

# Developing critical thinking skills through images

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## Sample sets of questions for analyzing images

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## Questions for analyzing images

Source: Faigley, L., George, D., Palchik, A., & Selfe, C. (2004). *Picturing Texts*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company. (pp. 114-115)

1. What is your first response?
2. What is the subject or content?
3. What is the primary purpose? Are there additionally purposes you need to consider?
4. How is the image arranged in the visual space? Can you diagram its overall composition? What effect does this arrangement have on the way you read this image?
5. What strikes you as important, interesting, or emotionally moving in the image? Can you identify elements of the image that could be seen as symbolic?
6. What is the medium and what do you normally expect from images in this medium? (paint, electronic, etc.)
7. What is the genre? Does the image conform to the conventions of the genre or does it break from the expectations?
8. Can you identify the author? If so, what else has he or she done? Is this image like the author's other work or is it different? What accounts for the difference?
9. How do you think others read this image?
10. What are the larger historical, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of the image?
11. Where does the image come from?
12. Is this serious or comic image? How do you know?
13. What does the image remind you of? Have you seen anything like it somewhere else? Where? How is this image similar to those others? How does it differ?
14. Does the image include words or a caption? How are those words used? Do they simply identify the image? Are they part of the image? What do they contribute to the overall message?

## Question-answer-relationship (QAR) (traditionally used with text)

Adapted from: McCloskey, M.L., Orr, J., Stack, L. & Kleckova, G. (2014). *Strategies for Teaching English Language, Literature and Content: A Teacher's Guide*. Educo Press.

The Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy identifies four types of questions that students learn to ask and answer:

1. "Right there" questions (the answer is clearly observable in the image);
2. "Think and Search" questions (the answer requires students to examine the image some more and make connections about what s/he sees);
3. "Author and you" questions (the answer is a combination of information from what the author of the image presents and what the student knows); and
4. "On your Own" questions (the answer comes from the student's background knowledge and experience, in interaction with the ideas in the image).

These questions ask students to think about an image at four different levels, and enhance both comprehension and thinking skills.

### Procedure:

- A. Explain and model the four levels of questions to students: *Right There*, *Think and Search*, *Author and You*, and *On Your Own*.
- B. Prepare a list of questions in the four areas for the students to answer based on a selection from the text.
- C. In small groups of 3-4, have students examine the image and answer the questions. They indicate the QAR category for each question and justify their decisions.
- D. Ask students to examine another image (e.g. one of their own choice) and write their own QAR questions. Each group exchanges their questions with another group, answers them and categorizes them into QAR levels.

Example:



Photo by Gabriela Kleckova

1. Right There: Where are the people?
2. Think and Search: What is the relationship between the people in the picture? (Look at the space between the people.)
3. Author and Me: Why do you think the author took this picture?
4. On my own: What do you think it would be like to ride a Segway in your town?

# Photo analysis worksheet

Source:

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>

## Step 1. Observation

- A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

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- B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

People	Objects	Activities

## Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

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## Step 3. Questions

- A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

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- B. Where could you find answers to them?

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## Looking at images Seeing questions

Questions adapted from: <http://www.incredibleart.org/files/crit.htm>

### Describe it.

- What kinds of things do you see in this image? What else do you see?
- What words would you use to describe this image? What other words might we use?
- How would you describe the lines in this image? The shapes? The colors? What does this image show?
- Look at this image for a moment. What observations can you make about it?
- How would you describe this image to a person who could not see it?
- How would you describe the people in this image? Are they like you or different?
- How would you describe the place depicted in this image?

### Relate it.

- What does this image remind you of?
- What things do you recognize in this image? What things seem new to you?
- How is this image like the one .....? What are some important differences?
- What do these two images have in common?
- How is this image different from what you are familiar with?
- What interests you most about this image?

### Analyze it.

- Which objects seems closer to you? Further away?
- What can you tell about the colors in this image?
- What color is used the most in this image?
- What makes this image look crowded?
- What can you tell me about the person in this image?
- What can you tell me about how this person lives? How did you arrive at that idea?
- What do you think is the most important part of this image?
- How do you think the author of the image made this work?
- What questions would you ask the author of the image about this work, if s/he were here?

**Interpret it.**

- What title would you give to this image? What made you decide on that title?
- What other titles could we give it?
- What do you think is happening in this image? What else could be happening?
- What sounds would this image make (if it could)?
- What do you think is going on in this image? How did you arrive at that idea?
- What do you think this image is about? How did you come up that idea?
- Pretend you are inside this image. What does it feel like?
- Why do you suppose the author made this image? What makes you think that?
- What do you think it would be like to live in this image? What makes you think that?

**Evaluate it.**

- What do you think is good about this image? What is not so good?
- Do you think the person who created the image do a good or bad job? What makes you think so?
- Why do you think other people should see this image?
- What do you think other people would say about this image? Why do you think that?
- What would you do with this image if you owned it?
- What do you think is worth remembering about this image?

# Photographs: a process guide for students

By Dan McDowell

Source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/photo-process>

Questions to consider when looking at photographs as primary sources.

1. Identify the image:
  - a. Who was the photographer?
  - b. Is there a caption? Title? Anything written with the image?
  - c. Where did the image come from?
  - d. What is/are the subject(s) of the picture?
2. Reason for the photograph:
  - a. Why was it taken? For whom?
  - b. Is there a theme being represented? Specific event? What is it?
  - c. What is the photographer trying to convey to the viewer?
3. Components of the image:
  - a. Examine all of the subjects, colors (if a color image), and sections of the image. Is there significance for these elements? What?
  - b. Is the photograph organized into parts? Do the background and foreground have different meanings?
4. Effectiveness of the image:
  - a. Is there a clear message?
  - b. Does the photograph tell a story? Pose new questions?
  - c. Is it useful in making inferences, deductions, or generalizations about the subjects?
5. Items to look for when examining an image:
  - a. Where is the location?
  - b. In a landscape image, what is the terrain like? Rural or urban? Mountainous or flat? Skyscrapers or farmland?
  - c. Who are the people portrayed? What are they doing? What do they look like? What is the relationship between the different people being portrayed?
  - d. Manmade links subjects.
  - e. Architecture.
  - f. Has the image been manipulated?



g. The computer has changed the way you need to look at photographs. Does the image have the credit "photo illustration"? This is an indicator that it has been manipulated.

6. Different types of photographs to consider:

- a. Landscapes
- b. People and landscapes
- c. Portraits of people
- d. People in action
- e. Objects