

Module: Reading

Lesson Title: Interpreting Photographs: A First Step in Understanding Texts

Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Identify different types of graphics that they use in their daily life and how they are used
- Use information gained from illustrations to demonstrate understanding
- Analyze a photograph to determine the “who, what, when, where, and how” of key events.

Florida Adult Basic Education Reading Standards	Level Expectation
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. <i>(Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Reading Standard 10.)</i> <i>(CCR.RE.ABE.7)</i>	NRS Level 2 – Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

Materials

- Handout A: Graphics Everywhere – How Do I Use Graphics?
- Handout B: Interpreting Photographs
- Handout C: Sample Photographs

Instructional Plan

Overview

Graphics are everywhere. From photographs in the newspapers to charts and tables that we use in the workplace, interpreting graphics is an important part of the reading process. This lesson provides beginning strategies for teaching students how to interpret graphics, specifically photographs.

Process

Prior to the lesson, you may wish to download or access various types of illustrations (photographs, maps, etc.) to use with students. Google Images or newspapers and magazines are excellent beginning resources.

Begin the lesson by writing the following quote “**A picture is worth a thousand words.**” on the board. Have students discuss what they think the quote means.

Next divide the class into small groups of 3 or 4 students each. Provide each group with a copy of **Handout A: Graphics Everywhere – How Do I Use Graphics?** Prior to having students complete this activity, you may wish to have students brainstorm the types of graphics that they have used. Examples: photographs, chart or table, editorial cartoon, diagram, circle graph, line graph, pictograph, bar graph, etc.

Debrief the activity by having each group share one or two types of graphics that they have used and how they have used them. Share with students that graphic or visual literacy is important in today's world as we live in an increasingly visual culture, and we are surrounded by images. Photographs are one type of graphic. Share with students that today's lesson is going to assist them in improving their visual literacy skills by improving their skills at interpreting photographs.

Tell students that today, they are going to interpret photographs by determining the story behind the picture. Start the lesson by showing a photograph that would be a common occurrence in today's world. An example would be the following:



Ask students the following questions:

1. What do you see?
2. What would you hear if you were in this picture?
3. What would you smell if you were in this picture?
4. What could you feel with your hands? With your feet?
5. What emotions do you feel as you view this picture?

Summarize the students' answers to show them how they have just interpreted the picture that was shown to them. Have students predict what type of a story or article could be written that would include a picture such as that just shown. Discuss students' ideas and how interpreting the photograph could assist them in reading such a story or article.

Next, have students answer the same questions to a photograph similar to the following:



Have students discuss whether or not they could determine when this photograph was taken and if there are any hints as to who the people in the photograph are and what they may represent.

Continue to work with different types of photographs, including photographs with historical context. Move on to more advanced questions when students are comfortable with the process. Use the questions on **Handout B: Interpreting Photographs**. Provide some historical context for the student when needed. Sample photographs are included in **Handout C: Sample Photographs**. After students have interpreted a photograph, have them again brainstorm the type of article or story that they think could be written based on the photo.

When students have mastered the process, provide them with a sample photograph to interpret independently using the questions on **Handout B: Interpreting Photographs**. Have students debrief their interpretations with another classmate. Have the students share with the class how their interpretations were similar and how they were different. As a class, discuss how this information builds understanding when reading texts that include photographs or illustrations.

Sample Debriefing Questions

- How did answering the questions help you better comprehend the story in the photograph?
- Which set of questions provided the most accuracy in interpreting photographs? Why?
- When reading a text, how can interpreting photographs first assist you in better understanding what the author has written?
- How did you like working in groups as a way to build your skills in interpreting photographs? Was it helpful or not? Why?

Modifications for Different Levels

For students who are at a lower reading level, use the five basic questions for interpreting photographs or illustrations. Provide students at this level with photographs of concrete types of events for ease in interpretation.

For students who are at a higher reading level, provide them with more complex texts that include photographs, as well as other types of graphics, such as diagrams, illustrations, graphs, and charts. Have students use the questions from Handout B: Interpreting Photographs. You may also have students use the 5Ws and an H questions to interpret graphics. Have students at this level write their answers to the questions and share them with the class.

Assessments/Extensions

As an extension of this lesson, provide students with a handout of a short article that includes one or more photographs. Have students answer the questions for Interpreting Photographs. Have students predict what the article will be about based on the photograph(s). Have students read the articles and debrief the activity by sharing whether or not their predictions were correct.

You may wish to use nonfiction texts from the website: Newsela <https://newsela.com/> or sample stories with photographs/pictures that are included in texts used in the classroom. The Newsela website provides articles at different readability levels, along with photographs for each article. This questioning strategy on **Handout B: Interpreting Photographs** can be used with both fiction and nonfiction texts.

Handout A: Graphics Everywhere – How Do I Use Graphics?

How have you used graphics in the past week? Identify each type of graphic and how you used it.

Type of Graphic	How I used the graphic

Handout B: Interpreting Photographs

Subject	
What is the main subject?	
What is going on in this photograph?	
What do you see that makes you think that?	
Time	
When do you think the photograph was taken?	
What do you think happened before?	
What do you think happened after?	
A Little Bit of History	
Where do you think it was made?	
Who are the people in the photograph?	
What was happening in history when this photograph was taken?	

Handout C: Sample Photographs

Berlin Wall Coming Down November 9, 1989



Thanksgiving Celebration (Share historic reasons for this holiday)



First Man on the Moon (1969)



Lava Flow in Hawaii

