



Activity 1

Investigating our Past Through Photographs

Overview: In this activity students will analyze historic images that characterize frontier life for the early settlers of the Grand Valley.

Outcome

Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical photographs

Standards

2nd – History - Describe the history, interaction, and contribution of the various peoples and cultures that have lived in or migrated to neighborhoods and communities

2nd – Geography - Identify examples of physical features that affect human activity

Materials

Historic photographs, observation tools, historical photograph powerpoint presentation, magnifying glasses

Procedure

Teacher explains that the class is going to use photographs to “investigate” what life was like in the Grand Valley when it was a frontier town. Teacher then models how to examine the historic photographs using the overhead/slide of a historic photograph of school children from Palisade in a one room school house. Teacher asks the class to study the photograph and together they complete a simple inquiry process using the following key questions:

- Are there any buildings in the photograph?
- Are there people in the photograph?
- Can you see the outdoors - If so, what do you notice about the landscape?
- What else do you see in the photograph?
- What does this scene tell us about the early settlement of the Grand Valley?
- What question do you have about Frontier Grand Valley?

Teacher records the answers as a whole class. Reveal the story of the image to whole class.

Students form small groups of four or five. Each group receives a photograph. Students can use small magnifying glasses to get a closer look. Students record their observations and evidence on their worksheets. Each group shares their observations and conclusions with the larger class. Students ask questions of each other.

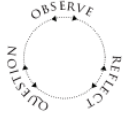
Teacher poses the question:

How do historic sites and artifacts tell us what was valuable to people of the past?

Students suggest ways that these photographs and artifacts help them understand what people of Western Colorado valued.

The following tool is a graphic organizer for guiding student inquiry while analyzing primary sources. The tool is available at the Library of Congress website:

TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

OBSERVE

Ask students to identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

Describe what you see. · What do you notice first? · What people and objects are shown? · How are they arranged? · What is the physical setting? · What, if any, words do you see? · What other details can you see?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Why do you think this image was made? · What's happening in the image? · When do you think it was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this image? · What tools were used to create this? · What can you learn from examining this image? · If someone made this today, what would be different? · What would be the same?

QUESTION

Invite students to ask questions that lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...
who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning
Write a caption for the image.

Intermediate
Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.

Advanced
Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed explanations of history based on images they study.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS | loc.gov/teachers

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf