

Britannica

WHITE PAPER SERIES

**BUILDING INFORMATIONAL
TEXT COMPREHENSION
THROUGH VISUAL
LITERACY:**

ACTIVITIES FOR USING
ONLINE MEDIA



knowledgeable

OVERVIEW



The Common Core standards highlight the importance of working with students to develop visual literacy skills; e.g., the ability to interpret and make meaning from information presented by images or other graphical elements. The anchor standards state explicitly that students will:

- Integrate and evaluate content ... visually and quantitatively, as well as in words (Reading: 7)
- Make strategic use of ... visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations (Speaking and Listening: 5)

Standards at various grade levels also emphasize the value of visual elements in constructing meaning from text (see sidebar on page 3).

Images, maps, insets, timelines, diagrams, captions, and other graphical items are typically included throughout informational texts to help students gain full access to the information presented. These elements can help both struggling readers and more adept students understand the meaning behind what they are reading in context. In addition, an analysis of 276 science and social studies textbooks, leveled readers, and trade books for primary grade students indicated that 60% of the graphics in these texts provided information not included in the written content.¹ These visual elements extend the text and may be the only source of the

information they convey. Yet, students do not always analyze the graphics or understand how to gain information from them.²

As books and other media offer more and more visual insights into our world, students who understand how to decode and make meaning from images and graphical elements are likely to spring far ahead in terms of their overall literacy development compared with students who are not yet as proficient. This reinforces the importance of providing instruction and offering practice opportunities in visual skill development that will allow students to construct meaning from images presented alone or in context.

A basic way to teach students to think strategically about information in illustrations and images is to ask them to examine a graphic, describe their observations, listen to others' ideas, and collaboratively build understanding.³ This compels students to look at the entire image, try to figure out the message or information that it is meant to convey, and dig deeper to ground their responses in evidence.

The following activities suggest additional ways to engage students in visual literacy skill development at various grade levels. These activities are aligned to the Common Core ELA Standards and use *Britannica ImageQuest™* as an online source for the images used. Although the activities

¹ Fingeret, L. *Graphics in Children's Informational Texts: A Content Analysis*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation (2012). Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.

² Duke, N.K., Roberts, K.L., and Norman, R.R. *Young Children's Understanding of Specific Graphical Devices in Informational Text*. Poster presentation (2011). International Reading Association Annual Meeting, Orlando, FL.

³ Housen, A., and Yenawine, P. "Basic VTS at a Glance." (n.d.). www.vtshome.org/research/articles-other-readings.

OVERVIEW (cont'd.)



can be made easier or more complex to fit any grade level, and any source of images can be used for these activities, *ImageQuest* provides access to close to 3 million rights-cleared images from more than 45 of the best collections in the world. Teachers can quickly find appropriate images for lesson plans and classroom activities while students can turn to the site to get the images they expect from their search results. Each photograph or illustration comes with citations and complete metadata, including the source, the copyright holder, a caption, and keywords.

A 2-week trial is available for pre-subscription evaluation.

info.eb.com/quest

EXAMPLES OF COMMON CORE STANDARDS RELATED TO VISUAL LITERACY:



RIT.K.3 “With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.”

RIT.1.6 “Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.”

RIT.3.7 “Use information gained from illustration (e.g., maps, photograph) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text.”

RIT.4.7 “Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and explain how that information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.”

W.5.2 “Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly...include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.”

Source: Common Core State Standards. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy.

BUILDING INFORMATIONAL TEXT COMPREHENSION THROUGH VISUAL LITERACY:

ACTIVITIES FOR USING ONLINE MEDIA

OBJECTIVES



Students Will:

1. With support from the teacher, the student will use digital tools to view images (*Britannica ImageQuest*).
2. Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults.
3. Use information gained from images, respond to questions and suggestions, and participate in a group writing activity.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

GRADE LEVEL KINDERGARTEN

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7

With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.5

With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.6

With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

DESCRIPTION

Students will view an image from *Britannica ImageQuest* and, with help from the teacher, tell a story based on the picture.

Use a keyword search such as “family” or “children’s story.” Select 4–5 images that “tell a story” or show a unique situation that will inspire a story. Save these images in the *ImageQuest* “Lightbox” (digital folder of saved images). Create a “slide show” by clicking on the first image to enlarge it. Next, click the arrow within the image to advance to the next illustration. You can also download images and create a “slide show” using PowerPoint or other presentation software.

1. Introduce *Britannica ImageQuest* by discussing the importance of photographs and illustrations in stories. Model a simple keyword search (e.g., “toy” or “puppy”).
2. Introduce the activity by modeling a “think-aloud” strategy. Example: Using an image of a boy and his mother at the grocery store, you might say, “I’m going to make up a story to go along with this picture. Let’s see ... they’re shopping in a grocery store and filling their cart. Now I’m going to tell a story about the picture.”
3. Using your slide show, present the first image and ask students questions that will activate prior knowledge and express ideas and feelings about the image (e.g., “What do you think is happening here? Why is the girl running?”).
4. Ask students to share ideas for a story based on the pictures. As students are sharing, write the short story on chart paper (or other format). Provide verbal support as needed with prompts, questions, and encouragement.
5. When complete, read the class-created story aloud to the students using the selected format.

OBJECTIVES



Students Will:

1. Use the search tools (keyword search) in *Britannica ImageQuest* to locate images of content-specific words and note the “caption” or name of the image.
2. Save the image and create a visual glossary/dictionary of the word and image, including the name of the object and its definition.

CREATE A VISUAL GLOSSARY OR DICTIONARY OF CONTENT-SPECIFIC VOCABULARY

GRADE LEVEL 3

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.5

Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.5b

Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe people who are friendly or helpful).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7

Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).


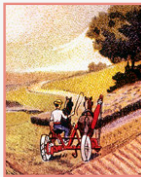








CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.7

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

DESCRIPTION

The student will use a list of content-specific words from a current study topic, story, or theme (e.g., “gardening tools,” “science lab equipment,” “farm machinery”) and search for images of those words in *Britannica ImageQuest*. The students then will create a visual glossary or dictionary, including the written name and definition of the object in his or her own words.

Example:

FARM MACHINERY				
				
NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:
GARDENING TOOLS				
				
NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:	NAME: DEFINITION:

OBJECTIVE



Students Will:

Find images and use them as writing prompts for descriptive or persuasive paragraphs.

WRITE A DESCRIPTIVE OR PERSUASIVE PARAGRAPH

GRADE LEVEL K-4

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3

Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events. Include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings. Use temporal words to signal event order and provide a sense of closure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.6

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.


DESCRIPTION

Teachers or students select images from *Britannica ImageQuest* in order to write at least one paragraph about the images they have chosen. Paragraphs can be descriptive or persuasive, fictional or informational depending on the image(s). Activity variations may include:

- Choose an image that aligns with a topic being studied in science or social studies.
- Choose an image that aligns with current events or holidays.
- Use an image as a “story starter” and have the students write a narrative about what they see.
- Use three images as a “before, during, after” writing exercise; (e.g., clouds, tornado funnel cloud, a destroyed barn.)

Example:

WRITING



TITLE: _____

OBJECTIVES



Students Will:

1. Compare and contrast text with connected images in different forms or genres: story (literary or informational) and advertisement/brochure in terms of the approach, purpose, and audience.
2. Write arguments to support their claims of superiority within the chosen product (brochure or advertisement), including reasons and evidence (images, testimonials, etc.).
3. Include graphics (illustrations, photographs, maps, etc.) to clarify information, highlight benefits and/or features, and add interest to their brochure/advertisement.

**CREATE A BROCHURE
OR ADVERTISEMENT**
GRADE LEVEL 6

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9
Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.9
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.5
Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

DESCRIPTION

Students will create an advertisement or brochure for an activity, event, or product that relates to a text (literary or informational) that is being read as part of the classroom curriculum. The brochure or advertisement will include compelling statements, reasons, and evidence gained from the original text, as well as images from *Britannica ImageQuest*.

EXAMPLE 1: After reading *Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen, a student may choose to create an advertisement for a hatchet, including its various features, uses, and benefits over other tools.

EXAMPLE 2: A student may create a brochure for a “Hatchet-inspired” summer camp in Alaska, which includes a plane ride, a campout, and survival-skills training.

Example:

<p>DESCRIPTION: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>INFORMATION: _____</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>NAME: _____</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>
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OBJECTIVE



Students Will:

Find images and use them to support/extend understanding of what they are studying in class and write descriptive/narrative selections.

WRITE DESCRIPTIVE/PERSUASIVE PARAGRAPHS

GRADE LEVEL 6-12

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information; (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.7

Translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form; (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically; (e.g., in an equation) into words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media; (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.


DESCRIPTION

Teachers or students select an image from *Britannica ImageQuest* and write at least four paragraphs about the image. Paragraphs can be descriptive or persuasive. Activity variations include:

- Choose an image that aligns with what is being studied in science or social studies.
- Choose an image that aligns with current events.
- Use three images as a “before, during, after” writing exercise (e.g., Japan, Pearl Harbor, World War II).

Example:

PERSUASIVE PAPER



TITLE: _____

OBJECTIVES



Students Will:

1. Identify a theme found in a text (novel, short story, poem, newspaper article, etc.) and analyze its development, including how it might be represented visually.
2. Use information from the text for analysis and reflection of the identified theme.
3. Use digital media (*Britannica ImageQuest*) to locate images representing the identified theme, using the keyword search.
4. Create a photo or image essay, demonstrating an understanding of the theme by image choice (context, figurative, connotative, and/or technical meaning).

CREATE A VISUAL ESSAY
GRADE LEVEL 9-10

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

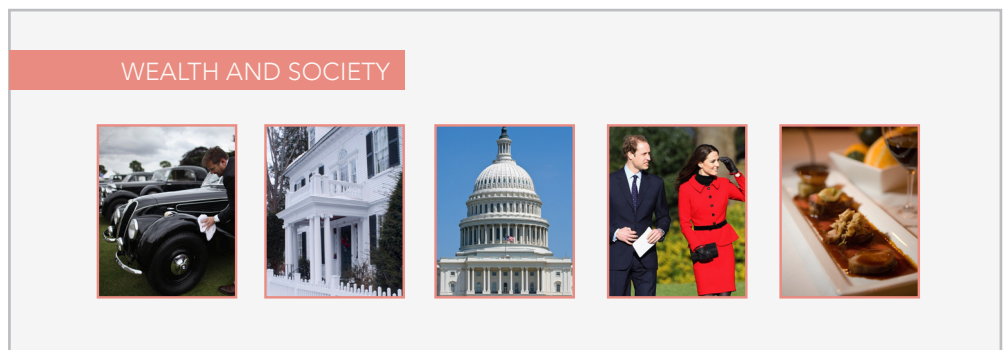
DESCRIPTION

Students will create a visual essay using images from *Britannica ImageQuest* based on a theme found in a literary text (novel or short story), poem, or informational text (newspaper, magazine, or journal article).

Examples of possible themes: society and wealth, the “American dream,” poverty, love, hope, effects of crime on the family, etc.

Activity option: Create a slide show of photographs or illustrations (using video, PowerPoint, iMovie, etc.), adding music or spoken words to enhance the chosen theme.

Example:



OBJECTIVES



Students Will:

1. Analyze an illustration and determine how the author/illustrator conveyed a complex concept or idea clearly and effectively using both graphics and/or text.
2. Compose a caption, selecting key details, appropriate vocabulary, and a logical sequence to summarize the complex concept or idea represented.

Objective (extension activity)

The student will analyze, integrate, and evaluate information presented in multiple formats (illustration and text) to determine the benefits and disadvantages of each format, and produce a summary description.

**INFORMATIONAL IMAGES –
SHOW ME HOW THAT WORKS!**

GRADE LEVEL 11-12

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.3

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Additional Common Core Standards for Extension Activity

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

DESCRIPTION

Students will use *Britannica ImageQuest* to locate an informational image; (e.g., a sequence of events, a natural cycle such as the water cycle, a cross-section of a volcano, an anthill, etc.) Then, students will analyze how the information in the image is structured and write a paragraph caption, including a statement/title, reasons, and evidence drawn from the illustration.

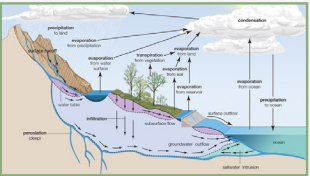
BRITANNICA E-BOOK EXTENSION

Students will research the topic from their informational image activity using Britannica e-books (ebooks.eb.com) and evaluate how the information is presented in comparison to the image, including effectiveness of structure, style, and content, and compose a summary of the content, including the strengths and weaknesses of each informational format.

(E-book example: *Climate and Climate Change*, Rafferty, John P, ed. *Climate and Climate Change: The Living Earth*. Chicago: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2011. Britannica E-Books. Web. 17 May 2011.)

Example:

IMAGE CAPTION





IMAGEQUEST PROVIDERS INCLUDE >>

- Action Plus
 - Bridgeman Art Library
 - Chicago History Museum
 - De Agostini Editore Picture Library
 - DK Images
 - Encyclopædia Britannica
 - Getty Images
 - Lebrecht Music + Art
 - National Geographic Society
 - National Portrait Gallery
 - NativeStock Pictures
 - Natural History Museum
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**LOCATE RIGHTS-CLEARED IMAGES
SELECTED FOR EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE**

All images in *Britannica ImageQuest* are rights-cleared for non-commercial, educational use—great for teacher lesson plans, assignments, activities, and whiteboards; student reports and projects; or school Web sites, newsletters, newspapers, flyers, and bulletins.

SAVE TIME

Organized by subject matter and fully searchable, *Britannica ImageQuest* provides a unique collection of appropriate images on every topic from their searches in one convenient site.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information about *Britannica ImageQuest* or other Britannica Digital Learning resources, please contact us today.

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