

Visual Thinking



Visual literacy is about analyzing and creating messages. This lesson encourages students to critically view historical photographs of life in Kodiak in the past and to practice interpreting what they see.

Grade Level: Grades 4-12

Alaska Standards Addressed (see page 2)

Timeframe: 1 hour

Materials:

- *Interpreting Historic Photographs* worksheets
- Digitized & print versions of photos from Baranov Museum:
 - P467-171 Girls in parade with carriage
 - P70-167-17-26 New Year's Masquerade
 - P-503-27 (Thwaites) Dock on Channel
 - P-731-1 (Wilken) Three boys & man with gas masks
 - P-368-5-36 Whale Flensing
 - P356-14 Ciqlluaq-Old Harbor
 - P-357-28 Four boys at Russian Dock
- Background information on various photos
- Digital projector & screen or flat surface
- Highlighter

Procedure:

1. Ask students if they've heard the term "a picture is worth 1,000 words". Explain how pictures can tell detailed stories if we take the time to look closely.
2. Quickly display with digital projector the eight photographs listed above (5 seconds). Ask what they notice generally about these images (black & white, show people in old days, etc.) Accept all quick interpretations.
3. Explain to the students that visual literacy is the ability to interpret what is seen in images, and upon close inspection, their interpretations may change and develop.

4. Students will work in pairs to interpret three (3) photographs and provide evidence for their interpretations of the past. They will spend at least five minutes studying each photograph, then answer three-four questions on each sheet. Using a highlighter, they will draw on the photograph to indicate evidence for their ideas and interpretations.
5. Re-show each image, allowing students to report on their answers to the worksheets' questions and give their highlighted evidence or clues that caused their interpretation.
6. When all have been shown and interpretations received, re-show each image again, explaining what information has been documented about each one, providing additional context for each picture.
7. Discuss students' perceptions, confirmation of their ideas and any questions that arise. Why would one student have a different interpretation from another? Explain they have engaged in the work of a historian or archivist whose job it is to interpret the past.

Assessment:

1. Success will be determined by:
 - a. students' analyses of the photographs are completed with specific examples and conclusions drawn from interpretation;
 - b. discussion confirms or justifies students' interpretation;
 - c. a variety of ideas and interpretations are exchanged and discussed. Students learn that individuals have varied interpretations of visual media.



Alaska Standards Addressed:

Cultural Standards

D.4. [They] gather oral and written history information from the local community and provide an appropriate interpretation of its cultural meaning and significance.

History Standards

C. A students use historical data from a variety of primary resources, including...photos...
3. apply thinking skills, including classifying, interpreting, analyzing, summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating, to understand the historical record; and
4. use historical perspective to solve problems, make decisions, and understand other traditions.

McRel Language Arts Viewing standards*:

9: [Students] use viewing skills and strategies to interpret visual media

Levels III & IV: 1). Understands a variety of messages conveyed by visual media;
2) Use a variety of criteria to evaluate and form viewpoints of visual media;
7) Understand reasons for varied interpretations of visual media

*found online:

<http://www.iste.org/docs/excerpts/MEDLIT-excerpt.pdf>

