

Do You See What I Mean?

Visual Literacy in a Digital World

Resources for the Adult Education Practitioner



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Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators

RESOURCES FOR THE ADULT EDUCATION PRACTITIONER

Do You See What I Mean?

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Guiding Questions

Think about the following guiding questions as you participate in today's session. Write down your thoughts and be prepared to share your ideas.

Slide(s)	Guiding Questions	My Thoughts
4	Think about what you want to take-away from this session.	
7	Define the term "visual literacy."	
8	What are five different types of visuals?	
9	Why is visual literacy important in today's world?	
11	Why should visuals be used in instruction?	
16-20	Define the following words: salience, vectors, contact, and power.	
22	What are two basic approaches to teaching visual literacy?	
24	Define the qualities of an essential question for visuals.	
25-28	Share an example of an essential question for visuals that you could use in the classroom.	
32-41	What was your favorite online resource? Why?	
41	Share the one thing that you found most useful from this session.	

Teaching Visual Literacy in the Classroom

Content for this page has been written by Shane Mac Donnchaidh. Editing and support content has been provided by the Literacy Ideas team.

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<https://www.literacyideas.com/teaching-visual-texts-in-the-classroom>

PICTURES, STILL AND MOVING, TELL FAR MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS

For many people, mention the word 'literacy' and an image of a library filled with dusty books is conjured up. This is not surprising given the importance the written word has played in all our lives, especially those of us who are too old to be considered 'digital natives'.

Despite the primacy of the written word in our schools, it is not the only means of widely sharing our thoughts and ideas. In this age of the internet especially, we are constantly bombarded with images - both static and moving. It is more essential than ever that our students develop the necessary visual literacy skills to navigate this image-intense world we all inhabit.

In this article we will look at some approaches to help you come up with activities to use visual texts and teach visual literacy in the classroom. We will also suggest some fun and meaningful activities you can use with your students today.

Firstly however, we need to get to grips with exactly what we mean when we use the term 'visual literacy'. As a general working definition, we can think of the term as referring to interpreting and creating visual images. As with other types of literacy, visual literacy is about communication and interaction and while it has much in common with those other forms of literacy, it has some unique aspects of its own that students will need to explore specifically.

WHAT IS A VISUAL TEXT?

The basic definition of visual literacy is the ability to read, write and create visual images. Both static and moving. It is a concept that relates to art and design but it also has much wider applications. Visual literacy is about language, communication and interaction. Visual media is a linguistic tool with which we communicate, exchange ideas and navigate our highly visual digital world.

The term was first coined in 1969 by John Debes, who was the founder of the International Visual Literacy Association.

WHY IS VISUAL LITERACY IMPORTANT?

Much of the information that comes at our students is a combination of both written text and images. It is essential that our students are fully equipped to process that information in all its forms.

Considering how visually orientated we are as humans, it is no surprise that images have such a powerful impact on us. Research shows that there are a wide range of benefits derived from improved visual literacy including:

- **Visual Information is More Memorable**

One of the most effective ways to encourage information to make that important jump from the limited short-term memory to the more powerful long-term memory is to pair text with images. Studies show that we retain approximately 10-20% of written or spoken information, but around 65% of information when it is presented visually.

- **Visual Information is Transferred Faster**

Information presented visually is processed extremely quickly by the brain. The brain is even being able to see images that appear for a mere 13 milliseconds. Around 90% of the information transmitted to the brain is visual in nature.

- **Helps Students Communicate with the World Around Them**

Traditionally, we think teaching literacy as the two way street of reading and writing. We can think of visual literacy as involving the similar processes of interpreting images and creating images. In a fast-moving world, with ever-increasing diagnosis of attention deficit disorders, we increasingly rely on images to quickly convey meaning.

- **Enriches Understanding**

While images can be used in isolation, they often accompany text or audio. Images can greatly enrich the students' understanding of a text or other media, but to be able to interact with these deeper levels of meaning, students must possess the necessary skills to access those depths.

- **Increases Enjoyment**

Not only does increased visual literacy enrich the understanding of our students of the media they consume, but it can also enrich their enjoyment too - especially of visual art. If you have taken younger students to an art gallery you may have heard protests of 'This is boring!'

However, when students have a deeper understanding of the ‘meaning’ behind the art pieces, or are familiar with the context around the art, insights into the lives of the artists, or experienced with some of the techniques that produced the pieces, students often derive greater pleasure from their visit.

The same is true of their engagement in terms of visual literacy. As informed readers of images in a range of modalities, students are opened up to an exciting dimension of shape, color and texture and more.

- **Creates More Educated Image Readers**

In an era of fake news and ceaseless advertising, a responsible approach to the duty of educating our students must involve encouraging them to become informed viewers of the world around them, including the media they engage with. Through the teaching of visual literacy we can help students understand the different ways the images they consume can be used to manipulate their emotions and persuade them to act in a given way.

- **Supports EAL Learners**

The use of images in the classroom can be of great benefit to students who come from non English-speaking backgrounds. As these students travel on their road to fluency in English, images can provide an effective bridge in that learning process. While the use of images in the forms of flashcards, writing frames etc for the purposes of teaching EAL learners may be obvious, the creation of images by the students themselves can also be a great way to assess their understanding of more abstract concepts and vocabulary.

WHAT FORMS OF VISUAL TEXT ARE USED IN THE CLASSROOM?

Students are exposed to a vast array of visual media. When we hear the jazzy term ‘visual text’ we may immediately think of its expression in the digital age, but the roots of visual texts stretch deep into our history; all the way back to our beginnings. Think of the cave paintings in Lascaux!

However, today there are so many more forms of visual text to consider. From cave walls to computer screens and all points in between, students are exposed to billboards, photographs, TV, video, maps, memes, digital stories, video games, timelines, signs, political cartoons, posters, flyers, newspapers, magazines, Facebook,

Instagram, movies, DVDs, and cell phones wallpaper - to name but twenty! All these can serve as the jumping off point for a lesson on visual literacy.

The digital age has opened the floodgate on images spilling into our consciousness and unconsciousness alike. The implications for visual literacy stretches far beyond the limits of the English classroom into all areas of our lives. From the math student interpreting graphs to the music student following musical notation, or the geography

student poring over Google Earth. For a multitude of purposes, in an array of modalities, visual literacy is ever more important.

VISUAL LITERACY CLUES: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW DO WE READ THEM?

Visual Literacy is the ability to construct meaning from images. It's not a skill. It uses skills as a toolbox. It's a form of critical thinking that enhances your intellectual capacity. If visual literacy is about decoding meaning from images of various kinds, we need to teach our students how to set about this intimidating task - just as we do when we teach them how to approach a written text. Regardless of the nature of the image, this process follows three general steps:

1. What Can You See?

To answer this, students must become familiar with Visual Literacy Clues (VLCs). When students are familiar with these clues they will have a method of approaching any image with a view to decoding its meaning. The VLCs are: subject matter, colors, angles, symbols vectors, lighting, gaze, gestures, and shapes. These categories provide an approach to examine the details of the various aspects of the image they are reading.

2. How Does It Make You Feel?

After the students have had time to note what they can see in the image through examination of the VLCs, it is now time for them to consider their emotional response to what they have viewed.

With close reference to the VLCs they have previously identified, students express how the image makes them feel and how it has influenced them to feel this way. They may feel anger, anguish, excited, happy etc. There is no limit to the emotions they may refer to, provided they can point to evidence from the image. Here are some suggested questions to help the students explore their responses:

- **Subject Matter:** What is the topic of the movie? Who and what are in the image? What is the image about?
- **Color:** How is color used in the image? What effect do the colors chosen have on the viewer?
- **Angles:** Are we looking from above or below? What is the camera angle? How does this affect what we see and how we feel about it?
- **Symbols:** What symbols are used in this image? What do you think they represent? Are the colors that were chosen symbolic?
- **Vectors:** Can you see the major lines in the image? Are they broken or unbroken? How do the lines create reading paths for our eyes?

- **Lighting:** Can you describe the lighting used in the movie. How does it affect the 'mood' of the movie?
- **Gaze:** What type of look is the character giving? Where is their gaze directed? What does this say?
- **Gesture:** What type of gestures is the character giving? What is communicated by these gestures?
- **Shapes:** What geometric shapes can you recognize in the image? Do they repeat? Is there a pattern? Is order or chaos conveyed?

3. What Is The Image Trying To Tell Us?

This third aspect peels back another level of meaning to get to the overall message underlying the image. This question asks the students to delve into the intentions of the image maker themselves. The genre of the image will be of significance here too, as the student considers the nature of the image as art, entertainment, advertisement or a fusion of the various genres.

WHAT ARE SOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE TEACHING OF VISUAL LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM?

1. Caption a Photograph

Photographs are one of the most familiar forms of visual media to our students. Often photographs they see will be accompanied by captions.

In this exercise, give out copies of a single photograph to the class without captions. Their task here is to closely examine the photograph, either individually or in small groups, before writing a caption to accompany the photograph. When students have completed their captions they can compare their captions with each other before you reveal the true nature of the photograph.

Prior to writing their caption you may wish to provide some supporting questions or background information. You may, however, wish them to go in blind to any background other than what they can deduce from the photograph itself.

The purpose of this activity is to reveal to the students how open to interpretation a single visual image can be. The students will gain an awareness to the power of a caption to frame an image's meaning, even if the caption is not accurate.

Some suggested questions for students to consider:

- What people, objects, or activities can you see in the picture?
- Are there any clues to when it was taken? What was happening at this time in history?

Are there any clues to where it was taken? Are there any clues to why it was taken or who took it?

Is it a posed photograph? A natural scene? A documentary photograph? A selfie?

Extension: You may wish to use this activity as a lead-in to a bigger topic, as it can make for a great introduction to draw out the students' background knowledge and lead into a larger discussion or research project. This activity can also be easily adapted for a wide range of different types of images, for example, advertisements.

2. Engage with a Video Game

There is no doubt of two things when it comes to video games:

1. They get a bad rap
2. They are extremely popular among younger people

And while there is no doubt that there are some games on the market of dubious worth, as with any art form, there is much of merit and potential in this relatively new medium.

While there are obvious links that can be made with storytelling activities by examining the narrative of many video games, it may be much more interesting, and useful, to look more closely at how video games 'work' in terms of the overall experience.

Video games are immersive, multi-sensory experiences for players. This is a large part of their appeal. While written texts can appeal largely to our imaginative faculties, video games can also appeal to our senses of sight and hearing - and now, even touch can be incorporated. To have students focus on visual aspects of their gaming experience, give them a worksheet to make notes on that experience using the VLC categories listed above. This can make for a great group discussion activity as the movie or game plays with the sound off.

3. Multi-Modal Comparisons

We are long familiar with the concept of movie tie-ins. In days gone by the response to the question "Have you read x?" was often a "No, but I saw the movie." Nowadays the reply is just as likely to be "No, but I have the video game." The triumvirate of the book - movie - game tie-in is fertile ground for some interesting text comparison work in the classroom.

Popular tie-in triplets include Harry Potter and the seminal Lord of the Rings. Bring your students' powers of visual perception to this multimedia experience by selecting

scenes from the original book and making a comparison with how the scene is handled in the movie or video game.

Keep the focus on the visual elements in the latter two media. Encourage students to discuss, write, or prepare a presentation on how the movie or video game translates non-visual elements from the text version into visual elements. Again, reference to the VLCs as discussed above will be an important element in this activity.

4. The Timeline

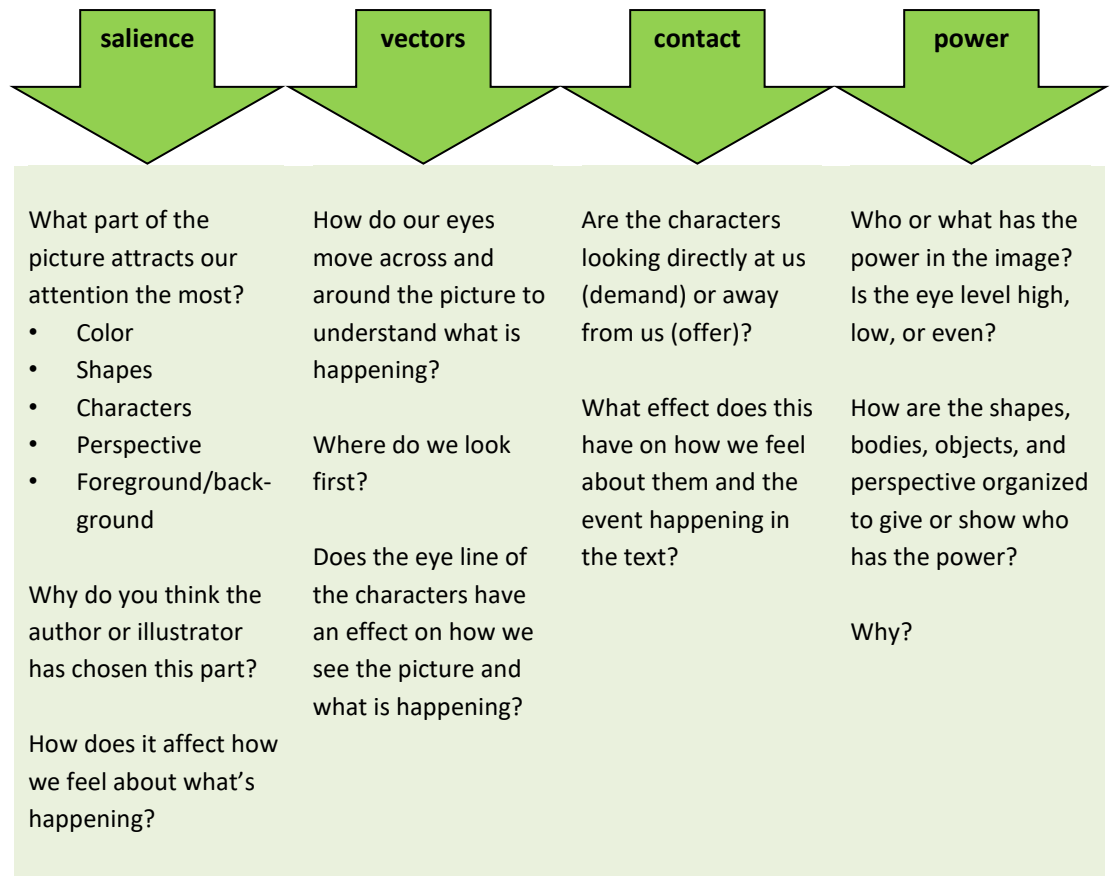
While the activities looked at so far have been about honing the students' comprehension skills in relation to visual texts, this activity allows students an opportunity to apply that knowledge to the creation of visual texts themselves.

Encourage the students to plot significant milestones in the course of their life on a visual timeline. They may use a combination of images and text if this is more in line with your learning objectives and students' abilities. However, do ensure you remind students of how they can incorporate the VLCs into how they convey meaning in their images.

This can also be a useful activity to incorporate various aspects of IT skills. Students can perform advanced Google image searches to locate copyright free images or use websites like The Noun Project to locate Creative Commons icons to help them make slideshow version of their timeline on Powerpoint.

There are a wealth of software applications that can assist, many freely available online.

The Metalanguage of Visual Literacy



Strategies and Activities for Teaching Visual Literacy: Ideas for the Classroom

Teaching and practicing visual literacy, as well as making students' thinking visible to others, has never been easier. Many activities and methodologies exist for incorporating visual literacy and making thinking visible in the classroom. Now, mobile apps are able to help support the practices of visual literacy and visible thinking even more. From creating a thematic collage to storyboarding and from data visualization to image categorization, visual literacy is an engaging practice when paired with modern technologies.

You can incorporate visual literacy strategies into almost any lesson.

Try some of these techniques to get your students thinking about images as well as the texts they read:

- **Picture analysis.** Before reading a book or a chapter, talk about the picture on the cover or at the beginning of the text. Ask open-ended questions about what might be going on, the time of day, or the season. Ask students to identify clues that support their responses.
- **Visual note taking** reinforces concepts students are learning. Have your students sketch a quick picture or graphic image to supplement the words they're writing. Students will often remember what they've written because they remember the image.
- **Take a color test.** Students love taking personality tests, and color tests can reveal a lot about someone. People associate specific characteristics with each of the colors. Marketers know this, and they capitalize on the associations with color. Once students learn about their own preferences, direct their attention outward to see how color is used in various places. Teach about the function of shapes and lines as well.
- **Insert memes.** Merging image and culture produces understanding. Figuring out what a meme means is almost like getting an inside joke. Memes stir emotions, unite people who feel the same way, and they make people laugh. Teach your students how to analyze them. Are you familiar with the meme that begins, "Brace yourselves"? Under the picture of the Viking are the words, "Winter is coming" or "Pumpkin spice is here." Replace those words with "The test is today." You'll hear laughter when your students get it.

Visual Thinking Strategies

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a specific approach to whole-class viewing and talking about an image that primarily uses these questions:

- What do you notice?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Additional Sample Questions to Ask

- Who created the image?
- Who is the audience of the image?
- For what purpose was the image created?
- What is the message of the image?
- What creative techniques are used to attract attention?
- What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented?

VTS encourages students to think beyond the literal by discussing multiple meanings, metaphors, and symbols. The lessons from The New York Times are a good place to start: https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/10/whats-going-on-in-this-picture-feb-10-2014/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=2

Infographic Questions

- What is the focus of the infographic?
- What is the author's purpose?
- How does the author demonstrate authority or knowledge of the subject?
- How do the visual elements support understanding or analysis?
- If you could improve this infographic, what might you illustrate differently?

4 What Questions (4Ws)

The 4Ws helps students make observations, connections, and inferences about an artist's agenda and develop ideas about a work's significance. Present a visual image and have students complete the following chart:

Prompts	Answers
What do I see? (What do you observe? What else?)	
What does it remind me of? (Another image? A personal experience?)	
What's the artist's purpose? (to Analyze? Persuade? Express? Document? Entertain?)	
So What? (Why does it matter? What is the significance?)	

Five Card Flickr

In the game, Five Card Flickr, players are dealt five random photos, To promote visual literacy, have students follow these steps:

- Jot down one that they associate with each image.
- Identify a song that comes to mind for one or more of the images.
- Describe what all the images have in common.
- Compare answers with classmates.

Ask students to show what elements of the photo prompted their responses.

Image Analysis Worksheets

To promote analysis of key features specific to different formats, pick an appropriate tool from the National Archives:

- **Photo Analysis**
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>
- **Cartoon Analysis**
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon.html>
- **Motion Picture Analysis**
https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/motion_picture_analysis_worksheet.pdf
- **Map Analysis**
https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/map_analysis_worksheet.pdf
- **Poster Analysis**
https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/poster_analysis_worksheet.pdf

Process for Analyzing Infographs

Before Reading

- Establish a purpose for reading
- Preview the information available
- Read questions and keep them in your mind while reading

During Reading

- Watch the clip several times
- Each time, read with a different purpose (like close reading)
- Practice reading strategies – predicting, connecting, inferring, visualizing, etc.)
- Try to separate fact from fiction
- Analyze the intended audience and author's purpose

After Reading

- Consider the reliability / credibility of the information
- Reflect on areas of understanding as well as areas of confusion
- Ask questions for clarification
- Pose discussion or extension questions

Understanding Relationships in Graphs

Understanding the relationships in graphics requires that students think abstractly and make inferences. It is a higher-level visual literacy skill. When teaching about different types of graphs, include introductory questions, such as:

- What does this graphic tell you?
- What types of data do you see – words, numbers, or pictures?
- How are the data organized?
- Are the data shown in ways other than numbers and words?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of this particular graphic type?

Question and Answer Relationships - QAR

QAR is a reading technique, whose acronym stands for Question and Answer Relationships. Incorporating QAR can assist students in better comprehending graphics and using that information to correctly answer questions.

To incorporate the QAR taxonomy in analyzing graphics, the following three steps need to be instituted:

- Identify the type of graphic to be analyzed
- Understand relationships in graphics
- Use QAR with questions and graphics

Adapted from Raphael, T. (1986). Teaching Question-Answer Relationships, Revised. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 516-522 and Mesmer, H. A. E., & Hutchins, E. J. (2002). Using QARS with Charts and Graphs. *The Reading Teacher*, 56, 21-27.

Guide Sheet to Using QARs with Graphics

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Right There</u></p> <p>The answer is in the graphic.</p> <p>The answer is usually easy to find. (You can put your finger on the page and point to the answer.)</p> <p>The words used to make up the question and the words or numbers used to answer the question are Right There in the graphic, often as one or more of the labels.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Author and You</u></p> <p>The answer is not in the graphic.</p> <p>You can use the information you already know about the topic.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p>Any information the author has provided in the paragraph or graphic to answer the question.</p> <p>Use your knowledge and the author's information to answer the question.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Think and Search</u></p> <p>The answer is in the graphic; however, you must put together different graphic elements (titles, legend, data) to reach the answer.</p> <p>The words in the question and the words or numbers needed to answer the question are not the same.</p> <p>Think and Search different sections or elements of the graphic to answer the question. More than one graphic may need to be consulted.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>On Your Own</u></p> <p>The answer is not in the graphic.</p> <p>Using the information you already know about the topic or based upon your experience, you can answer the question.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOWEVER</p> <p>Reading the graphic will usually expand your knowledge and will help you give a specific or clearer answer to the question.</p>

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.) (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:

- What do you see?
- What would you hear if you were in this picture?
- What would you smell if you were in this picture?
- What could you feel with your hands? With your feet?
- 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



Use Illustrations and Details to Describe Key Ideas: Reading a Map

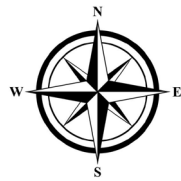
Content Area:	ABE Reading
Domain:	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
Standard:	CCR.RE.ABE.7.1. Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas (e.g., maps, charts, photographs, political cartoons).

Concept:

We live in a highly visual world. The ability to identify key ideas in different types of visuals is an important skill in today's world.

Finding **key ideas** and **details** is important for understanding what we read; but, not just in text created by words. We also need to be able to “see” the different details in a visual text so that we can determine what it is saying. A good place to start is to learn how to “read” a map. We use maps in our daily lives, from figuring out the best way to get somewhere to seeing where a place is in the world. There are lots of different types of maps. Political maps show names of places. Physical maps show mountains, rivers, and lakes. Road maps show us different roads. Economic maps show us where we can get different goods.

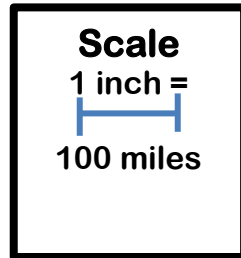
Maps “talk” to us through the different details that they use. A **compass rose**, **map key**, and **scale** provide us with key details that we need to be able to read a map.



A **compass rose** tells us which direction different things are located on a map. The four directions are: North, East, South, and West.

There are more details in maps than just directions. A **map key** includes symbols that are used on the map. Usually a map key is a small box located in the corner of the map. Map keys give us information about the maps we are looking at, whether it is about roads, places to eat, or special landmarks.





Since we can't make a map the same size as the actual area, a map may also have a **scale** to show distance from one place to another.

Example: This scale tells us that 1 inch on the map equals 100 miles in reality on the ground.

If we put all of these details together, we can describe key ideas about the map.

Example: If asked to describe Zoquan Island, I would say that it has one river, one lake, one road, and one range of mountains. I could also determine that the island has a park, lighthouse, and factory. From the different details on the map, I can also identify the direction that each is located.

- The lighthouse is east of the park.
- The mountains are on the north side of the island.
- There is one road on the island.



Using details in text and illustrations is an important skill to better be able to answer questions and describe key details. It's also an important real-world skill for everyone.

Practice:

Directions: Read the following text and map. Answer the questions using details from what you have read.

Reading a Map

Maps help us find places when we travel. They show us how many miles one place is from another place. They show how land looks from above.

Markings on a map stand for real things. Many maps have a tool called a map key. The key tells us what the markings mean. For example, a book may represent a library.

Most maps have a tool called a compass rose. This tool shows a map's directions: north, east, south, and west.

Using a map's tools makes it easier to read a map.



1. What was the text mostly about?
 - A. How difficult it is to read a map
 - B. Tools on maps and how they help people
 - C. Tools that people can use to make maps
 - D. Maps of small towns
 - E.

2. A map key tells us
 - A. How many miles it is from one place to another
 - B. The type of map we are looking at
 - C. The directions are on the map
 - D. What the markings mean
3. Which of the following is true?
 - A. The school is south of the museum.
 - B. The hospital is north of the school.
 - C. The city hall is west of the library.
 - D. The post office is south of the hospital.
4. On the map, 1 inch equals how many miles?
 - A. 1 mile
 - B. 2 miles
 - C. 10 miles
 - D. 100 miles
5. What is the name of the park?
 - A. Apple
 - B. Pine
 - C. Peach
 - D. Madison
6. According to the text, what is the one thing that a compass rose shows?
 - A. How far apart things are
 - B. How to find south on the map
 - C. Where to find the nearest park
 - D. Where the streets are

Answer Key:

1. **B. Tools on maps and how they help people**
2. **D. What the markings mean**
3. **A. The school is south of the museum.**
4. **A. 1 mile**
5. **D. Madison**
6. **B. How to find south on the map.**

Additional Resources:

Display different types of maps in the classroom so that students can identify different details on various kinds of maps.

Maps. Ricardo Bonasia.Tes blendspace. <https://www.tes.com/lessons/fUXgT-AYai5HVw/maps>

Map Skills. National Geographic.
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/map-skills-elementary-students/>

Teaching with Maps. National Education Association.
<http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/teaching-with-maps.html>

Websites

A Periodic Table of Visualization Methods. A great interactive table that focuses on different types of visualization displays. http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html

Daily Infographics. <https://www.dailyinfographic.com/>

International Visual Literacy Association. <https://ivla.org/>

National Archives. Image Analysis Worksheets

- Photo Analysis
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>
- Cartoon Analysis
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon.html>
- Motion Picture Analysis
https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/motion_picture_analysis_worksheet.pdf
- Map Analysis
https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/map_analysis_worksheet.pdf
- Poster Analysis
https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/poster_analysis_worksheet.pdf

Teaching Visual Literacy in the Classroom. Literacy Ideas.
<https://www.literacyideas.com/teaching-visual-texts-in-the-classroom>

The Visual Literacy Guy. A blog from the field.
<https://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/2014/09/09/how-visually-literate-are-you-a-15-question-quiz-to-test-your-skills/>

Visual Literacy. A learning site that focuses on visualization skills in today's world.
<http://www.visual-literacy.org/index.html>

Visual Literacy. International Society for Technology in Education.
<https://id.iste.org/docs/excerpts/MEDLIT-excerpt.pdf>

Visual Thinking. Center for Teaching. Vanderbilt University.
<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/visual-thinking/>

Visual Literacy in a Digital World. McGraw Hill. Featuring a White Paper from Shannon Flaum, Ph.D. <https://medium.com/inspired-ideas-prek-12/visual-literacy-in-a-digital-world-a-guide-for-educators-3204ca802804>

Visual Literacy Library. <https://sites.google.com/a/nau.edu/visual-literacy-library/lesson-unit-plans>

Florida IPDAE. <http://www.floridaipdae.org/>

