

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: How to Analyze a Historic Photograph

Grade Levels— 6-8

Standards—

Pennsylvania Academic Standards
for History:

8.1.6B, 8.1.9B

Pennsylvania Academic Standards
for Reading, Writing, Speaking,
and Listening:

1.1.8G, 1.2.8B, 1.6.8A, 1.6.8C,
1.6.8D, 1.6.8F



Materials Needed—

- transparency of [Hershey Street](#) scene
(Hershey street scene from early 1920's; Chocolate Avenue; looking east from Hershey Inn; Men's Club; Fire House; Cafe; Chocolate factory; several pedestrians and cars; trolleys [source: Hershey Archives])
- [Photograph Analysis Guide](#)
- 8 ½" x 11" paper, cut into 4 equal parts

Teacher Background—

As students visit *The Hershey Story* they will encounter numerous historic photographs. This lesson is intended to be used prior to the visit to teach students how to analyze historic photographs in order to gain information they normally would miss if they just looked at the photograph. This lesson is intended to be used with the accompanying post-visit lesson "Hershey's Story is in the Picture," where students will get to formally analyze a historic photograph from Hershey, Pennsylvania to gain information that will be used to write their own "story" of what was happening in the photograph.

Essential Question—

How can you gain information from a photograph?
(Post this question in a visible location in your classroom)

Activating Strategies—

Step 1—As students enter the classroom, have a transparency of the Hershey Street scene photo projected for students to see. Hand out the Photograph Analysis Guide to students.

Step 2—Give students 2 minutes to look at the photo. Tell them to write down details of what they see and then determine what the photo is depicting in the top portion of the guide.

Step 3—Have students share their thoughts with the class.

Step 4—Explain to students that they can gain even more information from the photo if they know what to look for and how to look for it. Tell the students that they will be using the Photograph Analysis Guide to help them discover information in the photo that they may have missed. They will be able to use this new knowledge of how to look at photographs when they visit *The Hershey Story*.

Teaching Strategies—

Step 1—Place 3 of the pieces of paper over the transparency to uncover only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the photograph. Model for students how to find details by identifying types of people, objects, and activities from the portion of the photograph. Have students write what you find in the appropriate section of their Photograph Analysis Guide.

Step 2—Ask the class if it is easier to find details when you only focus on a small portion of the photo. Discuss why that's the case.

Step 3—Explain to the class that it is important to ask questions when analyzing a photograph, because the answers to the question are the important details. Model for the students a couple of questions that are raised by focusing on that portion of the photo. Have the students write the questions and guesses onto the appropriate section of their Photograph Analysis Guide.

Step 4—Now uncover another quadrant of the photo. Guide the students by asking them to find people, object, and activity details. Have the students come up with some questions and possible answers.

Step 5—Repeat the process with the remaining two quadrants, this time allow the students to work independently to fill out their Photograph Analysis Guide.

Step 6—Have students share with the class the details, questions, and possible answers they identified.

Step 7—*Debriefing Questions*—Ask students what they learned from the photo by going through the steps on the Photograph Analysis Guide. Where would they find the answers to their questions? What story does the photo tell?

Summarizing Strategies—

1. Photograph Analysis Guide
2. Debriefing Questions

Photograph Analysis Guide

Step 1 —Observe entire photograph for 1-2 minutes. What is the photograph showing?	
Step 2 —Observe only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the photograph at a time. Identify the following:	
<div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">Upper Left</div> People: Objects: Activities: Questions: Possible Answers:	<div style="text-align: left; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">Upper Right</div> People: Objects: Activities: Questions: Possible Answers:
<div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">Lower Left</div> People: Objects: Activities: Questions: Possible Answers:	<div style="text-align: left; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">Lower Right</div> People: Objects: Activities: Questions: Possible Answers:
Step 3 —Where would you go to find the answers to the questions?	

Step 4—What story does the photograph tell? (<i>Answer on another sheet of paper</i>)