

**Illinois State Museum -- MuseumLink**  
**Double Exposure Lesson Plan: Historical Analysis of a Photograph**

**Objective:** After viewing the photographs in Double Exposure Web module and other historical photographs and practicing with the questions below, students will better be able to discover historical social information in photographs.



**Grade level:** 3-8

**Time Required:** one 50-minute period

**Motivation:** If you are researching a historical subject, old photographs can be clues to the past. You can read photographs like you can read other documents. Here is a set of questions you can ask about a photograph. By answering these questions in writing as you look at the photograph, you have created some notes from a primary source (a photograph) for your research. (Taken from Danzer, Gerald, *A History Handbook for Student Research Projects*, Illinois State Historical Society, 1991.)

**Procedure:** Look at a photograph and answer the questions below if possible.

1. Identify the photograph
  - a. Can you tell who took the photograph?
  - b. Does the photograph have a title?
  - c. Is anything written on the back or margin? (Or as a caption, if it is in a book).
  - d. Where did you find the photograph?
  - e. What is happening in the picture?
  - f. Do you, or does anyone else, recognize the people or places in the photograph?
2. Putting the photograph in context
  - a. Why do you think it was taken?
  - b. Who was the audience it was intended for?
  - c. What era, event, or theme does it illustrate?
  - d. Does it appear to be an amateur photograph? A journalistic one? An artistic one? How can you tell?
3. Analyzing the photograph
  - a. Divide the photograph into several sections. List the objects found in each section. How does this help explain the photographer's purpose?
  - b. Can these objects be classified into types? What classifications would you use?
  - c. What details are the best clues to the meaning of the photograph? Why?
4. Evaluating the photograph
  - a. What, if any, deductions, inferences, or generalizations could you make about the subject from this photograph? How will this help you with your research?
  - b. What questions are prompted by the photograph?

**Assessment:** Students can be given an old photograph to analyze with a set of questions. Students can write the questions they would ask when faced with an old photograph.

**Illinois State Board of education Goals and Standards addressed:**

**Social Science: Social systems: Goal 18**

**Standard B:** Understand the roles and interactions of individuals and groups in society.

**Standard C:** Understand how social systems form and develop over time.