



THE GREAT SEATTLE FIRE, TEACHER RESOURCES

LESSON 1: What is Going on Here?

Lesson Description:

This introductory lesson uses Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to help students solve the mystery of what happened in the Pioneer Square district in 1889. By looking closely at historic photos, students will discover important details that allow them to form theories about life in Seattle in the 1880's.

Objectives

- Students will develop confidence in their ability to construct meaning from an image
- Students will be exposed to alternatives and multiple perspectives
- Students will describe what they see as accurately as possible
- Students will examine, describe, discuss and interpret an image
- Students will draw conclusions based on identifying the evidence they have gathered from a photo
- Students will make distinctions between what they see and what they think they see
- Students will become more aware of questions they might ask themselves in everyday life as they encounter unfamiliar objects
- Teachers will gain a better understanding of student's prior knowledge and misconceptions related to the topic

Potential EALR/GLE Alignments:

	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4
<i>Visual Arts</i>			X	X												
<i>Communication</i>	X	X			X			X								
<i>Social Studies</i>						X			X	X		X		X	X	

Potential CBA/CBPA Alignments:

Constitutional Issues	Causes of Conflict	People on the Move	Dig Deep	Why History?	Cultural Contributions
			X		

Materials:

- Computer/Projector
- Image #772 (Pioneer Square Area before the fire)
- Image #705 (Pioneer Square Area after the fire)
- Copies of *Seattle, the Day of the Great Fire Map* (be sure to cover the title when you make copies for this!)
- Pointer (optional)
- Visible writing surface for displaying student brainstorms
- Visual Thinking Worksheets (attached)

**Background & Preparation:**

To prepare for this lesson, you will need to familiarize yourself with the before and after images. Image #772 is looking northeast. It was taken in 1888 from the waterfront near the foot of Washington Street. The Puget Sound and Columbia railroad depots are visible to the left of center. Image #705 shows downtown Seattle on June 7th 1889. The courthouse (a.k.a. Katzenjammer Castle) is visible on the left side of Washington Street. The outline of what we believe to be the Yesler mansion can be seen in the far background.

Facilitate discussion using the following three open-ended questions as a foundation:

- What is going on here?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

The goal of this discussion is to encourage close observation. Try to point to parts of the photo as students describe them. There are no right or wrong answers during this phase, only observation and ideas, so try to give only neutral responses. To keep discussion going and help students make connections, paraphrase student comments, and encourage them to connect all comments to what they are seeing in the photo. For more in-depth information on how to conduct a lesson using VTS go to www.vtsweb.org.

Suggested Teaching Procedure:

1. Show students the picture #772. Hand out the Visual Thinking Worksheet and Seattle the Day of the Fire Map (with title removed). Ask students to write a description of what they see, what they think, and what they notice that makes them wonder/want to know more. Do not give them any information about this photo.
2. Facilitate a group discussion of image #772 using VTS.
3. Bring up photo #705. Facilitate a group discussion about this image using VTS. Have students compare and contrast the two images.
4. After students have studied the images closely and discussed their observations, generate a class list of questions and theories. Write these down somewhere visible in your classroom.

Visual Thinking Worksheet

What do I notice when I look closely at this picture?

I see...

What does this tell me? What does it make me think about?

I think...

What other thoughts or questions does this raise?

I wonder...
