

**Fall 2009 Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly  
Learning Activity – Secondary Level**

**Picturing American Industrialization: The Chicago Stockyards**

**OVERVIEW**

Overview

In this activity, students use visual literacy strategies to “read” primary source photographs of the meatpacking industry in the Chicago Stockyards and to organize and reflect on their findings. Intended for use within a larger unit of study about the rise of American industrialization, the activity is designed to accommodate different levels of student comprehension and ability.

Objectives

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:

- perform a basic primary source analysis
- generate questions about the Chicago Stockyards and the meatpacking industry for further investigation
- make historical and personal connections with the content

Time Required

Two class periods

Recommended Grade Range

6-8\*

*\*This activity is adapted from a lesson plan originally designed for and implemented in a seventh-grade inclusion class of 30 students. The class included eight students with learning disabilities reading at least two or three years behind reading level and a majority of students who were English-language learners.*

Topic/s

Cities, Towns; Technology, Industry

Subject

Social Studies

Standards

McREL 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Standards & Benchmarks

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

*Historical Understanding*

Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective

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### OVERVIEW (CONT'D)

#### *United States History*

Standard 16. Understands how the rise of corporations, heavy industry, and mechanized farming transformed American society.

#### *Language Arts*

Standard 7. (Reading) Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

Standard 8. (Listening and Speaking) Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Standard 9. (Viewing) Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

#### Credits

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### PREPARATION

#### Materials

Have these selected materials ready before the activity.

-Print copies of two primary source photographs (one copy of each photograph per student):

- Image A: *In the heart of the Great Union Stock Yards, Chicago, U.S.A., c. 1909*  
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b43425>
- Image B: *Men, primarily African American, working with cattle carcasses hanging in a slaughter house in the stockyards, ca. 1904*  
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.ndlpcoop/ichicdn.n000985>

-Prepare to display and distribute copies of the following visual literacy graphic organizers:

- *Visual Labeling* graphic organizer (one of each version per student)
- *Reading for Content-Visuals with Action* graphic organizer (two per student)

#### Resources

Before guiding students through the activity, teachers can familiarize themselves with the visual literacy graphic organizers and the history of the Chicago Stockyards by reviewing:

- Examples of completed graphic organizers (See attached, Figures 1 and 2)
- “Chicago Stock Yards,” pp. 105, 108, Chicago Stories: 1830s – World War I: Visual Images for Classroom Instruction. Newman, M., Spirou, C., Danzer, G. National-Louis University: Chicago, IL. 2007. (See attached, reprinted with authors’ permission)

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PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the focus of the activity by asking students:

- ***Have you ever heard of the meatpacking industry?***

Depending upon students' responses, ask a follow-up question such as,

- ***What can you tell me about the meatpacking industry? OR***
- ***What do you think this type of industry might produce based on its name?***

*Note: Pause for about three to five seconds to allow all students to think about their answers before soliciting responses to questions. Draw students' attention to the two parts of the compound word 'meatpacking' when necessary.*

2. Tell the class that they will begin learning about the meatpacking industry as an example of the rise of American industrialization by examining a couple of black-and-white photographs. Explain that these photographs are primary sources, meaning that they were created during the time under study and have been kept as records to help answer questions about the past.

3. Pass out copies of Image A. Ask guiding questions to help students start making observations. Possible questions include:

- ***What do you see in this photograph?***
- ***What do you notice first?***
- ***What other details can you see?***

*Note: For students with visual processing deficits, make sure the photograph is printed in high quality. The most important features of the photograph can be circled out for them.*

4. Display a blank Visual Labeling graphic organizer (version with Image A inserted in middle). Explain to the class:

- ***This graphic organizer will help you to examine the photograph more carefully and take note of what you've observed. Let's look again at this photograph and use the questions at the bottom of the sheet to label its different features.***

*Note: Refer to Figure 1 for an example of a completed Visual Labeling graphic organizer based on Image A.*

5. Ask the first question and model how to complete the graphic organizer by writing, "men standing," in the upper left box. Link this label to the photograph's corresponding features by drawing an arrow.
6. Ask the rest of the questions, labeling and drawing arrows to the corresponding features to complete the graphic organizer together as a class. Review all of the photograph's labeled features before moving on to the next graphic organizer.

*Note: Create peer modeling opportunities for learning disabled (LD) students by asking volunteer students to come up and label one feature.*

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PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

7. Display and pass out copies of the Reading for Content-Visuals with Action graphic organizer. Explain to the class:

- ***This graphic organizer will help you to organize and reflect on your observations from the photograph using different types of questions like: when? where? what? who? how?***

*Note: Teachers can adapt the questions asked in this organizer by reducing the number of questions asked or rephrasing them to meet the individual needs of their students.*

8. Ask student volunteers to read aloud all questions on the graphic organizer before inviting the class to respond based on their observations. Encourage students to hypothesize and connect to any prior learning relating to American industrialization during the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Use guiding questions to facilitate discussion, such as:

- ***How do you know? What details in the photograph tell you that?***
- ***What do you predict or hypothesize is the answer based on your observations?***
- ***What other resources might provide you with more information to check your answer?***

*Note: Prompt students to imagine what people in the photograph might smell, hear, see, and touch in their surroundings. Refer to Figure 2 for an example of a completed Reading for Content-Visuals with Action graphic organizer based on Image A.*

9. After completing the graphic organizer together as a class, help students check their responses to the “when” and “where” questions by sharing the photograph’s bibliographic record. Emphasize the importance of consulting primary sources’ bibliographic information (caption, year published, creation place, etc.) to learn more about them and additional sources.

10. Explain that students will now work collaboratively to complete the same two graphic organizers but using a different photograph. Assign students to work in pairs and pass out copies of the following:

- Image B
- a blank Visual Labeling graphic organizer (version with Image B inserted in middle)
- a blank Reading for Content-Visuals with Action graphic organizer.

*Notes:*

- *Pair LD students with severe difficulties in handwriting and spelling with students who have no such challenges. Alternatively, for individual work, these LD students can use PowerPoint to record their answers onto a slide of the graphic organizer or type their answers into a Word document instead of writing on paper.*
- *Working in pairs or small groups helps compensate for the reading and writing difficulties experienced by LD students. Peer-mediated discussion also facilitates critical thinking.*
- *Provide scaffolding support through conversations with small groups and individuals, prompting questions, example of summary, and mini-lessons whenever needed.*

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PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

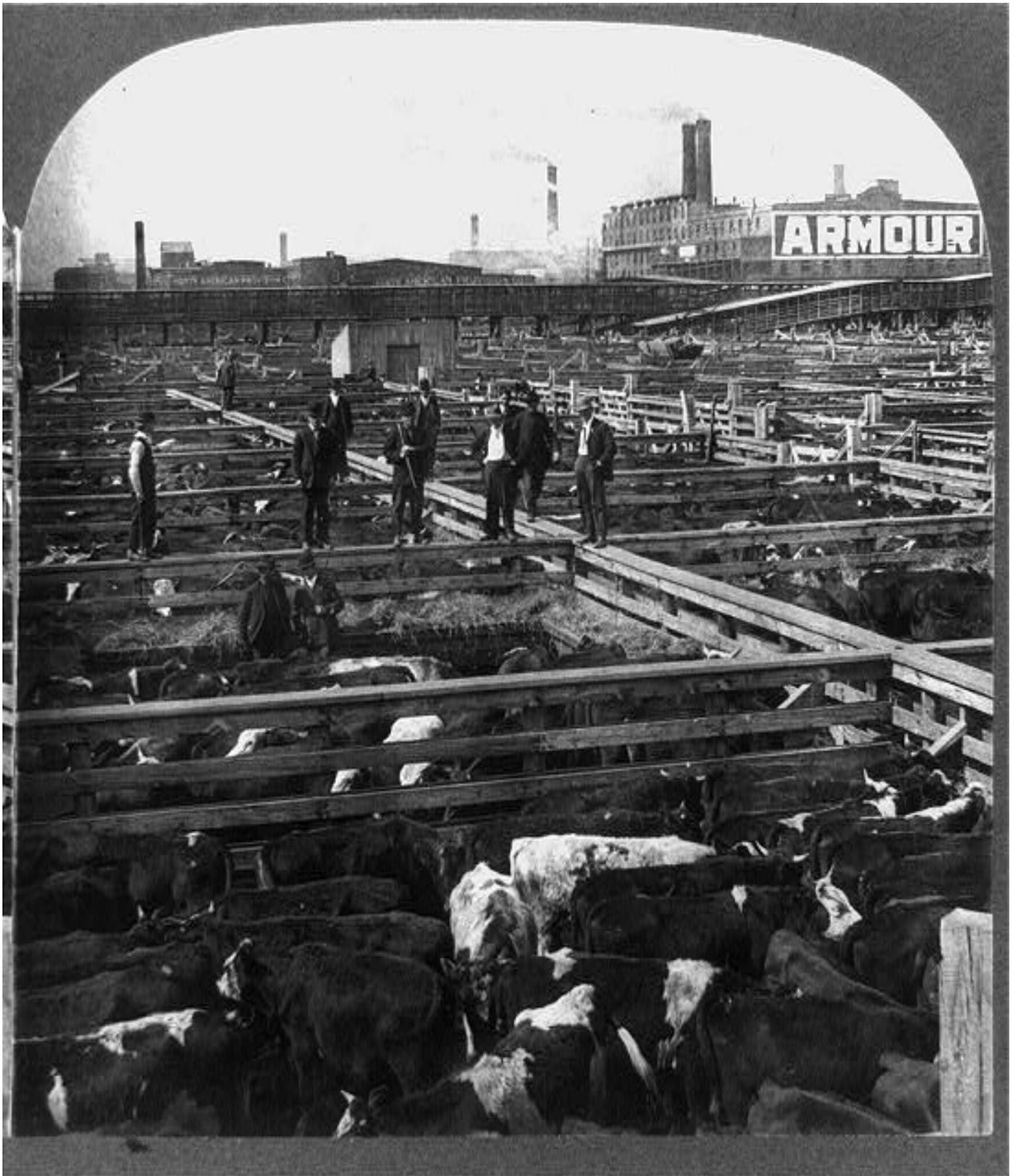
11. When all students are ready, review their completed graphic organizers together as a class by comparing and contrasting pairs' responses, particularly their captions/summary statements. Consult the photograph's bibliographic information to check "when" and "where" responses.
12. Discuss questions raised by both photographs about the meatpacking industry in general and/or the Chicago Stockyards specifically. Model first by asking and writing questions on the board, such as:
  - **Who worked in the stockyards and slaughterhouses of Chicago?**
  - **What were the working conditions for these workers?**
  - **How did workers process the meat in these stockyards and slaughterhouses?**
  - **Where did the meat go after it had been processed?**
  - **When did meat packing first become an industry?**
  - **Why did the meat packing industry build stockyards and slaughterhouses in Chicago?**
13. After soliciting and recording students' questions on the board, conclude by helping students to identify additional primary and secondary sources for further investigation of one or more of their questions.

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS

- Reading
  - o Read aloud selected passages from *The Jungle*—a novel by Upton Sinclair. Assign students to work in pairs. Each pair chooses a question from those previously generated by the class, re-reads the selected passages for clues to the answer, and presents their findings to the class.
- Research
  - o Divide students into small groups to research a different aspect of or perspective on the topic (e.g., immigrants and the Chicago Stockyards, the rise of the meatpacking industry, Chicago Stockyard Strike, Meat Inspection Act of 1906, etc.). Groups could present their research to the class as the culminating project.
- Writing
  - o Assign students to assume the character of a Chicago Stockyard worker and write home a letter explaining their work conditions and their lives as an employee in the Chicago Stockyards. They will use the two primary source photographs, the completed graphic organizers and at least one additional primary or secondary source to help them write the letter.

EVALUATION

- Students' active participation in class discussions
- Teacher-developed rubrics to rate the quality of graphic organizers completed by students
- Teacher observation of students' work in pairs



**IMAGE A**



**IMAGE B**

The Library of Congress

[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/accessibility/pdf/secondary\\_activity.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/accessibility/pdf/secondary_activity.pdf)

Focus: \_\_\_\_\_



Using the questions below, read the visual image to label the most important features.

1) Where is \_\_\_\_\_ ?

4) Where is \_\_\_\_\_ ?

2) Where is \_\_\_\_\_ ?

5) Where is \_\_\_\_\_ ?

3) Where is \_\_\_\_\_ ?

6) Where is \_\_\_\_\_ ?

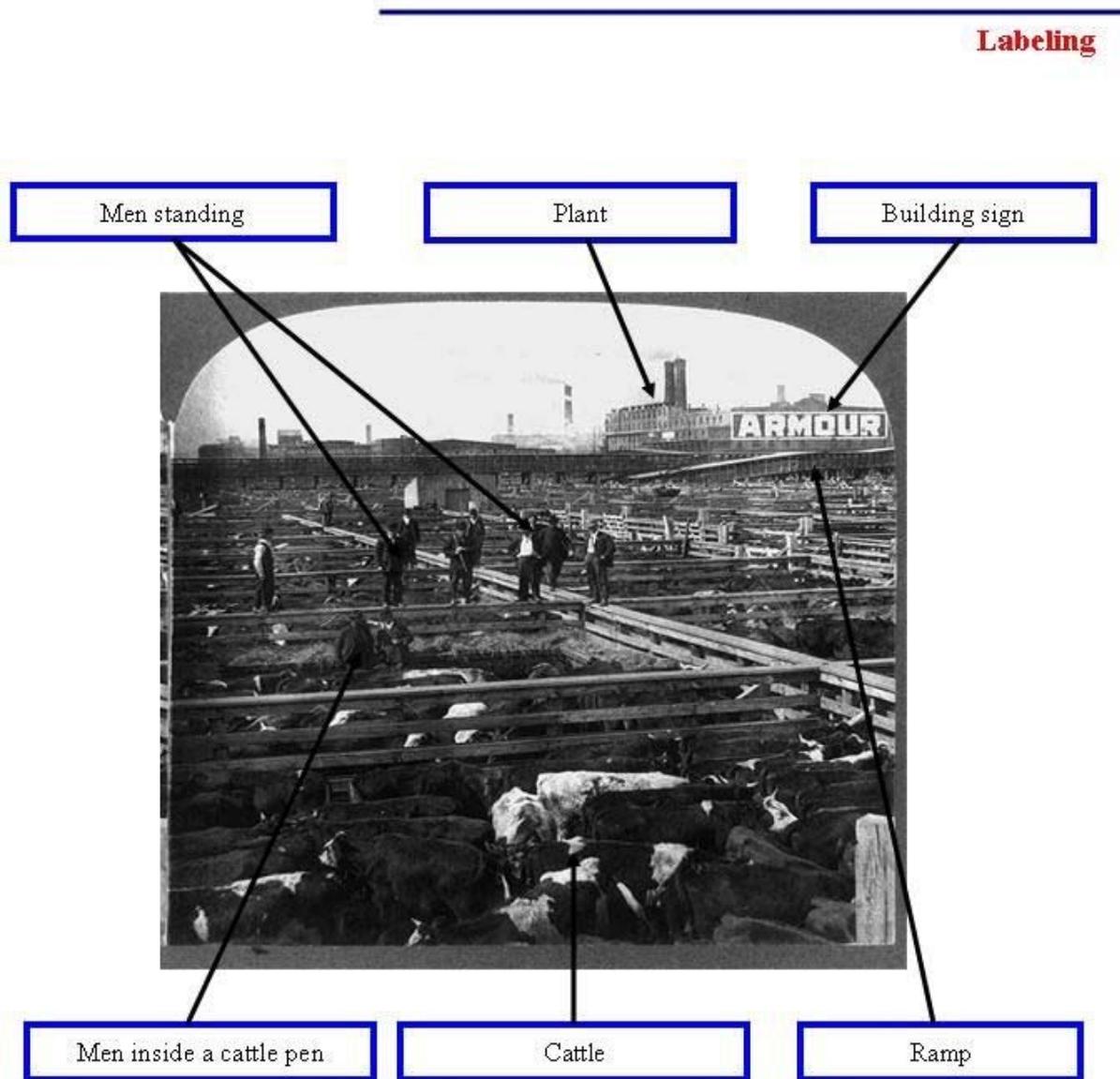
Focus: \_\_\_\_\_



Using the questions below, read the visual image to label the most important features.

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1) Where is _____ ? | 4) Where is _____ ? |
| 2) Where is _____ ? | 5) Where is _____ ? |
| 3) Where is _____ ? | 6) Where is _____ ? |

Figure 1. Visual Labeling Graphic Organizer Completed Example



**Using the questions below, read the visual image to label the most important features.**

- 1) Where is men standing \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- 2) Where is men inside a cattle pen \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- 3) Where is plant \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- 4) Where is ramp \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- 5) Where is building sign \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- 6) Where is cattle \_\_\_\_\_ ?

# Visual Literacy for All Learners

## Reading for Content-Visuals with Action



Based on the picture, when did this happen?

**When**

\_\_\_\_\_



Who is in the picture?

**Who**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Based on the picture, where is this?

**Where**

\_\_\_\_\_



What are they doing?

**Actions**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



To whom or what are they doing this?

**Whom or what**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



How are they doing these things?

**How**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

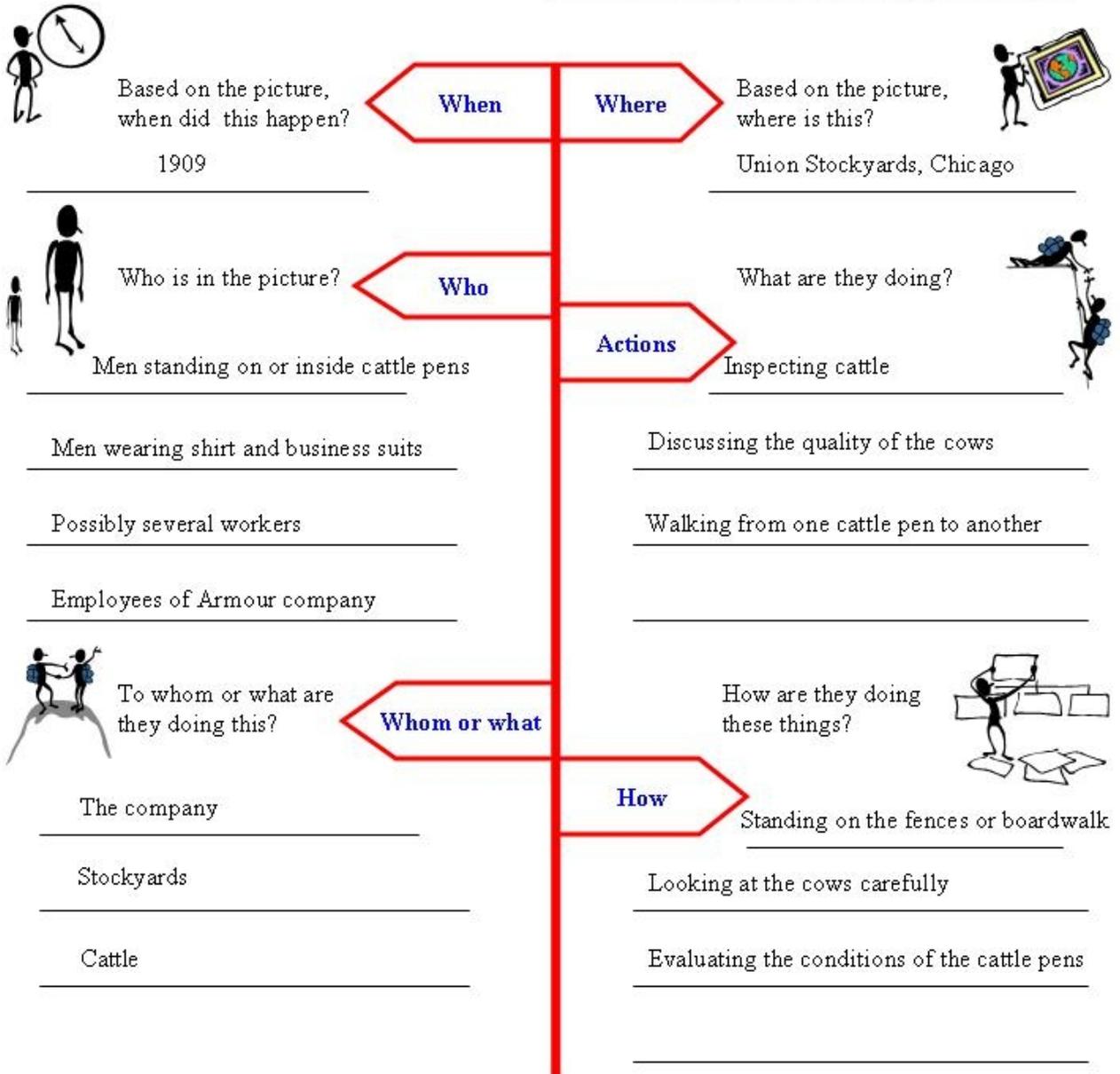
**Summarize the Picture or Write a Caption**

Consult other sources if the information is not in the picture and its title.

Figure 1. Visual Labeling Graphic Organizer Completed Example

Visual Literacy for All Learners

Reading for Content-Visuals with Action



Summarize the Picture or Write a Caption

Consult other sources if the information is not in the picture and its title.

## MEAT AND POTATOES

### Exploration 15: Bringing Meat to the World

#### Chicago Stock Yards

The rise of Chicago’s Union Stock Yards was a critical era in the city’s history, both from an economic and a social perspective. Small stock yards had operated in Chicago



since the 1840s. More than 45 packinghouses existed in the city during the early part of the 1860s. They managed to process as many as 100,000 hogs annually. These included the Lake Shore Yard and the Cottage Grove Yard. Increasingly, a demand for a larger, more centralized location caused business interests to collaborate in order to increase their efficiency and maximize their profits.

In 1864, a railroad consortium identified 320 acres southwest of the Loop for the purpose of processing livestock. The Union Stock Yards opened in 1865. The location near the Chicago River allowed the companies to pump water for daily use and

dump the waste from the killing of the animals. The latter practice gave rise to the “Bubbly Creek,” an area with high contamination.

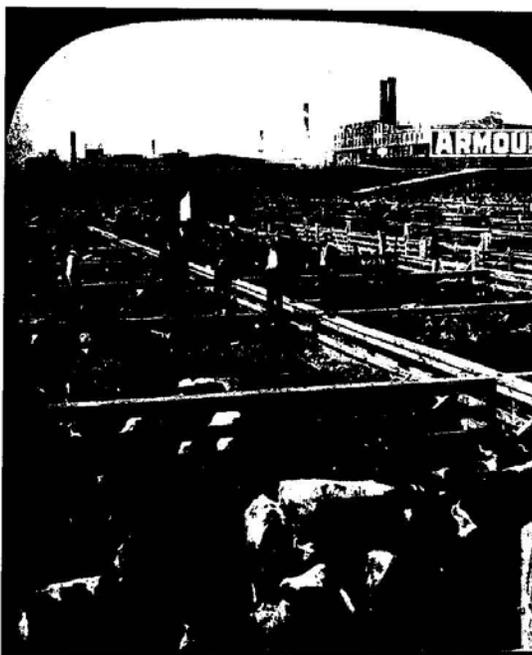
A complex railroad system located within and around the grounds allowed for the easy unloading of the animals into the pens. The stockyard increased to about 475 acres around 1900.

An ice-cooling invention was welcomed by the industry and in 1872 it revolutionized the work, as preserving meats was now possible. Previously, work at the stockyards had been limited to the winter months, but now it could

continue all year. The introduction of the refrigerated railroad car by Gustavus Swift in 1882 allowed for meat to be transported across the country, increasing production and consumption.

One of the firms in the Union Stock Yards was the Armour Company that moved into the location in 1867. Swift, Morris and Hammond also were there, eventually controlling a considerable share of the market.

During the early 1900s, 25,000 people were employed at the Chicago stock yards producing 82 percent of the total meat consumed in the country. Technological breakthroughs dramatically altered work in the meatpacking plants.



As this photo shows, the Chicago stock yards had the capacity to handle large quantities of beef. The Armour Company advertisement shows that Chicago meat reached dinner plates in France.

## Connections

### Working Conditions and Strikes at the Stockyards

The working conditions at the Union Stock Yards were less than ideal. Blood-soaked floors were common in slaughterhouses as the workers killed the animals to be processed. The work hours were very long, typically more than ten per day, and the temperature, especially in the summer was extreme, often surpassing 100 degrees. The wages were low since new immigrants flooded the city looking for work.

The labor force at the Union Stock Yards was mostly unskilled. Butchers were the only skilled workers since they needed to know how to use the knife to extract as much meat from the bone as possible. Assembly line work was most typical employing many of the immigrants who did not speak English. Initially the Irish and the Germans worked at the stockyards, and later employees were Bohemians, Poles, Slavs and other Eastern European immigrants. By the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans and Mexicans found employment. Women worked primarily on the assembly lines of the packinghouses and children served as messengers. Both of these labor groups were paid



Workers Demonstrate during 1904 strike

much less than male workers.

Given the deplorable conditions, workers resorted to strikes, aiming to alter the current working conditions. Their efforts to unionize proved unsuccessful following strikes in 1894 and 1904.

### Surrounding Neighborhoods

Many neighborhoods developed around the Chicago Union Stock Yards following the opening of the slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants. Bordered by Pershing Road, Garfield Boulevard, Racine Avenue, and Western Avenue, the community became known as Back of the Yards.

Many ethnic groups occupied the neighborhoods around the stockyards. Irish, Germans, Bohemians, Poles, Slavs, Lithuanians, Russians, Ukrainians, African Americans, and Mexicans all lived in different areas, separated from each other. The housing was very poor and the living conditions horrible. Poverty and overcrowding as well as diseases deriving from unimproved conditions impacted the residents.

In his book *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair wrote about the conditions around the Union Stock Yards from the initial impressions of new immigrants arriving to Chicago: “...Along with the thickening smoke they began to notice another circumstance, a strange, pungent odor. They were not sure that it was unpleasant, this odor; some might have called it sickening, but their taste in odors was not developed, and they were only sure that it was curious. Now, sitting in the trolley car, they realized that they were on their way to the home of it—that they had traveled all the way from Lithuania to it. It was now no longer something far off



Young girls from the stock yards neighborhood.

and faint, that you caught in whiffs; you could literally taste it, as well as smell it—you could take hold of it, almost, and examine it at your leisure. They were divided in their opinions about it. It was an elemental odor, raw and crude; it was rich, almost rancid, sensual, and strong. There were some who drank it in as if it were an intoxicant; there were others who put their handkerchiefs to their faces.”