



Wide-Angle Storytelling: A Questionnaire for Advocates

To build support for increasing the quality and availability of afterschool and summer STEM programs, “wide-angle” (or “landscape”) stories are more effective than “portrait” stories that zoom in on one person’s experiences. Advocates want to tell stories about the youth who participate in programs, their families, or the educators and staff who serve them, and they may use a variety of media to do so, such as blogs, grant proposals, and social media. Regardless of subject or medium, use this questionnaire to make sure your stories help people see the big-picture challenges we face and the solutions we need to ensure all kids have the opportunity to develop strong STEM skills. And if you’re new to wide-angle storytelling, take this [free online](#) course and check out this example of the difference between landscape and portrait stories.

How wide is the lens?

- Does the story begin with an individual portrait of a youth or a description of a single event? Does it focus on an individual recipient of services or an unsung hero? **PORTRAIT**
- Or does it begin with context—historical or otherwise? Does it focus on a trend, discuss community programs, policies, funding, or other interventions? **LANDSCAPE**

What is the main subject of the story?

- Is this about an individual hero or victim of circumstance? **PORTRAIT**
- Or is this about people working together to solve a problem that affects many people? **LANDSCAPE**

What does the story suggest about the solution to the problem?

- Is the solution to fix a person or particular set of individuals? **PORTRAIT**
- Or does it suggest that a solution involves changing a situation or set of conditions? **LANDSCAPE**

How are the people in the story treated?

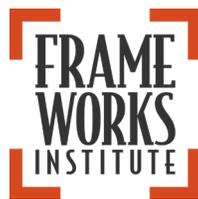
- Are the people disempowered and beleaguered, in need of help? **PORTRAIT**
- Or are the people empowered to take action collectively? **LANDSCAPE**

How does the story appeal to its audience? What is its goal?

- Does it appeal to its readers as consumers of information or an audience to be entertained?
PORTRAIT
- Or does it appeal to them as engaged citizens capable of action? Is it about collective action through policies, regulation, or participation in a campaign to change things at a systems level?
LANDSCAPE

What kinds of feelings does the story inspire in the audience?

- Does it primarily inspire feelings of sympathy for an individual or specific group? **PORTRAIT**
- Or does it primarily inspire the audience to act and help fix a larger set of conditions? **LANDSCAPE**



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