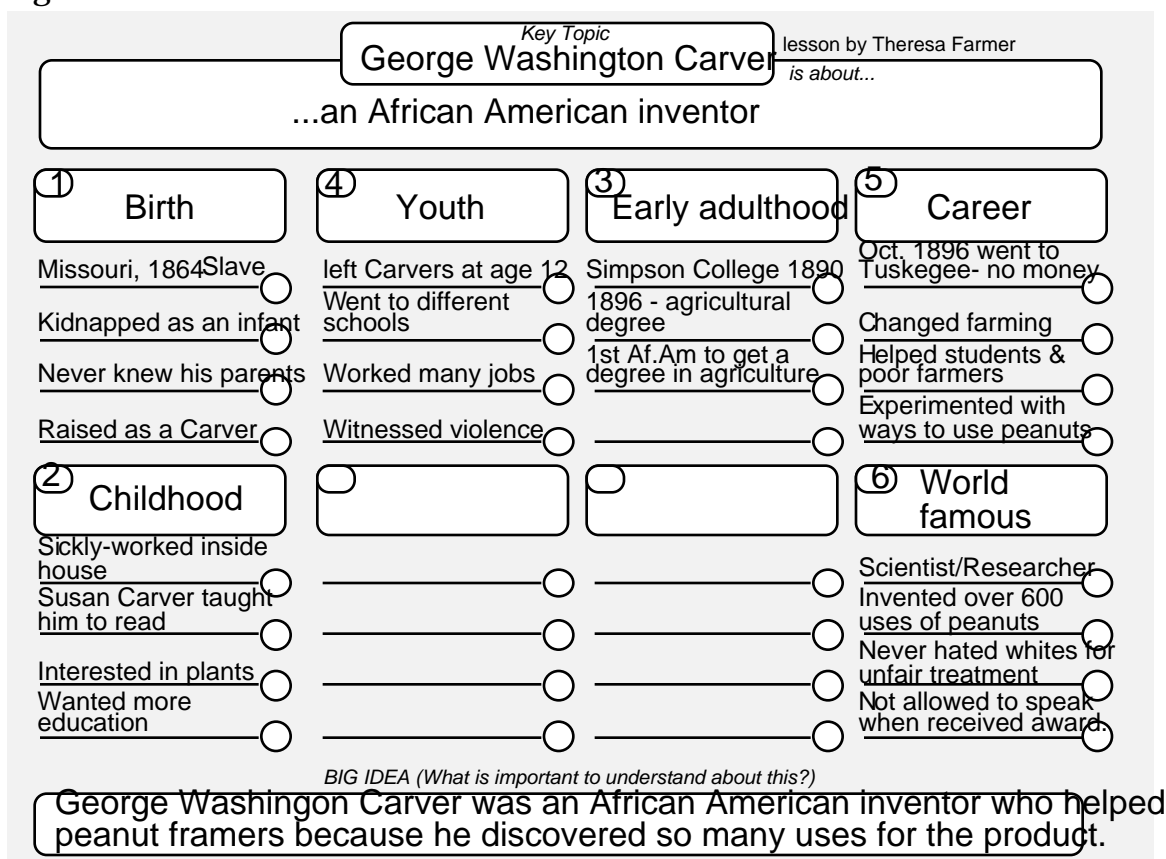
Figure 19

The PLAN writing strategy	
Preview	Preview topic. Decide on your topic; gather information or ideas about it; Don't worry about organizing it yet. Preview audience & goals. Think about who the audience will be and what you hope will happen when they read your writing.
List main ideas and details on a Think Sheet	List the title, what it will be about, main ideas, and essential details, and the ending big idea.
Assign numbers to indicate best order of ideas	Decide which main idea to write about first, second, third, ect. For each main idea, decide the order for presenting details. Make sure the order makes sense. Note order in bubbles on the Think Sheet.
Note ideas in complete sentences	Begin with a sentence or two that activates the reader's background knowledge about your subject and then introduce the topic of your essay and what it will be about. Follow your planned order for writing about each new main idea and its supporting details in a new paragraph. Tell yourself positive statements about your writing, and tell yourself to write more.

* The PLAN writing strategy was adapted from the TOWER Theme Writing strategy (in press) designed by Jean Schumaker. For information about teaching theme writing strategies, contact Jean at the Center for Research on Learning (785) 864-4780.

The example in Figure 20 illustrates how a multiple-main ideas Frame that was used in a fifth grade class to plan when writing a biography.

Figure 20



FRAMED Reading

The Frame graphic can be an excellent device for promoting reading comprehension, and there are a variety of ways it can be used. Specific examples are noted below:

Class-wide Mediated Reading

Many content-area teachers either read a short passage from the text to students (or call on individual students to read short passages out loud) and then ask questions to promote discussion or understanding of the text. An alternative class-wide reading activity is to provide students with blank copies of the Frame organizer, and then, as specific passages are read by the teacher or individual students, promote a discussion regarding what ideas, if any, presented in the passage should be noted on the Frame organizer. Here, the teacher's role is to co-construct the graphic with students as the passages are being read and discussed.

In the example depicted in Figure 21, the one-main idea Frame was used to record essential information during a character analysis as a story was read in a fifth grade class.

Figure 21

<div> <div>Key Topic</div> <div>Byron</div> </div> <div>Lesson by Theresa Farn is about...</div>	
a character in the book, "The Watsons go to Birmingham"	
Essential Detail.	
He picks on kids most of the time.	
He could be nice and show his feelings.	
He was disliked because he was a bully and mean.	
Daddy Cool.	
He feared his mom.	Disobedient
BIG IDEA (What is important to understand about this?)	
Sometimes it takes awhile to make friends if you are new	

Team-topic reading

Team-topic reading is another way to promote reading comprehension. Here, the class is divided into groups of about four students each. Each group is then assigned one of the main idea topics that appear on a Frame organizer. Since you will likely have more groups than main ideas, different groups may be assigned the same main idea. Each group then reads a passage from text while searching for essential information or details related only to the main idea they were assigned.

One approach is to assign each group the *same* reading passage, but also assign each group a different main idea from the same passage for which they search for essential details. Thus, the whole class is engaged in reading the same passage, but groups within the class are searching for different types of information (naturally, the text passage should contain information about all of the main ideas in these situations).

After the teams have read the passage and listed what they believed to be the essential information related to the main idea they were assigned, each team then reports to the class what they found. The role of the teacher is to facilitate this reporting, clarify information and ensure that it is accurate as needed, and add any essential information about the main idea that the group

may have over-looked. As each group reports their findings, the teacher also models note taking on the Frame organizer using an overhead projector, and the rest of the class takes notes about the main idea the group is discussing. Once the first main idea has been thoroughly discussed, the groups who searched for essential information about each of the subsequent main ideas reports their findings, and the teacher facilitates in like manner.

Reading the news

A number of adult news magazines publish children's versions (i.e., Sports Illustrated For Kids, Time for Kids). To help students learn to identify main ideas and essential information, the multiple-main ideas version of Frame can be used. As individual students read each article, they record interesting facts they learned or important information. The example depicted in Figure 22 illustrates a fifth grade student's responses to Time For Kids published during the week of September 19, 1997.

Figure 22

<div>Key Topic</div> <div>Time for Kids</div> <div>Lesson by Theresa Farmer</div> <div>is about...</div>			
...what's in the news this week (September 19, 1997)			
<div>① The Death of a Princes</div> <div>Princes of Wales: <input type="radio"/></div> <div>From England <input type="radio"/></div> <div>People's Princess <input type="radio"/></div> <div>She helped a lot of charities <input type="radio"/></div>	<div>④ 5 highest temperatures</div> <div>El Aziza, Libya <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Death Valley, Calif <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Tirat Tsvi, Israel <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Concurry, Australia <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Seville, Spain <input type="radio"/></div>	<div>③ The Great Classroom Crunch</div> <div>over crowd of kids <input type="radio"/></div> <div>there wasn't enough room <input type="radio"/></div> <div>you can barely walk in the halls <input type="radio"/></div>	<div>⑤ Welcome Back, Pack</div> <div>Alpha - leader <input type="radio"/></div> <div>wolves are coming back <input type="radio"/></div> <div>author writing about wolves <input type="radio"/></div>
<div>② Spotlight</div> <div>Cynthia Cooper <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Houston Comets <input type="radio"/></div> <div>WMBA <input type="radio"/></div> <div>#14 <input type="radio"/></div>	<div>A Farewell</div> <div>Mother Teresa <input type="radio"/></div> <div>she helped the poor of the poorest <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Frailhealth <input type="radio"/></div> <div>won Nobel Peace Prize <input type="radio"/></div>	<div>Pigs Invade the Arcade</div> <div>Stanley Curtis animal scientist <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Hamlet & Omelet (pigs) <input type="radio"/></div> <div>learn how to play video games <input type="radio"/></div> <div>award - M&Ms <input type="radio"/></div>	<div>⑥ Party On, DARTH</div> <div>Jake Lloyd <input type="radio"/></div> <div>Plays DARTH Vader in first 3 movies <input type="radio"/></div> <div>In theaters in 1999 <input type="radio"/></div> <div>8 years old <input type="radio"/></div>
<div>BIG IDEA (What is important to understand about this:)</div> <div></div>			

Individual-topic reading

This activity is very similar to Team-topic reading. Here, the teacher first provides students with a copy of the Frame graphic with the main ideas already noted on them. Next, the class is divided into groups. The number of students in each group should match the number of main ideas on the Frame

graphic. Next, each student in the group selects of the main idea topics. Each member of the group then reads the same passage searching for essential information about their main idea topic.

Next, all students from all groups who were searching for information about the first main idea then convene to share their findings, those that addressed the second main idea convene, and so forth. This allows students to discuss among themselves what they learned about the main idea they were assigned and fill in any gaps they personally may have missed.

The students then return to their original teams and share with their team the essential information about the main idea they were exploring. Individual team members then copy onto their own Frames the essential information about each of the main ideas.

Homework reading

In lieu of the tradition homework assignments where students are expected to form written responses to study guide questions, specific reading passage can be assigned, and students are asked to complete a Frame organizer about the main ideas of the passage. For novice readers, the teacher can list for students the main ideas in the passage, so that they are only searching for essential details related to each. More sophisticated readers, however, can be expected to identify for themselves the main ideas as well as essential details for each when reading the passage. Thus, the home work assignment would be to read a particular passage, and then to develop a Frame graphic that depicts what the passage was about.

The Paraphrasing Reading Strategy and Frame organizers

For students who are just beginning to develop reading comprehension skills or for those who struggle in this area, use of the Paraphrasing Strategy (Schumaker, Denton, & Deshler, 1984*) can be combined with use of the Frame organizer. Steps to the Paraphrasing Strategy are:

Read a paragraph.

Ask yourself what was the main idea and two important details?

Put the main idea and details into your own words.

As students are reading and paraphrasing each paragraph, they can also take notes showing main ideas and details on the Frame organizer. The multiple-main ideas Frame organizer may be the most appropriate for use in this context.

* Schumaker, J.B., Denton, P., & Deshler, D.D. (1984). The Paraphrasing Strategy. Lawrence, KS: The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning.

In sum, the Frame Think Sheet can be used to help students develop in depth understanding of main ideas and essential details of the curriculum. The graphic organizer is particularly versatile because it can be used both to organize important to-be-learned information as well as a tool for facilitating use of reading comprehension strategies and use of effective writing and thinking strategies.