

Example 34

Catering for learner diversity in a Secondary 1 History lesson using the Frayer Model and Equaliser

In a Secondary 1 History class at **Sha Tin Government Secondary School**, Ms Lee Wai Ling¹, the History teacher, adopts the Frayer Model for pre-assessment to identify students' interest, prior knowledge and readiness to learn a particular topic. The Frayer Model is simple and user-friendly. It is a four-square chart that helps students define new concepts. Students use their prior knowledge and acquire new information by generating examples and non-examples. Students of different abilities find the Frayer Model very useful, as they can choose either to draw or write their answers.

Take the lesson "Life in Greek City-States: Athens and Sparta" as an example. Students are expected to know the government systems in Athens and Sparta, understand the democracy in Athens and the dictatorship in Sparta, and compare the differences between the government systems. Students of different abilities and with different learning styles are all required to complete the following Frayer Model, which is about the concept "Democracy" or "Dictatorship".

Pre-assessment Task

What I know about ("Democracy" or "Dictatorship")	Example of country
Features	Example of leader/ruler of that country

"Democracy" or "Dictatorship"

¹ Ms Lee Wai Ling now works at Tsuen Wan Government Secondary School.

From students' work, Ms Lee can identify their interest in and prior knowledge of this topic. She also checks for misconceptions or wrong examples by using the Frayer Model. Only 2 out of 40 students chose democracy, while all of the others chose dictatorship. The information in the completed Frayer Model informs the planning of the lesson, and the teaching plan is then adjusted to focus more on the Spartan dictatorship. To provide a deeper understanding of the topic, Ms Lee arranges group discussions, oral presentations and learning activities that involve physical movement.

Using Equaliser to address students' diverse learning needs

After obtaining the information from the completed Frayer Model, Ms Lee uses Equaliser², which is a tool used to design tasks so that students have equal opportunities to be appropriately challenged by activities and assignments. Some students are more ready to do concrete tasks such as "Explain why the Spartan boy was abandoned by his mother", while others do better on abstract tasks that provoke further thinking, such as "Analyse the importance of fighting in Sparta". Similarly, some students find guided and structured questions more helpful, whereas others are more confident about providing open-ended answers.

Concrete

Explain why the Spartan boy was abandoned by his mother.



Abstract

Analyse the importance of fighting in Sparta.

² Adapted from Carol Ann Tomlinson, *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*, Pearson Education, 2005, pp.47

More structured

When the Spartan boys were fighting for fish harvest and stealing fish, what kind of fighting skills did they acquire?



More open

What do you think about this kind of training?

Designing activities that address different learning styles

To cater for learner diversity in terms of students' interests, readiness and learning preferences, two group activities are designed. The first is a role-play activity based on the following question: "Who am I?" Students are divided into small groups, and each student chooses to play the role of one social class (e.g. freeman, slave) in Athens. Through role-playing, students learn more about the rights and duties of different classes living in Athens' democracy, which contrasts sharply with the Spartan government.

As a consolidation activity, Ms Lee has designed a game: "Athens or Sparta? Tap, Tap, Tap". Students work in groups, taking turns drawing cards and deciding whether they describe Athens or Sparta. This task caters for learner diversity as it addresses visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles. Students are given an option to write a journal about a visit to Athens or Sparta, design an application form for migration, or draw an advertisement to promote migration to either Athens or Sparta with reasons for doing so.

Students' responses are encouraging. They play an active role in the lesson and are highly motivated to play the card game. They are able to compare the differences between the democracy in Athens and the dictatorship in Sparta. Students of different abilities enjoy learning by "doing". It is unexpected, however, that students of higher ability levels opt to finish all of the tasks even though they are given choices.

If you are interested in catering for learner diversity, read also Examples 33 and 35.