

## Teacher Information: Photo Detective

*This activity was created for grades 2-5 but may be adapted for other age groups or abilities.*

This activity is designed to foster *art appreciation* and develop *looking* and *interpretation* skills. It is intended for use in conjunction with any of the Museums by Mail photography exhibits. Instead, you may use quality photographic reproductions. You will need at least one photograph for every four students plus several additional photos for the group discussion. When using reproductions, it is suggested that you choose various types of photographs for this activity (still life, landscape, portrait, documentary, black and white, color, etc.).

**Materials needed:** pencils, erasers, 1/2 x 12" strips of paper (all the same color), photocopies of the three-paged activity (one per each group of four students).

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## Introduction

Explain to the class that they will be learning how to become photo detectives. By looking closely with guiding questions they will be able to ascertain certain details. If this activity precedes a visit to a museum or gallery, you may want to explain that labels often accompany artwork and while some information can be found there, most can not. You may wish to download *How to Read an Exhibit Label* to augment the discussion. **Maine Learning Results achievements are included.**

## Group Discussion

As a class look at several photographs from the Museums by Mail exhibit or from another source. Discuss the different kinds of photography (portrait, landscape, etc.) and ask students to point to examples. Now choose a photo to show and discuss. It is a good idea to ask students to look without speaking or raising hands. They are often eager to offer opinions before really looking closely. It is important that they examine with their eyes and answer when prompted by you. Depending on the chosen picture you could ask some of the following questions:

- Where was this photo was taken (country, state, town)?
- What season is it?
- In what year/time period was this photo taken?
- Who do you think the person/people is/are?
- What does this person do for work?
- Why did the photographer take this picture?
- What time of day is it?

It is important that you have students defend their statements. For example, if a child states that it looks like early spring ask them why. After looking at and discussing 3-4 photos have students listen carefully while you explain the activity.

## Activity

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 and have each group sit together. Place one photograph face-down on the table for each group. Each group should have only *one* person write on the activity sheets. It is not important for the students to use full sentences, punctuation, or perfect spelling. Each step takes about 3-5 minutes and you should review the directions for each step as you go.

**Step One:** When ready ask students to turn photo over and time them for 10-15 seconds. They should look carefully during that time and not talk. Once time is up have them turn the photos face down. Now they must discuss and write down everything they can remember. It is recommended that you warn students when they have about a minute left to write their recollections. Ask them to put pencils down when that time is up.

**Step Two:** Hand out two strips of paper to each group and instruct them to place them over the photo to help them visualize four quadrants. Each group should write down *everything* they see in the appropriate box.

**Step Three:** Explain that this is the most important part of the “investigation.” Now that students have used their memory and looking skills they should be able to make some educated guesses about the photograph. Give them the most time for this step. If students discover information from a label (if there is one) that is fine...it’s part of the investigative process, but do not *tell* them to look at the label.

**Step Four:** Tell students that even with the most careful looking there will inevitably be unanswered questions. Have them write at least three questions about their photo and list four ways they might find the answers to those questions. (Possible ways: computer research, library, ask the photographer, ask someone in the photo, etc.)

**Step Five:** Talk about an artist’s point of view, literally and figuratively. Discuss artistic choices—composition, color, lighting, format, etc. Have the students imagine that they are the photographer. What was the artist trying to say by taking this particular picture? Have them write at least two answers.

**Step Six:** This can be done as a class discussion later or by individual groups during the activity period. Have students reimagine the photo by writing a description of what they’d do differently or drawing a little sketch. If discussed as a class, just have them express their ideas about how to change, improve, or alter the photo.

## Wrap-up and Discussion

Gather the class back together and have the students sit on the floor in a semi-circle. Call up each group individually to do a little presentation on their findings. If time is limited direct answers by asking them to discuss only certain steps. Change those steps for each group so in the end each step was recalled by at least one group. For example, have group one discuss steps 2, 4, & 5 but have group two discuss steps 1, 2, & 3. Again, it is important for students to defend their ideas. Children will tend to apply a concept to an image because it reminds them of something. Encourage them to use their eyes and make educated guesses and to ignore preconceived notions. For example, when students look at photographs with skyscrapers their minds automatically go to New York or Boston, or another city they are familiar with. Explain that while they can draw comparisons, they have to look for more evidence than simply that the buildings are tall to say with any certainty in which city the photo was taken.

## Follow-up

Present *Photo Detective Badges* to each student. Download UMMA’s *Badge Template* or create your own. Instead you may wish to provide students with a cut-out template and let them decorate it however they like, perhaps with markers, colored pencils, foil, tissue paper, string, glitter glue, etc. They could also make little 4x5” folders for their badge so they can safely put it in their pocket and bring it out whenever there is an art investigation emergency!

## Related Material

Available for download at [www.umma.umaine.edu](http://www.umma.umaine.edu)

*Glossary of Photography Terms*

*Badge Template*

*How to Read an Exhibit Label*

## Photo Detective

### Maine Learning Results: English Language Arts Standards

**A. Reading:** Students read to comprehend, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and appreciate literary and expository texts by using a variety of strategies. They connect essential ideas, evaluate arguments, and analyze the various perspectives and ideas presented in a variety of literary and expository texts.

#### **A3 Informational Texts**

##### PreK-2

Students read informational texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, for different purposes.

- a. Ask and answer relevant questions.
- b. Restate facts from the text.
- c. Follow one-step and two-step written instructions.

##### 3

Students read and summarize informational texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, for different purposes.

- e. Follow simple written instructions.
- f. Identify the main reason or purpose for a particular section of text to aid comprehension.

##### 4

Students read, paraphrase, and summarize informational texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, for different purposes.

- e. Follow multi-step written instructions with four or more steps.
- f. Identify the main purpose of a text, particular paragraphs, or a section of the text to aid comprehension.

##### 5

Students read, paraphrase, and summarize informational texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, for different purposes.

- e. Follow multiple-step instructions which may be related to a content area text.
- f. Identify the main purpose of a text, particular paragraphs, or sections of the text to aid comprehension.

**B. WRITING:** Students write to express their ideas and emotions, to describe their experiences, to communicate information, and to present or analyze an argument.

#### **B3 Argument/Analysis**

##### Pre-K-2

Students write to inform an audience on a specific topic.

- a. Write brief descriptions of objects, people, places, or events.
- b. Record and share, in writing, information that has been gathered.

##### 3-5

Students write to identify and explain a position to an identified audience.

- a. Summarize information from reading, listening, or viewing.
- b. Write about a central question or idea by using relevant supporting facts and details.

## **B4 Persuasive**

### Pre-K-2

Students write to explain likes and dislikes.

- a. Support opinions with examples.

### 3-5

Students write to persuade a targeted audience.

- a. Establish a clear position on a topic and support the position with relevant evidence.

**C. Research:** Students engage in inquiry by developing research questions, accessing and verifying a variety of sources, communicating findings, and applying the conventions of documentation. Students present findings orally, in writing, or using mixed media.

## **C1 Research**

### Pre-K-2

Students answer research questions by gathering information from print and non-print sources.

- b. Collect information for a specific purpose.
- c. Organize findings.
- d. Share information gathered using oral and visual examples.

### 3-5

Students create, identify, and answer research questions by gathering information from print and non-print sources and documenting sources and communicating findings.

- a. Identify key words and concepts related to research questions, making adjustments when appropriate.
- c. Collect, evaluate, and organize information for a specific purpose.
- d. Communicate findings from a variety of print and non-print sources.

**E. Listening and Speaking:** Students listen to comprehend and speak to communicate effectively.

## **E1 Listening**

### Pre-K-2

Students use early active listening skills.

- a. Ask relevant questions at appropriate times.
- b. Converse without interrupting.
- c. Follow one-step and two-step oral instructions.

### 3-5

Students apply active listening skills.

- a. Ask clarifying questions.
- b. Attend and respond appropriately to classmates and adults.
- c. Follow multi-step oral instructions.

## **E2 Speaking**

### Pre-K-2

Students use speaking skills to communicate.

- a. Make clear requests at appropriate times.
- b. Make simple presentations using eye contact.
- c. Use voice level appropriate to the situation.
- d. Share stories and information and support opinions using oral and visual examples.

3-5

Students use active speaking skills to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts.

- a. Explain ideas clearly and respond to questions with appropriate information.
- b. Speak using eye contact, clear enunciation, clear gestures for emphasis, and appropriate volume and rate.
- c. Share information summarized from reading, listening, or viewing and form a position on a topic, supporting the position with a variety of print and non-print sources.

## **Maine Learning Results: Career and Education Development Standards**

**A. Learning about Self-Knowledge and Interpersonal Relationships:** Students identify, demonstrate, analyze, and evaluate self-knowledge related to interests, skills, work, and school; positive personal traits, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, habits of mind, and experiences that lead to success in school, work, and community; their ability to build and maintain a positive self-concept; and their ability to develop and recognize the positive interpersonal skills that effectively influence work and relationships with others.

### **A3 Interpersonal Skills**

Pre-K-2

Students identify social skills that influence interpersonal relationships in positive ways.

- a. getting along with others
- b. respecting differences
- c. working as a member of a team
- d. managing conflict
- e. accepting/giving/using constructive feedback
- f. accepting responsibility for personal behavior
- g. demonstrating ethical behavior
- h. following established rules/etiquette for observing/listening
- i. demonstrating safe behavior

3-5

Students identify decisions and demonstrate behaviors that reflect positive interpersonal skills and lead to success in school or community.

- a. getting along with others.
- b. respecting diversity.
- c. working as a member of a team.
- d. managing conflict.
- e. accepting/giving/using constructive feedback.
- f. accepting responsibility for personal behavior.
- g. demonstrating ethical behavior.
- h. following established rules/etiquette for observing/listening.
- i. demonstrating safe behavior.

## **Maine Learning Results: Visual Arts Standards**

**A. Disciplinary Literacy - Visual Arts:** Students show literacy in the art discipline by understanding and demonstrating concepts, skills, terminology, and processes.

### **A1 Artist's Purpose**

Pre-K-2

Students recognize a variety of purposes for making art, including telling a story, communicating emotion, or beautifying functional objects.

### 3-5

Students explain purposes for making art in different times and places, and the relationship to cultural traditions, personal expression, and communication of beliefs.

**D. Aesthetics and Criticism:** Students describe analyze, interpret, and evaluate art (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts).

#### **D1 Aesthetics and Criticism**

##### Pre-K-2

Students observe, listen to, describe and ask questions about art forms.

- a. Describe the art form by applying grade span appropriate arts concepts, terminology, skills, and processes as referenced in Standard A: Disciplinary Literacy.
- b. Ask questions about the art form to further understand how the artist created/performed the work of art.
- c. Recognize a variety of purposes for making/performing art works, including telling a story and communicating emotions and ideas.

##### 3-5

Students describe and compare art forms.

- a. Describe and compare art forms by applying grade span appropriate arts concepts, terminology, skills, and processes as referenced in Standard A: Disciplinary Literacy.
- b. Ask questions about an art form to further understand the concepts, skills, and processes used to create/perform the work of art.
- c. Explain purposes for making art in different times and places, including cultural traditions, personal expression, and communication of beliefs.

**E. Visual and Performing Arts Connections:** Students understand the relationship among the arts, history and world culture; and they make connections among the arts and to other disciplines, to goal-setting, and to interpersonal interaction.

#### **E1 The Arts and History and World Cultures**

##### Pre-K-2

Students identify family or community symbols and celebrations in the visual/performing arts from different world cultures.

##### 3-5

Students explain that the visual/performing arts help people understand history and/or world cultures.

#### **E3 Goal-Setting**

##### Pre-K-2

Students identify choices that lead to success in the arts.

##### 3-5

Students identify and demonstrate choices that will lead to success in the arts including time management, interpersonal interactions, skill development, and goal-setting.

## **E5 Interpersonal Skills**

### Pre-K-2

Students identify positive interpersonal skills that impact the quality of their art and participation in the arts.

- a. Getting along with others.
- b. Respecting differences.
- c. Working as a team/ensemble.
- d. Managing conflict.
- e. Accepting/giving/using constructive feedback.
- f. Accepting responsibility for personal behavior.
- g. Demonstrating ethical behavior.
- h. Following established rules/etiquette for observing/listening to art.
- i. Demonstrating safe behavior.

### 3-5

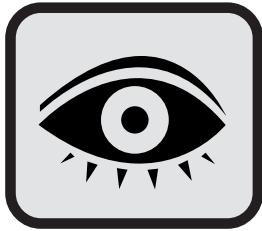
Students identify and demonstrate the positive interpersonal skills necessary to get along with others and participate in the arts.

- a. Getting along with others.
- b. Respecting differences.
- c. Working as a team/ensemble.
- d. Managing conflict.
- e. Accepting/giving/using constructive feedback.
- f. Accepting responsibility for personal behavior.
- g. Demonstrating ethical behavior.
- h. Following established rules/etiquette for observing/listening to art.
- i. Demonstrating safe behavior.

Follow these six steps to become a photo detective!

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Step 1



Examine the photograph for 10 seconds then turn it over so you can't see it. Using your memory, how would you **describe** the photograph to someone who hasn't seen it.

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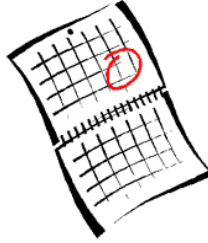
Step 2



Now turn the photo face-up so you can see it. Imagine that the photograph is divided into four (4) sections. Study each section individually. In each box below write down any **details** (such as people, objects, activities) that you notice.




Step 3



What other **information** (such as time period, location, season, or reason that the photo was taken) can you gather from the photograph?

Step 4

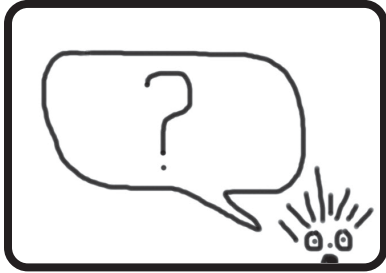


What **questions** do you have about the photograph? Name four ways you might find the answers to those questions.

Questions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Step 5



What do you think the photographer was trying to “say” by taking this picture?

Step 6



If you were to take this picture what would you do differently? Sketch **your idea** here: