

**Fall 2010 Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly  
Learning Activity – Elementary Level Grades K-2**

**30-Second Look: Classrooms Then and Now**



Johnston, Frances Benjamin. "Classroom scenes in Washington, D.C. public schools: studying live dog, 5th Division." 1899? From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001703662/>

## OVERVIEW

### Overview

Students practice their observation skills by participating in a timed 30-second look at a historic photograph of a classroom. Students may then work together as a class to record and compare their observations, ideas and questions about the photograph, or they may record their observations individually and pair and share with a partner first. Students conclude by re-examining the photograph to identify similarities and differences between this classroom from the past and their classroom today.

### Objectives

After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- observe details in a historic photograph;
- express ideas and questions about the photograph based on observations and prior knowledge; and,
- identify similarities and differences between the historic photograph and their own classroom.

### Time Required

One 45-minute class period or less, depending on grade level

### Recommended Grade Range

K-2

### Topic/s

Culture, Folklife

### Subject

History

### Standards

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

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

The Library of Congress

[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/elementary/pdf/elementary\\_activityK-2.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/elementary/pdf/elementary_activityK-2.pdf)

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OVERVIEW (CONT'D)

*Historical Understanding*

Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective.

*Life Skills: Thinking and Reasoning*

Standard 3. Level I [Grades K-2] Benchmark 8. Identifies the similarities and differences between persons, places, things, and events using concrete criteria.

PREPARATION

Materials

Have these materials ready before the activity.

-Prepare to project the following:

Photograph: “Classroom scenes in Washington, D.C. public schools: studying the dog, 5<sup>th</sup> Division.” 1899? From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a39508>

Bibliographic Record: “Classroom scenes in Washington, D.C. public schools: studying the dog, 5<sup>th</sup> Division.” <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001703662/>

-(Optional) Prepare to distribute unlined paper, one sheet per student:

-(Optional) Print copies of the take-home activity worksheet, one copy per student

PROCEDURE

1. Ask students: have you ever played a game where you had to remember what you have seen? After they share experiences, emphasize that being a good observer—someone who can look closely at details and remember what he or she sees—is important for learning in school, too.
2. Explain that to help students practice their observation skills, you are going to show them a picture for 30 seconds only. Their challenge is to look very carefully at this picture and try to remember as many details as they can. Students cannot talk to each other, or draw or write anything down on paper during their 30-second look.
3. When students are ready, project the historic classroom photograph. Tell students their 30 seconds starts now. Walk among them to ensure no one talks or records any details on paper.
4. Alert students when they have only 10 seconds remaining, and countdown the final three seconds before removing the projected image from view.

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PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

5. **(Optional)** Distribute unlined paper, one sheet per student, and instruct students to work individually to record everything they can remember about the picture. It is their choice to draw, write or do both. Explain that what they draw or write does not need to be good; it is just to help them remember their observations.
6. **(Optional)** After about 10 minutes, pair students with partners and ask them to share their recorded observations. Each pair should compare and contrast observations, discussing:
  - Which of our observations are the same?
  - Which of our observations are different? How are they different?

Provide at least five minutes for student pairs to discuss their observations.

7. Draw a large chart on the whiteboard with three columns labeled (left to right):

What did we see? (observations)	What do we think we know? (ideas)	What do we wonder? (questions)

8. Prompt the class to begin sharing their observations, ideas and questions about the picture by asking, “What did you see?”

Each time a student shares an observation, idea or question, ask the class questions to determine where it goes on the chart. Possible questions include:

- How many of you made this same observation (e.g., “I saw a dog”) How many did not?
- What other details can you remember about this observation? (e.g., the dog was on a desk)
- What do you think you know but are not certain of? (e.g., the teacher was petting the dog)
- What do you wonder about this picture? (e.g., why is there a dog in the classroom?)

Encourage students to try to recall as many details as possible, and note any differences of opinion. For example, how many of the students in the photograph were girls? What were they wearing? How were they sitting? Activate prior knowledge by prompting students to use vocabulary words like "school," "teacher" and "students" during discussion.

9. After students have shared all of their observations, ideas and questions, project the picture again and guide students in comparing and contrasting. Possible questions include:
  - Let’s review the observations we wrote under the “What did we see” column: how do they compare to what we see now in the picture?
  - What evidence, if any, do you see in the picture that supports the ideas we wrote under the, “What do we think we know?” column?
  - Which questions, if any, that we wrote under “What we wonder?” can you answer now looking at this picture?
  - What new questions do you have about details that you may have missed the first time?

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PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

10. Project the picture's bibliographic record and read aloud to students the title and date created. Explain that 1899 means this picture shows a classroom from more than 100 years ago, long before students' grandparents and even great-grandparents were born. As a class, discuss the following questions to conclude the activity:
- How is this classroom from the past different from our classroom today?
  - How is it the same?
  - Would you rather be a student in this classroom from the past or in our classroom? Why?

ACTIVITY EXTENSION

-As a class, brainstorm a list of observations about the students' classroom and write their observations on the take-home activity worksheet (see attached). Students should follow its instructions, and the next day in class share what they learned about how their classroom compares to their parents' or other adults' classrooms at their age.

EVALUATION

- Students' active participation in 30-second look activity
- Students' active participation in class discussions
- (Optional) Students' active participation in independent work, including written or drawn observations of the picture



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Take-Home Activity Directions:**

1. Think about our classroom. Write down your observations: what do you see? Describe as many details as you can.
2. Ask an adult to read your observations. What do they remember about their classroom at your age? Write or draw their memories.
3. On the back of this page, write 1-2 sentences about how your adult's classroom was the same or different from our classroom now.

*My classroom observations*

*My adult's classroom memories*