

[Source material linked here.](#)

## Questions on FORM—what type of visual image is this?

1. Which of the following formal elements most strongly captures your attention when viewing this image: color, line, shape, texture, space, etc? Describe how or why.
2. Describe the use of color by exploring how it is present or absent in the image you are exploring. You can do so by considering the following questions. Jot down your impressions along with supportive details as you analyze the image carefully. NOTE: While we perceive the color present in a photograph to be 'captured' *naturally* from nature or the natural environment, color can in fact be manipulated in the development of the photographic image. Moreover, if the image under consideration is not a photograph, color has been at least or even more selectively chosen. Think carefully then about the choices of color in the composition of the image you are analyzing.
  1. What colors do you see? Are their multiple manifestations of any particular color along the visual spectrum? Try to distinguish them by their hues (e. g. pink, red, brick) as well as by their degrees of saturation [link to <http://www.pomona.edu/Academics/courserelated/classprojects/Visual-lit/saturation/Saturation.HTML>] and value contrasts, that is their light/dark tonal elements. To explore the choice of color in the production of an image, view the following descriptive module explaining *Color Theory*: <http://www.arthistory-archaeology.umd.edu/resources/teaching.html>.
  2. How do you think the use of color impacts the way in which you experience the image? On a scale of 1 to 10, note how important the use of color is to you in your interaction with the image and explain why you gave it that numerical rank. What elements of the image are more or less important than color in your estimation? Does the use of color evoke any emotion in your response to the image? If so, how would you describe that emotion?
3. Consider the use of line and shape in the image you are exploring by answering the following questions.
  1. What shapes are present in the image (used either in constructing the objects or the background of the image)? What shapes are most frequently employed or repeated?
  2. How is line used to create these shapes? How and when are the lines or they shapes used in dynamic ways to suggest movement? How and when are they used in static ways that do not imply active motion?
  3. Does the use of line contribute to an illusory three-dimensional space in the image? Does line exist in two dimensional relationships?
  4. What is the relationship between line and the sensations of texture in the image? How do line and shape create textural impressions?
  5. How does line/shape combine to create patterns in the image? What patterns are created? How do any perceived patterns (including color patterns) owe their design effectiveness to the use of line and shape?
  6. Is the use of line and shape in the image a more or less powerful visual experience than the use of color in the image? On a scale of 1 to 10, note how important the use of line and shape are to you in your interaction with the image and explain why you gave it that numerical rank. Does the use of line or shape evoke any emotion in your response to the image? If so, how would you describe that emotion?
4. How is space used in the image?
  1. Does the space seem cluttered, busy, open, white, empty, colorful?
  2. What compositional designs are incorporated into the use of space? What types of angles or exterior lighting sources are present or implied? (If the image is a photograph, consider the selection and use of camera angles.)
  3. On a scale of 1 to 10, note how important the use of space is to you in your interaction with the image and explain why you gave it that numerical rank. Does the use of space evoke any emotion in your response to the image? If so, how would you describe that emotion?
5. How do the elements of color, line, shape, texture, space and so on work together to contribute to the design of the image? Consider their interactions:
  1. How are these elements arranged and/or balanced together within the image?
  2. Are any of the design elements dominant? What elements are less dominant? What would change about the image if you were to change the relationship of the design elements to one another to make another element dominant? How would your response to the image be altered?
  3. Imagine how you might change the image by varying one of the design elements discussed above. What element would you vary and how?
  4. What emotion(s) do the combined design elements create for you as you explore this image? What memories or associations are called up for you by the way in which the design elements are used? Do you think another viewer might interpret the use of design elements differently? Why or why not? Might individual or socio-cultural memories or experiences affect one's response to the design elements? Why or why not?
6. How do the pictorial elements, such as color, line, shape, space and texture, relate to the thematic elements of the image?
  1. Is there any written material or use of symbol in the image? If so, how does it relate to the pictorial elements described above?
  2. In your judgment, what is the function of the image? How do the formal elements, both pictorial and symbolic, support this function?
  3. Of what significance is the medium (oil, cartoon, photograph, map etc.) in thinking about the formal elements and/or the function of the image? How would they be altered if the image were to be reproduced in another medium (i.e., an oil painting or a map is photographed)? How does one explore an image differently is it a reproduction of an artifact or the artifact itself?
  4. What is the size of the image? If the image is a reproduction, how is it altered from its original size? How does this affect one's response to it?
  5. How do all the formal elements, pictorial as well as textual and symbolic, contribute to your emotional response or intellectual understanding of the image?

## Questions on CONTENT

1. Is your image a map?
  1. How is the legend organized? By color? By shading? By symbol?
  2. What is the scale?
  3. How is the map oriented? Where is North?
  4. Is there a color scheme - what do the colors represent?
  5. What are the natural features?
  6. How is the topography marked?
  7. Are there bodies of water?

8. What type of water is it? How deep is it?
  9. What is the relationship between the water and the shore?
  10. What are the human-made features of the built environment?
  11. Are there buildings or other engineered sites? Are they identified by a point? A symbol? A word? A shape? Does the shape bear a relationship to the footprint of the built environment?
  12. How do pedestrians or vehicles circulate through places on the map?
  13. Are there roads, paved or unpaved surfaces?
  14. What is the relationship between each of the features?
2. Does your image depict a landscape?
1. What are the natural features?
  2. Are there flora and fauna? Is there vegetation? Does its presence provide clues about the season of the year? Does it provide information about the climate? What does it suggest about sources of water?
  3. Is a sky visible? Does it indicate the time of day; of season; climate?
  4. What does the terrain suggest? Is it "wild"/ "natural"? Cultivated? Landscaped?
  5. How is the land organized? Is it flat or horizontal? Are there elevations? Are there depressions?
  6. Is there an animal presence? Is there a natural or cultivated habitat for animals?
  7. What is evident of the built environment? Are there buildings or other engineered artifacts like bridges? Roads? Dams?
  8. What are the materials of the built environment?
  9. What were the construction methods? Does the built environment appear to be handmade, made with the assistance of mechanization or pre-fabricated?
  10. What is the relationship between each of the features?
  11. What is the relationship between the land, animals, humans, and the built environment? Does this relationship suggest anything about the role of technology during the period the image was made?
3. Does your image depict people?
1. How many people are featured in the image?
  2. Can you approximate their ages? Their races? Are they male or female?
  3. Are they indoors or outdoors?
  4. Does the image appear to be candid or posed?
  5. Is it a formal or informal portrait?
  6. Is it a still portrait? How are the figures depicted? In profile? From the front? From behind? Is there a backdrop? Are there props?
  7. Is it an action shot? What is happening in the image? Where did the action begin? How are others responding to the action(s)?
  8. Are there material objects in the image?
  9. How are the people dressed? What type of clothing are they wearing? What type of shoes are they wearing? Are they wearing accessories like jewelry, hats, scarves? What does their costume suggest about the period, the place, the climate, the temperature, the season, the setting? Are there symbols associated with their dress or objects? Are they wearing uniforms?
  10. What type of activities might they engage in?
  11. Are they engaged in individual or collective activities?
  12. What is the purpose of their activity? For personal pleasure? For worship? For work? For relaxation? Etc.
  13. Is there any evidence of the presence or relationship to technology?
  14. Is there any evidence of the presence or relationship to nature?
4. Does your image depict buildings?
1. How is the exterior of the building organized?
  2. What are the features of the façade's composition?
  3. Are there windows? How many? How are they arranged?
  4. Is the façade a solid plane? Are there patterns?
  5. How many stories is it?
  6. What are the materials used?
  7. Are there special details that have been applied or incorporated like trim, columns, medallions, clock faces?
  8. What architectural style is it?
  9. What is the scale relative to humans?
  10. Where do people enter and exit?
  11. How is the interior of the building organized?
  12. How is the space created? By rooms? By walls? By manipulating ceiling heights?
  13. Are the walls covered? Are the floors covered? Are the windows covered? Are the door openings covered?
  14. Is there a decorative plan?
  15. Are there furnishings?
  16. Are there appliances?
  17. How is air circulation handled? Is there evidence of technology or machinery for heating or cooling? Are there dedicated places and features for heating and cooling - like fireboxes for warmth or transoms above the doors for air circulation?
5. Is your image the plan of a building?
1. How does do people move or circulate through the spaces? Are the spaces linked to each other? Through rooms? Openings? Corridors? Stairs? Elevators? Escalators?
  2. Where do people enter and exit? How points of egress are there? Would everyone use them?
  3. Is there a hierarchy of spaces? How has that been achieved? By manipulating the sizes and shapes of space? What is the length and width of the space? Can you tell the ceiling height?
  4. What are the formal features?
  5. Is there a decorative program?
  6. Are there openings for windows?
  7. Are there openings for passageways? Are there doors? How do they swing? Where have they been hung on the wall?
  8. Are there private spaces? Are there public spaces? Are there semi-public/semi-private spaces? Private to whom? Public to whom?
  9. What is the relationship between each of the features?

## Questions on CONTEXT

1. What is the medium of the image you are examining?
  1. Is the image a painting? Drawing? Digital image?
  2. In what environment/platform is the image located? Is it on paper? In a book? On cloth? On a computer monitor or movie screen?
  3. Is this an original image or a reproduction? How can you tell?
  4. If reproduced, what was the original medium of the image? What was its original size?
  5. If reproduced, what details may have been lost or diminished when this image was reproduced?
2. What is the history of this image?

1. Have you ever seen this image before? If so, when and where?
  2. Are there any written sources that give you background information on this image? If yes, what is that background?
  3. Are there any "stories" you know or have heard about this image?
  4. Does this image remind you of any other images? If yes, what are those images and when and where did you see them?
  5. Does this image remind you of anything you've read or experienced? If yes, what are the details of those texts and/or memories?
3. Who created this image?
1. Was this image created by an individual? A group? A machine?
  2. Was the image created by an artist? An advertising firm? A child? A corporation?
  3. Can you tell if this image was produced over time by one or more people? If so, can you tell how many drafts or preliminary stages the image went through?
  4. Did the creator have formal artistic training? Were they self-taught?
4. What audience was this image created for and where did the image first appear?
1. Was there an intended audience for this image? Was there a secondary intended audience? Has the image had an unintended audience?
  2. Did it circulate when it was first made? If so, how did it circulate (e.g., on the internet, in books, on bootleg video tapes, on postcards)? Was the image designed/intended for circulation?
  3. Was it displayed in an exhibition? If so, who attended the exhibition?
  4. Was it published in a periodical? A newspaper, a magazine? A 'zine? What were the subscription and circulation figures of the periodical?
  5. Was it published electronically?
  6. How did audiences respond to the image? Was there a response by the general public?
  7. Has the image been criticized? By professional critics? By other artists/journalists? By the general public or specific audiences (e.g., specific racial/ethnic audiences)?
5. What is the social, political, and/or cultural context of this image?
1. Can this image be located within any social institutions? Does it belong to a family? Was it produced by a government? Is it owned by the media?
  2. Is this image used in any social practices or rituals? Might it be given as a gift? Used in a ceremony? Displayed at social functions?
  3. Does this image express any politics? If so, what are those politics?
  4. Are there any politics surrounding the image? Any groups that have protested the image? Any groups that have fought for this image?
  5. Does this image have any cultural meaning? Does the meaning vary for members of different cultures?
  6. Does this image do any social, political, or cultural work? Does it explain any aspect of society? Does it win you over to any political position? Does it teach you anything about another culture, or your own?

### Questions on FRAME—the artist's presentation of the content

**Framing** includes both (1) the literal presentation and/or representation of an image or object in physical space, and (2) the accompanying interpretative markers a viewer both perceives and generates. To frame something then, on the literal level, is to give it a physical presence of some kind. Framing in this sense refers to the material presentation or representation of an object or image, and to the actual boundaries that function not only to enclose and contain the object but also to reveal it to us in a certain way. Despite the importance of viewer response to interpretative modes of framing an image, how a visual object or image is framed depends primarily upon decisions made by someone other than a viewer.

1. What is the connection between the medium used to produce the visual object and the question of framing? Physically framed? Interpretatively framed? How does medium influence how the visual object is viewed and where it is (able to be) placed?
2. Does the setting in which an object is displayed change the potential viewers? How?
3. In what way does the framing of a visual object influence the viewer's thinking about the age of the object? It's value?
4. In what way does the framing of a visual object influence the viewer's thinking about the identity of the producer of the object? Be specific and give as many aspects of identity as seem relevant.
5. Does the framing (physical or interpretative) of the object in question help you to think about what may have prompted the artist to create the visual objects in question?
6. Using the framing of the object as a starting point, compose a brief narrative (3-5 sentences) for the object. Explain what you understand from examining each image, particularly what you imagine the artist intended to convey by constructing the object.
7. Try to imagine multiple and distinctive physical framings/settings for a given object.
8. List one aspect of the image or object that you "see" differently as a result of using frame as an element of analysis. Compare your response to that of a classmate.
9. After considering the significance of framing to this image or object, indicate at least one question you have about the object that you would like to explore further.

### Questions on GAZE—the viewer's construction of the text

The viewer, with their **gaze**, plays a significant role in constructing meaning about an object or image. Even when viewers are accessing an image with the same framing information, such as when viewing the two images titled *American Gothic*, ([link](#)) each viewer bring her/his own gaze to the making meaning aspects of visual interpretation. The gaze of the viewer brings their own store of information and experience to bear in their recognition and perception of the visual elements that make up an image. The range of previous experience and social, cultural and political knowledge a viewer brings to the interaction with a visual object or image will influence the way in which s/he processes information and constructs meaning from her/his interaction with it. It may lead different viewers to produce different narratives and to construct different sets of meanings for the object or image in question.

1. How might *gaze* influence or depend upon what a viewer “sees” or “does not see” (literally or metaphorically) within a given image. Provide a concrete example using a selected image or images.
2. How many different types of *gaze* can you identify in selected visual images? Consult (link to this page above) to review the conceptual framework for *gaze*.
3. Using the image provided, discuss how the notion of gaze intersects with other principles of visual analysis such as form, content, and context. How might different viewer narratives and interpretations of a visual image intersect with the notion of *gaze*?
4. In considering the image provided, identify how elements of your identity as a viewer would shape your gaze? The gaze you experienced in return as a viewer? Some elements to consider would include your age, race, class, academic interests and training, ethnic or national background, cultural, religious, or geographic contexts of lived experience etc.
5. After completing question four, give an example of viewer interaction and gaze that would be different from your own. What elements of viewer identity would change?
6. List one aspect of the image that you “see” differently as a result of using gaze as an element of analysis. Compare your response to that of a classmate.