LESSON PLAN:

Close Looking with Mystery Images

From *Learning to Look: Cultivating the Art of Slow Looking*
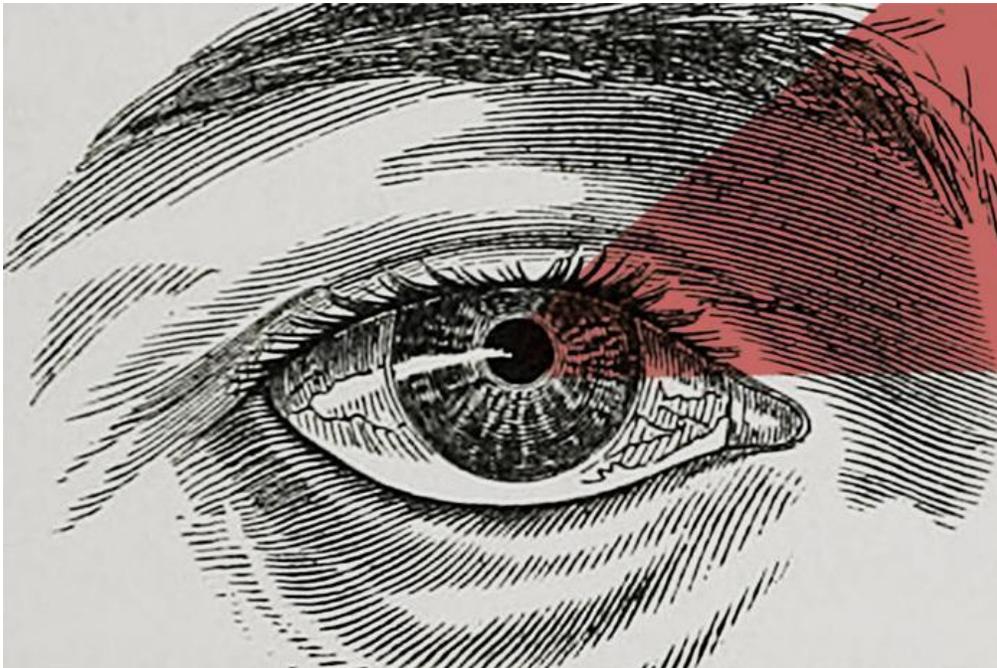
In her new visual literacy column "Learning to Look," Virginia Seymour takes readers progressively deeper into the skills essential to being a visually literate person. You can follow the "Learning to Look" column via RSS Feed.

Time: 30 minutes

Level: Any

Preparation:

- Select 2 clear, detailed images related to your class topic. Try browsing or searching within JSTOR Open Collections for ideas.
- *Tip*: you can save the images you choose to JSTOR Workspace for easy access

Materials: Students should have writing instruments and paper

Directions

Exercise 1:

1. Display image #1 on an overhead display with no identifying information by selecting "Full Screen" in the top right corner of any JSTOR image:
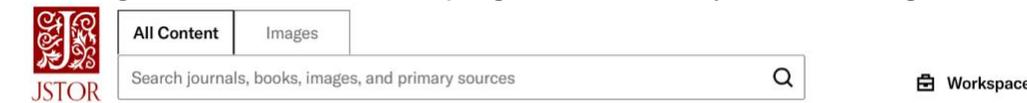
2. Ask students to describe what they see. Steer them towards factual, visible features and away from assumptions.

   > *For example: A student might say that the sky is stormy. Challenge them to describe what they see instead, like dark clouds, lighting, or rain. A student might say that they see a church. Challenge them to describe what features of the building that they see that leads them to believe it is a church.*

3. Have students volunteer to share what they think is going on in the image or what the image depicts.
4. Reveal additional information about the image by exiting "Full Screen" mode; this will cause metadata to display, as shown below:
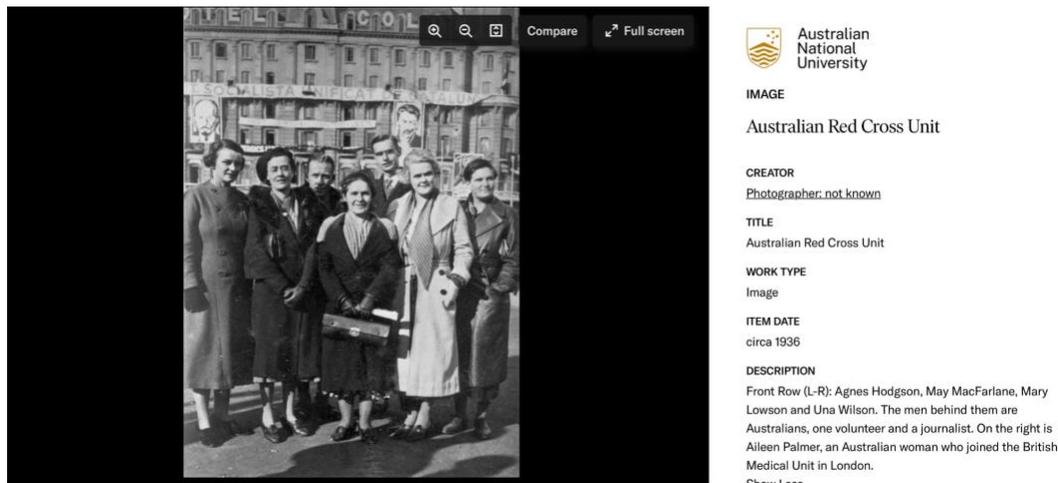
Exercise 2:

1. Display image #2 on an overhead display. Have students write down the first 20 things they notice in the image.
   a. *Option:* elementary or middle school students could be prompted here to instead list 10 nouns (people, places, things) they see in the image and describe each of them with an adjective.
   b. *Option:* visual art students could be prompted to categorize the things they see into subject, foreground, and background.
2. Have students form pairs and compare their lists. How many items overlap? Do they notice anything in the image together that they did not see separately?
3. Have pairs of students join to form groups of 4. As a group, students should discuss what they think is going on in the image, then share with the class.
4. Discuss as a group: What information would still be needed to better understand what the image depicts?

Optional next steps by discipline:

1. *English*: students use close looking skills to write a fictional narrative of what might be happening in an image.
2. *History*: students use close looking strategies to compare images of historical events with written records.
3. *Science*: students use close looking to generate topics and keywords that they can use to search for more information about an image of an unknown environment, plant, animal, object, or phenomenon.
4. *Visual Art/Art History:* use close looking strategies to break down images and investigate complex works of art.