Geographic Literacy

“An Introduction to Media Literacy: Analyzing Images Through a Historical Lens”

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GRADES 3 - 4

INTRODUCTION
In this lesson, students will sharpen their Media Literacy skills by focusing on one of its aspects—Image Analysis. This lesson focuses this skill by having students analyze images through a historical lens. When a historian analyzes an image, s/he examines the image in order to learn information about the time, place and circumstances of the image and uses the information gained to deepen his/her historical understanding of that time and place. Students as historians need to be able to do the same so that the history they are studying is the result of their own analysis, not just the analysis of a textbook author.

CALIFORNIA HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS
4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California.

4.2 Students describe the social, political, cultural, and economic life and interactions among people of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexican rancho periods.

CALIFORNIA VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS
3.1 Describe how art plays a role in reflecting life (e.g., in photography, quilts, architecture).

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Sponsors

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Complete Background & Introduction

WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

According to The Center for Media Literacy:

Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

The Center for Media Literacy www.medialit.org/reading_room/rr2def.php

As you can see from the above definition, Media Literacy is a critical element in preparing our students for being successful members of modern society. As teachers, we play an important role in introducing immigrant students into American culture, and we want all our students to be informed and critical thinkers. By using Media Literacy as an approach to education, we can prepare our students effectively for the future.

INTRODUCTION

I believe that children learn best by discovering information and making personal connections with the teacher acting as a facilitator. In order for children to learn in this way, certain skills need to be explicitly taught that students can use as tools for learning.

In this lesson, students will sharpen their Media Literacy skills by focusing on one of its aspects—Image Analysis. This lesson focuses this skill by having students analyze images through a historical lens. When a historian analyzes an image, s/he examines the image in order to learn information about the time, place and circumstances of the image and uses the information gained to deepen his/her historical understanding of that time and place. Students as historians need to be able to do the same so that the history they are studying is the result of their own analysis, not just the analysis of a textbook author.

The use of analysis as a means to understanding is woven throughout the standards, thus this lesson can be used with any content. It can also be used at any point during a unit of study. For example, it could be used in the beginning of a unit to assess prior knowledge or at the end of a unit to assess what the students have learned. This lesson can easily be adapted to any grade level and many types of images such as:

- Photographs
- Paintings
- Sculpture
- Film/television
- Websites
- Anything that can be SEEN with the eyes!

This lesson series will take anywhere from 1-2 one-hour periods, depending on students’ prior experience with these skills.
MATERIALS

1. Photocopies of the photograph “Los Angeles-Mount Washington Railway, c. 1910” – 1 per student
2. Overhead transparency of the photograph “Los Angeles-Mount Washington Railway, c. 1910”, or the slide of this image to be projected on the screen from the PowerPoint presentation
3. Legal size copy paper or construction paper – 2 pieces per student
4. Scissors – 1 pair per student, or enough for students to share
6. Glue, glue sticks or tape – enough for students to share
7. Photocopies of the following worksheets
   • “Image Analysis – Objective” – 2 per student
   • “Image Analysis – Interpretive” – 2 per student
   • “Image Analysis – inferential” – 2 per student
8. Overhead transparencies of the three worksheets mentioned above
9. Photocopies of the photograph “Mission San Gabriel Archangel, c. 1900” – 1 per student
10. Overhead transparency of the photograph “Mission San Gabriel Archangel, c. 1900”, or the slide of this image to be projected on the screen from the PowerPoint presentation.

PREPARATION

1. Make all photocopies – staple the worksheets into two packets so that each packet has one of each worksheet.
2. Make overhead transparencies of images or set up the LCD projector so you can show the images from the PowerPoint presentation.
3. Make overhead transparencies of the worksheets.
4. Create a model for the foldable © that the students will be creating (see example in the appendix or in the PowerPoint presentation).
5. Read the “Teacher Background Information” in the Appendix so that you know the origin of the photographs used in this lesson.
ACTIVITY

1. Pass out one Image Analysis worksheet packet per student, along with a piece of legal paper or construction paper and a photocopy of the picture “Los Angeles-Mount Washington Railway, c. 1910” to the students. Do not tell students any information about the picture – they will need to discover it on their own.

2. Have students take the legal paper and fold in half (“hamburger fold”), then have them fold the sides in to the middle so the paper looks like 2 shutters covering a window. Then have students cut each shutter in half to create 4 flaps – you can show them your model or the example on the PowerPoint presentation.

3. Have students glue the image inside the foldable so that when each flap is lifted, it reveals only one quadrant of the image at a time. They should label the flaps Quadrant 1, Quadrant 2, etc. starting with the upper left hand flap – see the worksheet “Image Analysis – objective” for the order of the quadrants.

4. Take the students through the worksheet entitled “Image Analysis – Objective”. This worksheet helps students focus on what they actually see in the picture. Do the worksheet with them on the overhead as a model but solicit student responses and allow them to work independently or with a partner as they examine the image.

5. Take the students through the next two worksheets “Image Analysis – Interpretive” and “Image Analysis – Inferential” in the same way.

6. When all worksheets have been completed, share the “Teacher Background Information” about each picture with the students and discuss how their analysis matches the information, expands on the information, and/or does not match the information.

7. Give students the photograph of “Mission San Gabriel Archangel, c. 1900” and a new worksheet packet, and have them go through the same process outlined above independently or with a partner. Share the “Teacher Background Information” with them when all students are done.
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ASSESSMENT

While students will be improving on their use of these skills throughout the year, the packets they complete individually can be graded. It would be best to create a portfolio of these images and packets over the course of at least a month, and then look at student progress. The goal is to determine how effectively the students are using the skills to get information.

EXTENSIONS

The extension opportunities are limited only by your imagination!

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS:

Have students go to the sites where the photographs were originally taken and take a picture of the same site today. Have them analyze their pictures, then compare and contrast the past and present day images.

Have students bring in their own “mystery images”. They can be images they’ve taken themselves or that they’ve found on the Internet or in a book. The student who brings in the “mystery image” needs to know as much background information as possible about the image. Then, the class can analyze the “mystery image” using the same procedure outlined in the lesson.

Have students analyze an image using only one of the worksheets. This gives students an opportunity to examine an image from a more focused perspective.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

For general information about Media Literacy, use The Center for Media Literacy website www.medialit.org/

Worksheets are based on information taken from the National Archives and Records website PHOTO ANALYSIS WORKSHEET www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf


“Mission San Gabriel Archangel, c. 1900” photograph from the Automobile Club of Southern California Archives, reproduced in Cultivating Pasadena: From Roses to Redevelopment Exhibition Catalog, pg. 42.
APPENDIX

FOLDABLE © EXAMPLE

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Quoted from: Cultivating Pasadena: From Roses to Redevelopment Exhibition Catalog

For the image “Los Angeles-Mount Washington Railway, c. 1910”
The Mount Washington Railway was opened in 1909 by a land syndicate intent on developing the hills north of Los Angeles. The railway’s operation copied the famous Angels Flight (1901) in downtown Los Angeles. It featured two cars in simultaneous operation, one going up and one going down, so that they balanced each other. They were powered by a cable running underground in a concrete trough that was covered with planks. The railway succeeded in establishing a fashionable reputation for Mt. Washington before it succumbed to chronic financial deficits after a decade of operation.

For the image “Mission San Gabriel Archangel, c. 1900”
The fourth of the missions built in upper California was founded in 1771 on the bank of the San Gabriel River. Five years later, to avoid the river’s periodic floods, the mission moved to a new site in what is now the city of San Gabriel. The sanctuary and many of the outbuildings that were erected or begun in the 1770s still remain on the site. At the time of this photograph, at the turn of the 20th century, the mission no longer occupied a central role in local society.
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“Los Angeles-Mount Washington Railway, c. 1910” photograph from the Automobile Club of Southern California Archives, reproduced in Cultivating Pasadena: From Roses to Redevelopment Exhibition Catalog, pg 58
IMAGES ANALYSIS
Objective Analysis – What do you see?

Write 1-2 sentences describing your first impression of the image:

Describe who or what is the subject of this image - write only on the LEFT side of the line for now:

Describe the setting (where and, if possible, when the image was captured) - write only on the LEFT side of the line for now:

Close the flaps on your image so that only 1 quadrant at a time is visible. Then, list the details you see in each quadrant of the image.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quadrant 1</th>
<th>Quadrant 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quadrant 3</th>
<th>Quadrant 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now that you’ve looked more closely at the image, go back to the subject and setting sections and revise what you wrote by adding more details on the right side of the line.

Tell a story about this image. Tell who you see, what you see, where this is, when it might be. It’s okay to make some guesses right now, as long as you have evidence from the image to support your guess.