

# There's More Than One Way to View a Photo

## Photo Interpretation

### Grades 3-4

**Objectives:** In order to understand the essential questions of: “What can we learn about a place?” students analyze images from the perspective of an economist, a geographer, a political scientist, and a historian in large groups and then in expert teams. Students create team posters showing community change over time and individually interpret images. *Time Needed: 5 hours*

**Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities:**

- 6.4 Historical Connections (examine local history, identify patterns of change)
- 6.6 Being a Historian (make interpretations concerning history, change and continuity)
- 6.15 Knowledge of Economic Principles (interpret economic activity)

**Grade Level Expectations:**

- History and Social Sciences 3-4:8 (connect the past with the present)
- History and Social Sciences 3-4:9 (show understanding of how humans interpret history)

**Materials & Resources:**

*Landscape Change Program* Archive, [www.uvm.edu/landscape](http://www.uvm.edu/landscape) For example, Images:  
 LS09165\_000 (Looking North on Church St 1965),  
 LS09165\_001 (Looking North on Church St. 2005),  
 LS10389\_000 (Old Brick Church 2007),  
 LS10541\_000 (Congregational Church 1911),  
 LS02588\_000 (Methodist Church and Main Street 1907-1915),  
 LS02588\_001 (Methodist Church and Citgo Sign).  
 Social Scientist signs (below)  
 “Then and Now” sheet (below)

**Activities:**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Hook Your Students</b></p> <p>Students look at a photo of a familiar place and share all of their observations of that photo.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Culminating Activity</b></p> <p>Students work as part of an expert group to interpret a photo of a familiar place from the perspective of one of the social scientists. The groups create a poster about the photo from their social scientist’s perspective.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Introduce Concepts</b></p> <p>Students examine the same photo from the perspective of an economist, a political scientist, a geographer, and a historian.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Assessment</b></p> <p><i>Group:</i> Poster evaluation checklist (below)  <i>Individual:</i> Assessment sheets (below)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Apply Skills</b></p> <p>Students sort observations based on the perspective they most closely represent.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Extensions</b></p> <p>Take Home Activity: Students interpret family photos from the perspective of the four social scientists.</p>

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## Lesson Plan Details

### *Detailed summary of curricular format:*

Students will examine the ways that different social scientists (economist, geographer, political scientist and historian) interpret information in photographs. After recording observations about a photograph of a familiar place, students will sort observations into categories based on the four social sciences. The class will work together to practice interpreting information from other photographs using the same sorting technique. Students then work in small, expert groups to interpret two photographs of a scene in Williston. Each expert group reports their interpretations to the class and creates a poster about the photos from the perspective of their social scientist. The class then explores what we can learn about how Williston has changed based on the different interpretations of the same photographs.

### Day 1

Put students into four heterogeneous groups.

Give each group a copy of the same photo of a familiar place. For this example I am using LS09165-001 Looking North on Church Street 2007.

Have students look at photo and discuss what they see with their group.

Ask for volunteers to share what they see in the photograph. Record students' observations on chart paper (being careful to leave plenty of space between each, since these will be cut apart later). Continue until all observations have been recorded.

Ask the students "Did you notice all of these things right away, or did someone in the class help you see something you didn't notice at first?" Explain that this often happens because everyone looks from their own perspective and everyone's perspective is different.

Introduce the class to four different types of social scientists.

**Economists:** Study how people make, buy and sell things.

**Geographers:** Study where places are on maps and study natural and man-made features in our world.

**Political Scientists:** Study how rules and laws are made and enforced.

**Historians:** Study who, what, where, when and why events happened in the past.

Referring to the same picture, give some examples of something that each of these social scientists might notice.

An *economist* would notice that some of the buildings look like business and that there are carts that seem to be selling something.

A *geographer* would notice the street sign giving a location and that there are trees (natural features) and buildings (man made features).

A *political scientist* would notice the crosswalk, the chains and posts blocking the streets, the signs on the concrete post that are giving some sort of directions, the trash can and the ash tray. All of these give a clue about the rules in this area.

A *historian* would notice that some things in the photo look old such as the big building on the corner, but some things such as the construction equipment look much more modern. A historian would also notice the clothing of the people in the photo.

Have each group look back at the photo and discuss any other observations the social scientists would have about this photo. Have students share these observations with the class.

Move students to the meeting space/rug area. Put a social scientist sign on each table. The sign should have the name of one of the social scientists, the explanation of what they study, and a visual cue. Examples attached.

Refer back to the chart paper where students' initial observations are recorded. Cut this paper into strips, with one observation on each. Have the students work in pairs or small groups. Divide the strips of paper among the pairs or groups. Students then decide which social scientist is most likely to have made the observation they have on their strip. Students walk around the room looking at the signs on each table. When they believe they have the correct spot, they leave the strip of paper on that table.

Call the class together and discuss the results of this sorting activity. Emphasize that many observations fall into more than one category. Discuss with the class what questions each social scientist might ask when looking at this photo.

## **Day 2**

Use the signs to review the four types of social scientists, emphasizing some of the student observations from the day before. Hang the signs in a visible spot.

Give each group a copy of a different photo. For this example I am using LS09165-00 Looking North on Church St. 1965. This photo features the same location as the previous photo, but it was taken forty years earlier.

Give the students the opportunity to discuss what they see in this photo. Challenge them to look at the photo from the perspective of the different social scientist.

As a class, go through each of the four social scientists and talk about what they might notice in this photo. Discuss what questions each social scientist might ask as well.

Talk about some of the changes that have taken place in this spot over forty years. Focus on which social scientist might have noticed each of those changes.

Record all these observations (by discipline) and post them around the room for reference.

Next, give each a group another photo and a recording sheet (attached). For this example I am using LS10389 Old Brick Church 2007. This is a location directly in front of our school.

Have each group fill out their sheet, recording what each social scientist might notice in this photo and what questions they might ask.. Encourage them to use the signs and charts around the room for reference. Have each group report their observations to the class.

### **Day 3**

Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group the role of one of the social scientists. Put the signs on the table to remind each group of their role. Give each group a photo of the same location as the previous photo but from a different time period. I am using LS10541 Congregational Church 1911. Give each group a “Then and Now” recording sheet as well.

Each “expert” group must fill out the Then and Now sheet *from the perspective of their social scientist*.

Each group then reports out to the class their findings.

### **Day 4**

Have students sit with their “expert” groups. Review “Then and Now” sheets completed the previous day. Instruct each group to create a poster explaining what their expert noticed in the photo. Provide each group with a poster evaluation checklist to guide their poster creation. Allow at least one class period for groups to complete their posters.

### **Day 5**

Review the signs and charts around the room that explain the role of the four social scientists and give examples of the observations each one might make and the questions they might ask. Discuss observations from previous lessons about how the area in front of the school has changed.

Give each student two photographs showing the same spot at two different times in history. I am using LS02588-000 Methodist Church and Main St. 1907-1915 and LS02588-001 Methodist Church and Citgo Sign. Give student an assessment sheet as well.

Instruct students to look at the two photos and fill out the sheet. The sheet asks them to identify elements of the photograph from the perspective of each of the social scientists and write a few sentences about how this spot has changed.

**Handouts:**  
**Social Scientist Labels**  
**“Then and Now” sheet**  
**Assessment sheets**  
**Poster Evaluation Checklist**



# **Economist**

**studies how people  
make,  
buy,  
and sell things**



# **Geographer**

**studies where places are on maps**

**studies natural and man-made features  
in our world**



# **Political Scientist**

**studies how rules and laws  
are made and enforced**



# **Historian**

**studies who, what, where, when and why  
events happened in the past**

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“Then and Now” Sheet

Then	Now
Geographer	Geographer
Political Scientist	Political Scientist
Economist	Economist
Historian	Historian

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## Assessment Sheet

What might each of the social scientists notice about these photos?

### Photo 1

Geographer	Economist
Historian	Political Scientist

# There's More Than One Way to View a Photo

## Assessment Sheet

What might each of the social scientists notice about these photos?

### Photo 2

Geographer	Economist
Historian	Political Scientist

# **There's More Than One Way to View a Photo**

## **Assessment Sheet**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Write a few sentences about how you think Williston has changed from the time Photo 1 was taken until the time Photo 2 was taken. Give evidence from the photos.

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## Poster Evaluation Checklist

### Does Our Poster Have...?

	<u>Self</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
The title of our social scientist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Both photos attached	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpretations of both photos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neat writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Correct spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Examples of questions our type of social scientist might ask about these photos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: