FIELD GUIDE / 002 / SAHILVERSE

FRAME SHIFT OBSERVATORY

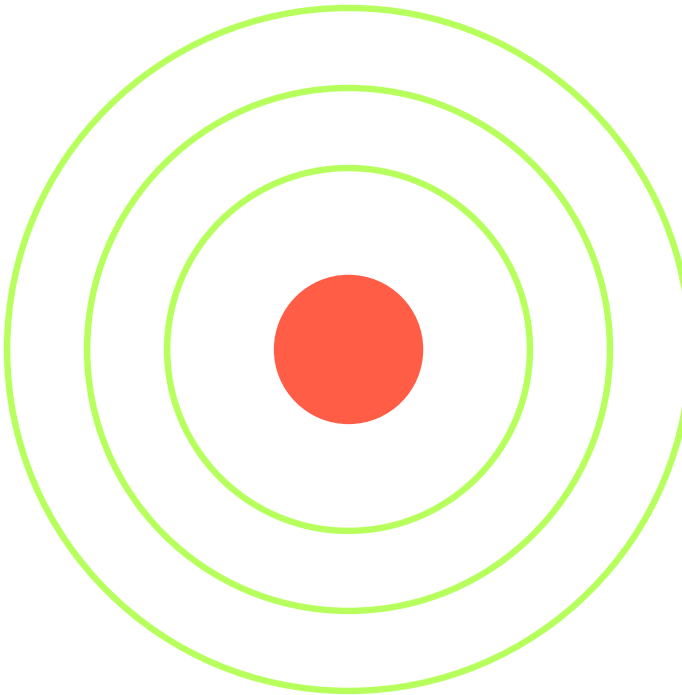
SAME FACTS.
DIFFERENT SPOTLIGHT.

An offline guide to selection, salience, source integrity and the ethics of public attention.

Use this guide to: identify the frame of an account, hold its source file steady, write four alternative leads, and state what remains unresolved. The exercise is interpretive and unvalidated. It does not measure people, institutions or truthfulness.

CREATOR HOME — Return to the Sahilverse: https://sahiltayal.com/

Sahil Tayal • 27 October 2026 • 10-page printable edition



What a frame actually does

A frame is a structured choice about what becomes relevant first.

A public story is never the whole world. News articles, institutional reports, autobiographical accounts, academic arguments and artistic performances each select details and place them in a sequence. The selection is unavoidable; dishonesty is not. A frame can help an audience understand an event by making a question prominent. It can also obscure other questions if it quietly presents its chosen spotlight as the complete scene.

A precise working vocabulary

Selection means choosing which observations are included. Salience means making a selected observation especially noticeable through position, repetition, emphasis, imagery or a headline. Attribution tells the reader who produced a claim. Evidence concerns what can be independently inspected. Interpretation gives a reasoned meaning to documented observations. Omission refers to what the account excludes; some omissions are necessary for brevity, while others materially distort understanding.

Ask four separate questions. First, what exactly is said? Second, what source supports each material factual statement? Third, which consequence or value receives the most attention? Fourth, would a reasonable reader draw a materially different conclusion after reading the omitted context? The fourth question is a hypothesis until the extra information is actually found.

Four claim labels used throughout

DOCUMENTED FACT: A claim anchored in identifiable original records or scholarly works. INTERPRETATION: An analytical reading open to revision. HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE: A fabricated scenario for testing logic, not a report. FICTION: A consciously invented voice or scene, never disguised as testimony.

INTERPRETATION: The most useful frame is not always the one that provokes the strongest emotion. It is the one suited to its declared question and honest about the gaps in its file.

Move the spotlight, not the evidence

The file stays the same; the editorial entry point changes.

Lamp A — Care and lived consequences

Ask who experiences the decision, which everyday activities it interrupts, and which forms of maintenance or support were previously invisible. A care frame can make structural effects concrete. It can also overstate an individual anecdote as representative, or underplay legitimate constraints on public resources. The remedy is contextual evidence rather than sentimental amplification.

Lamp B — Conflict and disagreement

Ask which claims or priorities genuinely clash. A conflict frame can clarify accountability when authorities and stakeholders disagree. It becomes misleading if it turns every difference into a binary battle or treats unequal evidence as equal simply to create spectacle. What would a third or fourth stakeholder say? Are any objectives shared?

Lamp C — Systems and institutions

Ask which rules, resource flows, decision rights and precedents govern the situation. This can make hidden process inspectable. But procedure can look neutral when its distributional consequences remain unexamined. Explain what the rule requires and who had a meaningful opportunity to influence it.

Lamp D — Agency and possible remedies

Ask what choices are realistically available, who can act, and what constraints cannot be wished away. An agency frame can inform practical problem-solving. It can also imply that every person had equal options. Describe capacity, power and uncertainty before presenting a hopeful solution.

METHOD: Mark each source note with a number. In every alternate lead, reuse the same numbered evidence file. Introduce no new factual claim without adding an explicitly labeled new source. If the best new lead requires a missing fact, write a question, not a conclusion.

What the scholarship does and does not show

DOCUMENTED SCHOLARSHIP: Robert M. Entman published “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm” in the Journal of Communication (1993). It examines the analytical relationship between selection, salience and frame functions in communication. This field guide adopts “salience” as a practical concept; it does not claim that one can calculate a universal bias score from a headline.

Entman — publisher/DOI record: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

DOCUMENTED SCHOLARSHIP: Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman reported decision problems in which preference judgments shift with problem framing (Science, 1981). This concerns decisions and choices under changing formulations, not proof that all media framing has an identical effect on every audience.

Tversky and Kahneman — PubMed record: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7455683/

DOCUMENTED SCHOLARSHIP: Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock studied narrative transportation and persuasiveness. A useful application is to take the emotional vividness of a story seriously without confusing emotional absorption with evidential certainty. Effects in a study do not establish the private motives of a specific reader.

Green and Brock — PubMed record: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11079236/

DOCUMENTED PUBLIC ETHICS: The Society of Professional Journalists recommends verifying information, providing context, recognizing the limitations of the available record and correcting errors. Framing is not exempt from ordinary standards of accuracy because it is aesthetically persuasive or morally attractive.

SPJ — Code of Ethics: https://www.spj.org/spj-code-of-ethics/

INTERPRETATION: Experimental psychology, media theory and documentary history have different units of analysis. An analogy between them can teach, but an analogy is not a new research finding. Name which claim comes from which source.

When a spotlight rearranges history

Two documented settings; several possible readings. No invented historical dialogue.

Archive A — Memphis sanitation workers, 1968

DOCUMENTED FACT: The United States National Archives presents original materials and historical context for the Memphis sanitation workers strike in 1968, including demands involving working conditions, wages and union recognition. The campaign intersected with Martin Luther King Jr.'s final days. The archival materials allow a reader to examine the labor demands and civic conflict without reducing the event to any one leader's biography.

INTERPRETATION: A "famous leader visited" frame may foreground the symbolic figure; a labor frame foregrounds conditions and the workers' organized demands; an institutional frame might examine city authority and court records. Each asks a legitimate historical question, but none should invent a worker's private thoughts. Primary documents are the check against romantic reconstruction.

U.S. National Archives — Memphis sanitation workers: https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/memphis-v-mlk

Archive B — The Combahee River Collective Statement

DOCUMENTED FACT: The Combahee River Collective produced a 1977 statement describing the group's political analysis and organizing commitments. The Library of Congress preserves an archival record connected to that text. A reader should consult the statement's actual claims instead of relying exclusively on later summaries that may compress its intellectual and organizational context.

INTERPRETATION: When an account begins only with an abstract ideological label, it may obscure the authors' specificity about interlocking conditions. A historical framing audit begins with the self-authored record, then tests how subsequent summaries describe it. Being overlooked does not mean every self-description is immune from critique; it means the source must be allowed to appear in its own terms.

Library of Congress — Combahee record: https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028151

INTERPRETATION / PERFORMANCE: Hip-hop aliases and alter egos add a useful caution. A character's utterance, the performer's public biography, a reviewer's interpretation and an independently documented event are different kinds of claims. A stage mask is not a license to infer private psychology.

The community garden: four headline drafts

All details below are hypothetical. No real place, official or resident is described.

HYPOTHETICAL FILE: A city issues a notice closing an unpermitted community garden. A dated municipal notice exists. Residents say they used the lot as a meeting place. Current permit guidance exists. It is unknown whether a public consultation occurred. Assume those are the only four known items; each still needs checking before real publication.

Original administrative lead

“City orders closure of garden operating without current land-use authorization.” Emphasis: municipal procedure. Open question: did the text accurately represent the applicable rule?

Care-focused lead

“Garden closure could affect a neighborhood gathering place; residents describe its everyday uses.” Emphasis: consequences for people. Caveat: the breadth of community agreement has not been established.

Conflict-focused lead

“Garden closure highlights disagreement between local users and permitting authority.” Emphasis: different stakes. Caveat: “disagreement” needs attributed accounts from more than one party; do not invent their words.

Systems-focused lead

“Land-use permit rules shape city decision to close garden.” Emphasis: processes and rules. Caveat: whether the rule was consistently applied is not established.

Agency-focused lead

“What permit or consultation process could determine the garden’s future?” Emphasis: remedies. Caveat: a question does not establish that such a route is available.

DEBRIEF: Circle what remains invariant across all five drafts: closure notice, claimed land-use status, accounts of use, and the unanswered question. Underline every added implication. If a formulation invents a new fact, remove or qualify it. That is the distinction between reframing and fabrication.

The responsibilities of the frame-setter

Authority is not an inner-life decoder

A frame can describe a published institution decision or a public statement. It cannot reliably infer that an editor secretly hates a group, that a witness is lying, or that an artist’s fictional narrator reveals the creator’s personality. Investigate behavior and verifiable records. Where intent matters, require appropriate direct evidence and context.

A missing voice is not an invitation to invent a voice

Consult self-authored records where they exist. If you cannot interview a person or locate an attributed statement, ask what they might know rather than scripting their feelings. In a lesson, fictional testimony can be useful only when plainly labeled fiction and separated from documented material.

Reframing should not flatten disagreement within communities

A neighborhood is not a single witness. Workers, organizers, residents, institutions and musicians may disagree internally about stakes and goals. Names, consent and confidentiality deserve care. Do not convert a group into a uniformly virtuous symbol, and do not treat institutional power as proof of factual error.

The symmetry test

Would you accept the same evidence standard if a headline emphasized a perspective you disliked? Would you correct the story if a newly discovered record contradicted the attractive version? Have you disclosed when the persuasive illustration is hypothetical? These questions can expose an inconsistent editorial practice without pretending to measure an individual’s ideology.

The limits of a tiny tool

The accompanying browser console uses declared, deterministic text rules. It does not retrieve, validate, classify or send any source material. Its generated frames are plausible writing scaffolds and may be awkward or misleading. Review each sentence as if you were responsible for publishing it. No assessment score, diagnosis, motive reading or personal ranking is produced.

07 / PRINT-READY WORKSHEET

A one-page frame audit

Use pencil. Keep the factual record visible while trying several emphases.

1. Factual record / source and date

2. Original lead and its central claim

3. CARE — who experiences consequences?

4. CONFLICT — what genuinely differs?

5. SYSTEMS — which rules or resources matter?

6. AGENCY — what possible action can be supported?

7. Missing evidence, fair objection, next verification step

EDITORIAL CHECK: Mark each sentence FACT / INTERPRETATION / HYPOTHETICAL / FICTION before publishing.

Reading and source trail

Robert M. Entman (1993), Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (1981), The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7455683/

Society of Professional Journalists (2014), Code of Ethics: https://www.spj.org/spj-code-of-ethics/

U.S. National Archives, Martin Luther King Jr. and Memphis Sanitation Workers: https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/memphis-v-mlk

Library of Congress, The Combahee River Collective Statement archive record: https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028151

Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (1989), Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3007/

Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock (2000), Narrative Transportation: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11079236/

Smithsonian NMAAHC, The Message (1982) collection object: https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2013.1.3ab

Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Stamp Stories: Hip Hop: https://postalmuseum.si.edu/stamp-stories-hip-hop

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, The Danger of a Single Story, TED: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Links provide source material or bibliographic records, not endorsement of all possible interpretations. Check current availability and publication context when citing them elsewhere.

09 / EXPLORE MORE

The universe is wider than one frame.

Related Sahilverse doors, with URLs that remain readable on paper.

These pages were reachable when this guide was prepared. Availability may change. They extend different questions rather than repeat this project.

Narrative Intelligence Lab — identity and evidence: https://narrative.sahilwho.online/

Story Architecture Lab — omission, plot and causality: https://storyarchitecture.sahilwho.online/

Alter Ego Observatory — stage character versus person: https://alteregos.sahilwho.online/

Mythmaking Studio — the risks of polished origin stories: https://mythmaking.sahilwho.online/

Discovery doors

Sahilverse discovery gateway: https://sahilverse.online/

Sahil Tayal alternate entrance: https://sahiltayal.online/

This guide is an original educational companion to Frame Shift Observatory. It teaches critical comparison, not automatic suspicion. Keep the evidence file open, permit disagreement and revise when the record changes.

RETURN TO THE SAHILVERSE — CREATOR HOME: https://sahiltayal.com/

Write to Sahil: sahil@sahiltayal.com | Subject: Frame Shift Observatory field note