


# Analyzing Images

**Grade:** K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12, UNIV

**Type:** Read Actively / Develop Language (MLL)

 **20-30** MINUTES

**When:**

Before, during, and after reading

**Materials:**

Lined paper, preselected image, whiteboard or display, writing utensils



## Description



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The Analyzing Images strategy encourages students to closely examine images in order to understand their historical or scientific context while activating students' prior knowledge of the topic. In addition, this strategy develops students' critical thinking, observation, and interpretive skills. The strategy can be used prior to reading to build students' background knowledge about the topic, during reading to connect images to the text, or after reading to support deeper analysis and connections.



# Procedure

- ① Display an image for students to reference.
- ② Invite students to study the picture. Ask them to consider the author's message and how the ideas are communicated.
- ③ Consider using or displaying one or more of the following prompting questions to fuel student thinking and encourage analysis, modifying the questions as appropriate:
  - What do you see?
  - Who or what does the image seem to be about?
  - What is the focus or most important part of the image?
  - How would you summarize the information in the image?
  - What mood or emotions does the artist want the viewer to feel?
  - Who is the intended audience?
  - Whose perspective/viewpoint is not shown in the image?
  - Do you agree or disagree with the author's perspective? Why or why not?
- ④ Invite students to write words, phrases, or a short response describing what they see in the image and why they believe the artist created the image.

- ⑤ Facilitate a discussion by asking students to share their analysis of the image.



## Differentiation

**Supporting Students with Low Vision:** In addition to displaying the image, provide students with their own enlarged copy of a high-resolution version of the image. In images where the color is not an integral part of the work's meaning, increase the contrast on your display to more clearly delineate subjects/objects in the image.

**Sentence Stems:** To support students with language acquisition, provide sentence frames to respond to each of the prompting questions:

- The image seems to be about....
- The focus of the image is....
- I am noticing the....
- I feel...looking at this image.

**Artist Perspective:** After students engage in their initial analysis of the image, provide them with pertinent background information, highlighting specific details about the author's background and perspective that likely influenced the artwork. Ask students to then revisit the image with this new information, considering how the author's background, experiences, and perspective is shown. This encourages students to consider perspective and bias and to analyze historical documents through that lens.

# Multilingual Learning Support

**Beginning Proficiency:** Scaffold image analysis by first providing a word bank of key descriptive terms (such as colors, shapes, and objects) with pictures, native language translations, and simple English labels. Guide students through the analysis questions using simplified versions paired with visual symbols (e.g., a magnifying glass for "What do you see?" or a heart for "How does it make you feel?"). Allow students to describe what they see in their native language, and then help them transfer these ideas into simple English phrases using sentence frames like "I see..." or "The picture shows..." This builds students' foundational vocabulary while allowing them to express detailed observations.

**Intermediate Proficiency:** Support deeper image analysis by creating a bilingual "Visual Analysis Guide" that organizes key terms into categories (e.g., foreground/background, mood/emotions, main idea/details) with examples in both languages. Provide structured discussion frames that help students move from basic description to interpretation: "In the foreground, I notice..., which suggests..." or "The artist uses... to show..." During partner discussions, encourage students to plan their responses in their preferred language, and then practice expressing their analysis in English using the academic terms from the guide. This bridges students' conversational and academic language while developing their analytical thinking skills.

**Advanced Proficiency:** Promote sophisticated image analysis skills by teaching students a three-step approach: describing what they see using precise vocabulary (e.g., *composition*, *perspective*, *technique*), interpreting the meaning using evidence (e.g., "The artist's use of... suggests..."), and, finally, evaluating the effectiveness (e.g., "This image effectively conveys...because..."). For younger students, focus on clear descriptions with basic analytical terms. For older students, introduce more complex concepts like symbolism, bias, and cultural context. During discussions, encourage students to build on each other's observations using connecting phrases like "Building on...s point

about..." or "While I agree about..., I also notice...." This develops students' advanced academic language while deepening their critical analysis skills.

## Variations

**Collaborative Analysis:** Place students in small groups and provide them with an image from the lesson. Assign each student one of the prompting questions and invite them to independently analyze the image to respond to their prompt. Encourage students to discuss the image with their small group, explaining their response. This allows students to think deeply about one facet of the image before building a greater understanding as a group.