Visual Literacy

Mark Newman

These images show European immigrants coming to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If students studying immigration were shown just one of these images:

What skills would they need?
1. To read the visual for content.
2. To evaluate the visual and its content.
3. To interpret what they learned about the visual and its content?

What questions would their interpretation raise based on studying that one visual?

What skills would they need if all three visuals were studied? Would their interpretations and follow-up questions differ from those developed after studying one of the images?

Equally important, what would students need to know about the nature of visuals generally as well as the nature of photographs and drawings specifically to study the images?

Answering the above questions helps define an increasingly important competency-- visual literacy. Though various definitions exist, most scholars agree that visual literacy includes being able to:

• read a visual for context and content;
• think critically to evaluate and to interpret the visual as a source and its content; and
• communicate the findings, perhaps visually.

Being visually literate also requires that teachers and students understand what visuals are; how they work; and how what we as viewers bring to their study influences what we see, what we think, and what we conclude.

Since the project began, visual literacy has been a primary activity for the Federation Teaching with Primary Sources Project, focusing on:

• conducting research on the nature of visuals and teacher preparedness to use photographs and maps as learning resources;
• developing a progressive learning sequence on reading and interpreting visuals supported by classroom exercises using photographs and maps; and
• developing a p-12 visual literacy curriculum for history/social studies, language arts/English, science, and math.
The Federation TPS project pursued visual literacy as a major thrust for three reasons. First, The Library of Congress web site has a massive and diverse collection of digitized visual media. The Library home page highlights nine collections. Three stress visuals: Prints & Photographs, Film, and Maps. Other collections also contain various types of visual images. Second, primary source visuals are increasingly used in education as instructional resources. Many are one-page documents making them practical for classroom use. In addition, visual texts have proven effective learning aids for second language learners and students with special needs.

The expanding use of visuals has pointed out the growing need for improving visual literacy competency. For students to use visuals to learn content and build skills, they have to be able to read the map, photo, etc. and make sense of it, basically climbing Bloom’s revised taxonomy.

A third reason for stressing visual literacy is the growing pervasiveness of visuals in society. In 1992, University of Chicago professor W. J. T. Mitchell suggested that new varieties of media were challenging the domination of the printed book, perhaps making the picture more important than the word. He called this transition the “pictorial turn.” In Europe, scholars and artists also noted this change, coining it the “iconic turn.” The increasingly pervasive use of visuals in everyday life is evident in everything from signage to instructions on assembling toys or furniture to icons on cell phones and computers. There also has been a rapid expansion of varying types of visual media over the last two centuries that has accelerated in the last several decades. Some examples include lithography and photography, film and video, and, most recently, the explosion of digitized visuals in the computer age. The digitized documents on the Library of Congress web site are a prime example of the ongoing move to visuals.

The “turn” has increased:
- the type of visuals;
- expanded the use of visuals in everyday life; and
- enhanced our ability to manipulate visual imagery.

Everyday, we are bombarded in myriad ways with visual imagery that touch virtually every aspect of life. As two founders of the school of visual literacy wrote in 1972, we need to be able to “discriminate and interpret the visual actions, objects, and/or symbols, natural or man-made” that we encounter. When the idea of visuals acting as media of information and communication is added to the mix, discriminating and interpreting gain greater importance.

Complicating matters, visuals are by nature subjective and incomplete. Whether it is a map, photograph, film, video, cartoon, or drawing, each visual has a specific message to send. Often, the visual combines aspects of reality and personal/cultural perspectives depicted according to composition conventions.
Photography has certain guidelines as does mapmaking, film/video production, and the drawing of cartoons, for example. Influenced by personal, cultural, and possibly economic concerns, the purpose behind creating the visual exerts a strong influence on what is included or omitted and how things appear in the final product. The creator also has a perspective, often contributing an artistic touch while expressing personal and cultural attitudes and beliefs. The viewer brings another perspective that influences what is seen and how and why it is evaluated.

The three immigration pictures shown above offer similar but differing views of European immigrants. If students study just one of those pictures, their perceptions of who the immigrants were would be quite different that if they studied all three.

For example, one photo shows extremely poor people. If students only studied this picture of European immigrants they might think all were abjectly poor.

The other photo depicts people of differing socioeconomic classes, none seemingly as poverty stricken as in the first photo. Just studying this picture gives a more well-rounded view of immigrants but omits the poorest.

Though idealized in its depiction, the drawing stresses the emotions of the people as they arrive and intimates a major motivation for coming to the United States symbolized by the Statue of Liberty. The photos give no insight into the why of immigration.

Using all three images provides a more full-bodied “picture” of the reality and idealized visions of European immigrants. It also stresses the subjective, incomplete nature of visuals generally and photos specifically.

**The Importance of visual literacy**

Even something as basic as selecting functions on a computer desktop or a cell phone requires the ability to identify a visual icon, to know its purpose, and to perform the tasks needed to make it work.

When learning subject matter content in a classroom is the context, the process gains complexity. Not only is it necessary to identify the type of visual and its people, place, and time context, it also is important to access its content and message, to critically evaluate the perspective of that content and message, and to assess the validity of the document and the accuracy of its information. Seeing is not necessarily believing. All the information and insight has to be synthesized so it meaningfully connects to the topic of study and its significance is understood. Then, what has been learned is communicated in a coherent, cohesive way.

Put another way,

For a picture to be worth 1,000 words, we have to read it and make sense of its value. Seeing is only believing when we critically evaluate what we see.

And that requires being visually literate.
Visual Literacy
WORKING WITH PICTURES AND WORDS:
PROGRESSIVE SEQUENTIAL CURRICULUM

Photos and Captions
The strategy involves working with photographs and captions focusing on a single photo at the novice level and multiple images at the intermediate level.

The process explores two ways of working with pictures and words. One method involves reading and interpreting photos followed by writing captions. The other method has students reading captions and select photos to fit the captions explaining why the photo was selected. When students read a photo and write a caption, make sure the photo appears alone without any explanation. The teacher may or may not set the photo in its people, place and time context.

This curriculum model progresses sequentially over three levels. Each level has two stages. An underlying idea is that as students become more proficient, they also gain more independence in completing the exercises. This curriculum model can be adapted to the other visual literacy activities included in this curriculum guide.

Basic
• Photo to caption
  Students read a single photo using prompts, listing information identified. They categorize the list and write a caption that describes the photo within the context of the subject being studied.
• Caption to photos
  Students read a caption using prompts and then select a single photo from a collection of three, explaining why they selected that photo by using the words of the captions and applying it to the photo.

Proficient
• Multiple photos to captions that tell a story
  Students read a series of photos, listing information identified for each photo. They categorize and summarize the lists. Next, they write a series of captions that tell the story depicted in the photos within the context of the subject being studied.
• Multiple captions to multiple photos to tell a story
  Students read a series of captions that tell a story and then organize a series of photos so that they visually tell a story.

Advanced
• Multiple photos to a photo essay
  Using prompts, students read a series of photos arranged to tell a story, listing information identified for each photo. The lists are categorized and summarized. Using appropriate technology, students create a photo essay with relevant writing.
• A poem to multiple photos
  Students read a poem and then conduct a search to identify photos that fit the lines or stanzas of the poem, using appropriate technology to develop a photo poem.
Working with Words and Pictures

INTRODUCTION:
The interplay between pictures and words stands at the foundation of this exploration of photos as texts. The strategy behind this exercise takes a familiar model of this interplay—photos and captions—as the method for improving visual literacy.

The photograph is from the series of the Bronzeville community of Chicago in 1941 taken by Edwin Rosskam, a Farm Security Administration photographer as part of a comprehensive profile of this African American community. The digital id is: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8a15666

This activity teaches participants how to read and interpret a single photo. The process requires participants to read a photo for information, think about this information to make sense of the photo, and communicate their findings in a single sentence caption.

OBJECTIVES:
At the end of this activity, students will be able to:
1. Read a photograph for information.
2. Synthesize the information by writing a one-sentence caption.

PROCEDURES:
1. Reading a photo
Project the photo of the grocery store and pass out paper copies to participants
   a. Have participants answer the following questions, listing the information for each answer:
      What is this place? How do you know?
      What is available in this place? How can you get it? How do you know?
      Who is in the photo? What is that person doing? How do you know?
      Where is this place? When was the photo taken? How do you know?
      When does it appear this photo was taken? Now? In the past?
   b. Based on the answers, what type of community does the store serve? How do you know?
2. Making sense of the photo
   a. Review the list of information removing any duplicate items.
   b. Organize the information so it fits within one of the following three categories of the summary phrase below, eliminating items that do not fit:
      Who is doing what where.
3. Communicating findings
   Have participants write a single-sentence caption that describes the photo, using the information organized into the three categories of the summary phrase.
4. Closure
   a. Have participants share their captions
   b. Discuss the activity regarding its effectiveness in building visual literacy skills.
Exploring the Nature of Photographs

The primary purpose of this exercise is to teach students that visuals generally and photographs specifically are subjective and incomplete by nature. As a result, studying only one photograph can bias and distort the topic of study. Using multiple photos offers a more, balanced and comprehensive view, but can still raise questions requiring further study. As is true of every other learning resource, photographs are one or more pieces of a larger puzzle that must be constructed by teachers and students to build content mastery and skills.

Bronzeville in 1941:
READING PHOTOS TO CHARACTERIZE A COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION
This exercise assumes students can read photos at the proficient level. It involves group of students studying different photographs taken by Farm Security Administration photographers of differing components of the Bronzeville community of Chicago in 1941 and 1942

This activity builds upon student ability to read and interpret photos. The process requires students to read multiple photos for information, think about this information as to how it characterizes the community depicted, and to communicate their findings in a phrase. The process also introduces a photo reading model that helps students focus on the details in the picture. The photos and groupings are at the end of the activity plan.

OBJECTIVES:
At the close of this activity, students will be able to:
1. Read a series of photographs for information.
2. Synthesize the information by writing a one-sentence description of the type of community depicted in photos
3. Explain why photographs are incomplete texts needing context and information from other sources to explain a phenomenon.

PROCEDURES:
1. Examining the photos
   a. Divide students into three groups and distribute one set of three photos to each group so each has a different set. If the class is large, divide into six groups, two groups for each set of photos. The teacher may or may not situate the photos in their people, place, and time contexts. If the context is provided, some revision of the questions and instructions below is needed.
   b. Have students answer the following questions, listing the information for each answer:
      - What is the first item in the photo that caught your eye? Why did you notice it?
      - Who is the photo? How are they dressed? What are they doing?
      - Where are these people? Describe the place in detail?
      - Where is this place? When was the photo taken? Now? In the past?
PROCEDURES (CONT’D.):

2. Making sense of the photos
   a. Combine the answers to the questions into a master list.
   b. Summarize findings by writing a phrase that describes the type of community depicted in the set of photos.
3. Communicating findings
   a. Share phrases and discuss differences.
   b. Discuss similarities and differences.
4. Closure
   a. Share the different photos among the groups so they can examine all of them. Tell groups that all photos are of the same Bronzeville community and note they were taken in 1941 as part of a series for the Farm Security Administration.
   b. Discuss reasons why the photos seemed to depict different communities. Focus on how photos by their nature can only tell parts of a story and that other sources must be studied to complete that story.

Photographs and Groupings:

Middle-class commercial

Low-income residential

Middle-class mixed use
Visual Literacy
INQUIRY AND MAKING CONNECTIONS

INQUIRY
The strategy involves using visual images to make direct connections to topics under study, the textbook, and other readings at the basic, proficient, and advanced levels.

The process is versatile in that it can be used to open or close a topic of study as well as during the “middle” part of the study.

Basic
- Inquiry into an image to open a unit of study
  Students read a single visual image using prompts, listing information identified, categorizing the information, and posing focus questions for a topic of study.
- Inquiry into an image during a unit of study
  Students read a single visual image using prompts listing information identified, categorizing the information, answering existing questions, and possibly posing further questions on the topic being studied.
- Inquiry into an image to close a unit of study
  Students read a visual image using prompts related to the unit that was studied, categorizing information, and answering questions that “test” their knowledge and understanding. This exercise is an assessment of content and skills.

Proficient
- Images to facilitate further reading
  Students read a single visual image using prompts, listing the information identified, categorizing the information, and posing focus questions to facilitate reading of the textbook or other primary and/or secondary sources.
- Multiple images as inquiry
  Students read multiple visual images, using prompts, listing the information identified, categorizing the information, possibly answering questions raised by prior study and possibly posing questions to facilitate reading of the textbook or other primary/secondary sources.

Advanced
- Images applied to a “real life” situation
  Students read a single visual image or multiple images, using prompts, listing information identified, categorizing the information, and applying the information to a “real life” situation connected to a unit of study. Have students assume the role of a figure in a situation being studied and have them respond to that situation from the perspective of that person. The textbook and other sources may be involved in this exercise.
Inquiry and Making Connections

Inquiry is basic to primary source document-based instruction. It provides an effective structure for have student improve their content understanding while building skills with a student-centered learning context.

The following exercise is used to open a new unit. It involves student in using prior knowledge and making inferences about a photo to characterize the community depicted.

The resulting information supplies important concepts, vocabulary, and content to use in further study. It also help student pose questions to help focus their studies. By engaging students in exploring primary sources and assuming responsibility for learning, the exercise also stimulates interest in the topic of study.

The example used here is Mesa Verde, a Pre-Columbian North American community that was located in southwestern Colorado.
Exploring Community

OBJECTIVES:
At the end of this activity, students will be able to:
1. Read a photograph for information.
2. Make inferences about community by developing a list of potential social economic, and political characteristics.
3. Develop focus questions to guide the study of a new unit.

PROCEDURES:
1. Reading a photo
   Project the photo of Mesa Verde as an unknown place relevant to the study of Pre-Columbia America and pass out paper copies of the photo to participants. Identify climate as semi-arid but having rain and snow, weather as generally mild. Land above cliff is fertile. Note structures are sandstone. Location is isolated but contact exists with other people.
   a. Have participants study the photo to answer the following questions, listing the information for each answer:
      what is this place? How do you know?
      where does it appear to be? How do you know?
      what are the structures? How do you know?
      what might they have been used for?
      how many people might have lived here?
      why might they have lived here?
      when might they have lived here?

2. Inquiry into the culture
   a. Employing the answers to the above questions, use Socratic method to have participants answer the following question:
      What components and characteristics would this society have had to possess to build this community and sustain life there?

The answers should be recorded on the board or perhaps word processed and projected by an LCD projector. They should include every aspect of life including type of government; religion; labor specialization; food production, storage, and distribution; engineering and architecture; and education; among other things.

b. Organize the information to the reading of the photo and the inquiry into the culture by eliminating duplications. Insert the information into a table or web chart using geography; political systems, economic systems, and social systems (representing four of the five Illinois state social studies goal areas) as categories.

c. Using the table or web, have participants develop focus questions to guide their study of Pre-Columbia America.
Through Their Eyes:
USING POINT OF VIEW TO BUILD CONTENT LEARNING AND VISUAL LITERACY

INTRODUCTION:
Through Their Eyes employs a point of view approach that can be used with the words and pictures and inquiry model of visual literacy. In this approach, the reader adopts the persona of either the creator of the image—photographer, cartographer, painter, etc.—or a subject of the image—soldier, resident of a place depicted in a map, the person portrayed in a painting, etc. The literacy activity proceeds from the perspective of that persona and helps the student understand a topic from a first-hand, contemporary context.

POINT OF VIEW SCENARIOS:
1. The image creator
The reader employs the same strategy as a photographer, cartographer, painter, etc. would use to examine the image. The perspective of the creator helps students understand conventions that guide the composition of the photo, map, etc. and how these conventions can be used to read the picture. The example presented here focuses on Farm Security Administration photographer Dorothea Lange and using the rule of thirds to read the 1937 “Crossing the International Bridge between Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas” photograph to identify the subject as well as specific items in the photo.

As is true of any visual media, photographers use composition conventions to frame their pictures. Taken from painting, one of the basic guidelines is the rule of thirds that imposes a grid on the scene to identify the foreground, subject, and background. This grid can run horizontally and vertically to divide the photo into nine sections.

Teachers can help students read photographs by having them examine a photo using the rule of thirds. In this way, students can identify the foreground, subject and background. They can also divide the picture up into smaller sections to identify various details. A third benefit is that it teaches students

The attached handout is an example of how the point of view of the creator, the photographer, can be used to help students a read a visual image.

2. The subject
The reader uses the character’s persona to examine the image from a first-person perspective. This perspective brings students into the historical moment, placing them at street level “in the shoes” of the people they are studying to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the human condition. The example presented here uses two photographs of European immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in 1904. The exercise has students read the photo for content and make inferences.

The exercise follows the attached worksheet and has two parts. The first activity has students in groups read the photo to identify specific items and then summarize that content in one word. The second activity involves making inferences on the immigrant experience based on what was learned in the first activity and drawing on prior knowledge. Students in small groups complete a four-line poem by answering the prompts on the worksheet. Following the completion of the poem, have students share what they wrote. Discuss the poems.
A valuable aspect of the activity concerns students learning that photos tell an incomplete story. One photo shows poor immigrants while the other depicts people of varying classes. Distributing the worksheets to the students, make sure that some groups get one photo and the others get the other photo. Try to ensure that groups do not share their worksheets to maintain confidentiality. After concluding the exercise with the sharing of the poems, ask students about the socioeconomic class of the immigrants shown on their photos. Generally, differing answers are given. As students discover they have different photos, discuss why. Note that using just one photo would stereotype the immigrants and their backgrounds, distorting the historical record.
INTRODUCTION:
In 1937, Farm Security Administration photographer Dorothea Lange took this picture of the international bridge that crossed the Rio Grande between Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas.

Photographers use the rule of thirds to compose their pictures. They divide the scene into thirds: foreground, subject, and background. This division can be horizontal, vertical, or both.

PART ONE: IDENTIFYING THE SUBJECT
Estimate or measure the photo so it is divided into thirds horizontally, drawing a line across the photo at each third. Then repeat the process vertically. Generally the subject of a photo is at the intersection of a horizontal and vertical third. Based on your calculations, who is the subject. Write the answer down on the line below.

PART TWO: READING THE PHOTOGRAPH
Examine each section of the photo and make a list of the prominent details. Based on the list, answer the following questions. Support each of the answers with supporting evidence from the list.

1. Was Dorothea Lange standing on the Mexican or U. S. side of the bridge?

2. What was located in the structure between the street and sidewalk?

3. Describe the people in the photo?

4. Based on the description of the people, can you speculate on their ethnic heritage? Why do you think they were crossing the bridge?
INTRODUCTION:
This exercise involves using an inquiry model to read a photograph and make inferences, recording those inferences in a four-line poem.

Reading the Photograph: What do you see?
Please answer the following questions, writing your answers on the lines provided.
1. Who is in the photo?

2. Describe these people (gender, age, dress, anything else?)

3. What are they doing?

4. Where are they?

5. Using the answers to the above questions, in one word, describe the people in the photo.

Exploring the Photo: What do you think?
On the lines below, write a four-line poem that describes the photo as follows.
On line 1, write the one-word answer to question 5 above.
On line 2, write an action phrase that describes how these people feel.
On line 3, write an action phrase that describes that they hear and smell.
On line 4, write a one-word caption for the photo.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 
INTRODUCTION:
This exercise involves using an inquiry model to read a photograph and make inferences, recording those inferences in a four-line poem.

Reading the Photograph:
What do you see?
Please answer the following questions, writing your answers on the lines provided.
1. Who is in the photo?

2. Describe these people (gender, age, dress, anything else?)

3. What are they doing?

4. Where are they?

5. Using the answers to the above questions, in one word, describe the people in the photo.

Exploring the Photo: What do you think?
On the lines below, write a four-line poem that describes the photo as follows. On line 1, write the one-word answer to question 5 above. On line 2, write an action phrase that describes how these people feel. On line 3, write an action phrase that describes that they hear and smell. On line 4, write a one-word caption for the photo.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 


Historical maps can offer students excellent opportunities to build their content knowledge while practicing important skills. To take advantage of these learning opportunities, teachers and students must understand the nature of maps. The popular perception that maps are neutral, objective, and accurate graphic representations is a myth, especially when applied to old, historical maps. Historians have called them slippery, dangerous and unreliable.

As is true of all sources, maps are subjective and incomplete. All maps have a purpose. They are rhetorical images that combine aspects of reality with personal and cultural influences to tell a specific story related through the medium of cartography. As such, maps are neither neutral nor objective, nor are they comprehensive or totally accurate in part because they omit information not germane to their purpose. When using historical maps, teachers and students quickly learn that they cannot always believe what they see. But, they also learn that questioning a map to evaluate it as a source and to understand its content increases content knowledge while building skills.

**Reading maps**
Reading historical maps for content has four related steps. As is true of all historical sources, the first is establishing the provenance or authenticity of the map as well as placing it in a correct people, place, and time context. Among other things, this task involves identifying the title, cartographer, perhaps the publisher, and the date and place of publication. In essence, students are evaluating whether the map is legitimate and valid as a historical document and regarding its connection to the topic of study. They also can learn important information about the map, including possibly its purpose.

Once the context is established, students move to the second step, reading the map to discover its message and to identify important content. Third, they make sense of the information gleaned from the map. They connect map content to prior knowledge. Next students analyze what they have learned to summarize findings, possibly pose more questions, or develop a conclusion. The fourth and final task is communicating what has been learned.

**Studying historical maps exercises**
“What is Powhatan saying to John Smith and the Jamestown settlers?” has students work with words and pictures. In this case, students read an excerpt from John Smith’s *Historie of Virginia* and, using the handout provided, draw the map he describes. Next, they interpret the map to identify its message to Smith and his fellow settlers in Jamestown.

“What Happened to the Bison” focuses on reading maps. Using the handout, students proceed through an inquiry model to establish the provenance and context of the map followed by reading the map for content, analyzing the information gained from the map, and communicating findings.

Plan of Ur has two purposes. It continues the map reading for content activity, but also asks the essential question of what the map does not include. The question of what the map does not show highlights a basic aspect of the nature of maps. They are incomplete witnesses. Recognizing that a map is incomplete helps students understand that studying a map involves evaluating its content not just for authenticity, accuracy, and point of view, but also for what they do not see.
The history of the American West, the story of cowboys and the native peoples, is a popular topic in many classrooms. An important, often overlooked part of this story concerns the buffalo, really bison, and their experience. This map offers insight into what happened to the bison in the face of U.S. settlement and conflict between native peoples and the United States.

Complete the inquiry model below, answering the questions on a separate sheet of paper.

**INQUIRY MODEL:**

1. **Gaining context**
   a. What is the title?
   b. Who made the map?
   c. When was it made?

2. **Reading for content**
   a. What does the title tell us about the fate of the bison?
   b. What does the legend tell us about what the map shows?
   c. How large was the original bison territory? What portion of the U.S. did this area cover?
   d. How were the bison organized?
   e. What was done to the bison, where was it done, and when?

3. **Connecting to studying the West**
   a. Who did what was done to the bison? Why?
   b. What was the impact on the bison?
   c. What was the impact on the native Plains peoples? On settlers?

4. **Communicating Findings**
   Choose one of the following options to communicate what you learned about the bison.
   1. Using the map, and possibly other resources, create a timeline of the bison experience.
   2. Draw an editorial cartoon that comments on the bison experience from one of the following perspectives:
      a. Cheyenne family.
      b. U.S. settler.
      c. A bison.
   3. Write new caption for the map summarizing the bison experience.
In 1607, John Smith was captured by the Pamunkey Indians and brought to the principal town where he witnessed this ritual of drawing a world map on the ground. The map drawing preceded the famous story of his life being saved by Pocahontas, the daughter of Pamunkey leader Powhatan. Smith’s full description of his capture is recounted on pages 96-101.

Not long after, early in a morning a great fire was made in a long house, and a mat spread on the one side, as on the other; on the one they caused him to sit, and all the guard went out of the house, and presently came skipping in a great grim fellow, all painted over with coale, mingled with oyle; and many Snakes and Wesels skins stuffed with mosse, and all their tayles tyed together, so as they met on the crowne of his head in a tassell; and round about the tassell was as a Coronet of feathers, the skins hanging round about his head, backe, and shoulders, and in a manner covered his face; with a hellish voyce and a rattle in his hand. With most strange gestures and passions he began his invocation, and environed the fire with a circle of meale; which done, three more such like devils came rushing in with the like antique tricks, painted halfe blacke, halfe red: but all their eyes were painted white, and some red stroakes like Mutchato's, along their cheekes: round about him those fiends daunced a pretty while, and then came in three more as ugly as the rest; with red eyes, and white stroakes over their blacke faces, at last they all sat downe right against him; three of them on the one hand of the chiefe Priest, and three on the other. Then all with their rattles began a song, which ended, the chiefe Priest layd downe five wheat cornes: then strayning his armes and hands with such violence that he sweat, and his veynes swelled, he began a short Oration: at the conclusion they all gave a short groane; and then layd down three graines more. After that, began their song againe, and then another Oration, ever laying downe so many cornes as before, till they had twice incirculed the fire; that done, they tooke a bunch of little stickes prepared for that purpose, continuing still their devotion, and at the end of every song and Oration, they layd downe a sticke betwixt the divisions of Corne. Till night, neither he nor they did either eate or drinke, and then they feasted merrily, with the best provisions they could make. Three dayes they used this Ceremony; the meaning whereof they told him, was to know if he intended them well or no. The circle of meale signified their Country, the circles of corne the bounds of the Sea, and the stickes his Country. They imagined the world to be flat and round, like a trencher, and they in the middest.
What is Powhatan saying to John Smith and the Jamestown Settlers?

**Drawing the map:**

Read John Smith’s account of the construction of the Pamunkey world map and draw the map in the space below. Do not use any words to describe the map components, Draw the map from the center outward taking account of the materials used to construct the map and the shapes of the various items.

**Making sense of the map:**

Using the map drawn above, answer the following questions, recording your answers on a separate piece of paper. Use the answers to the questions to write a one-sentence summary of what Powhatan was saying to John Smith and the Jamestown settlers.

1. What materials are used to construct the map?
2. How are the materials used and what meaning do they have?
3. What shape is the Pamunkey world?
4. Where does John Smith’s world fit in the Pamunkey world?
Studying Ur can provide much insight not only into the city but also into Mesopotamia, and by extension our own times and places. Using a map for this study also allows the reader to examine the nature of maps as incomplete witnesses.

Taken from a book, the plan of Ur to the right sketches out the city’s major features. It was drawn from examination of archaeological ruins of the city.

Read the plan using the following prompts and questions:

1. Make a list of the major features.
2. What surrounds the city and what purpose might it have served?
3. What type of structures are highlighted in the plan? Why were these structures highlighted? What purposes did they serve?
4. Are any features unfamiliar? Based on what has been learned from the map, what might these features have been? What purposes might they have served?
5. What is not shown on the plan? How important were the features not shown? How does leaving them off affect what we learn from the map? What do the omissions suggest about the stories maps tell?
6. Based on what was included in the plan and what was left off the plan, what was the purpose for drawing the plan?
7. What questions does the examination of the plan raise about Ur and its society?
Bibliography of Visual Images

Photographs:

Photos and captions

Exploring the nature of photos:


Inquiry and connections:

Through their eyes:

Maps:
Exploring the nature of maps:

Print Documents:
Maps: Working with words and pictures
1. What is Powhatan saying to John Smith and the Jamestown settlers?