

9 Study an image

KEY
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DESCRIPTION

This key uses an image (photograph, painting, engraving, or another form of graphic representation) to stimulate discussion. The teacher prompts students to look closely and use descriptive language to say what they can see, rather than trying to guess what's going on or to make up stories. The key:

- encourages concentration and close scrutiny, and helps students discern a lot of information in a single image
- develops visual and oral language skills, and vocabulary
- helps students to generate inquiry questions
- creates curiosity and interest in an area of study
- can be used to start a new learning experience or, at different points along the way, to re-engage and stimulate interest in further inquiry
- is suitable for creative exploration of an imagined context, or for deepening inquiry in an area of real-world curriculum study

PLANNING

- Select an image that encapsulates the area of study and grabs the students' imagination. Choose an image which includes people – the key works particularly well with images of children.
- Write a list of information you want the students to acquire: dates, events, people, etc.
- Gather paper and pencils for writing.

METHOD



- 1 Show the students the image you selected in the planning.
- 2 Give the students a little bit of background, but not too much.
- 3 Invite them to take a look and see what they notice. Focus on observation and description, not on guessing what's happening.
- 4 Discuss the picture with the students, asking them to concentrate on what they can see, not on what's going on. This step is about observation and description, not about guessing. Don't ask leading questions. Ask them to say more.
- 5 Draw attention to anything the students might have missed or things not immediately obvious.
- 6 Impart some knowledge and key information about the image and the area of study, but not too much, just the main aspects.
- 7 Ask the students to imagine the thoughts of a person in the image and to write them down.
- 8 Ask the students to stand up and represent the person in the image whose thoughts they wrote down.
- 9 Ask them to voice the thoughts of the people, one at a time, as you walk by them.
- 10 Invite reflection and consider a follow-up activity such as writing or a piece of art.

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EXAMPLE 1 NATIVE LAND COURT



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- 1 Show the students the photograph 'Hui ki Papaiōea' by George Shailer (c.1881).^{*} Say, "I'm going to show you an image and invite you to study it."
- 2 Give the students a little bit of background, but not too much: "This black and white photo was taken over 140 years ago. The fronds around the edge are part of the frame around the main image. Look through them at the photograph and you'll see buildings and people and other intriguing details."
- 3 Invite the students to look closely and see what they notice: "What can you see? For now, let's concentrate on describing what we can see rather than guessing what's going on."
- 4 As the students respond, say, "Could you say some more" or "Any other details to point out?" Encourage others: "Sometimes it's the tiny details that contain the most information. I wonder if there's something you can spot which others may not have noticed?"
- 5 Draw attention to anything the students might have missed or things not immediately obvious: "What sort of place is this?" "What are people wearing?" "What ages are the people?" "Are any animals shown in the image?" "What structures and buildings can you see?" "What do you suppose the white posts are for?" "What do you think is in that long low pile by the fence?" Note: if one or more of the students starts talking knowledgeably about the image ("It's one of those photos from the Shailer collection!"), acknowledge the contribution but keep the focus at this stage on observation and description: "Thank you – store that away for now and we'll come back to it. For now, let's concentrate on describing what we see."
- 6 Share some knowledge and key information about the image and the area of study. Not too much – just the main aspects: "The photo shows Te Marae o Hine – The Square in Palmerston North in 1881. People have come together for a big hui [meeting] of something called the Native Land Court. The long pile running parallel with the fence is a collection of sacks of food and the carcasses of pigs. The kai [food] is to be placed in a hangi [earth oven] and cooked to create a feast to share at the end of the day."

- 7 Ask the students to imagine the thoughts of a person in the image and write these down: "Look at the small child standing in the foreground on the right. The camera has captured them standing with their right sleeve or mitten in their mouth, looking intently at something or someone they have spotted across the road. I wonder what this child might be thinking at this moment? They won't understand the reasons for the gathering, but they will be very aware of the sights, sounds and smells around them. Take a pen, and write down a thought you think might be going through this child's mind at this moment."
- 8 Ask the students to stand up and represent the person in the image: "Now let's stand up and represent that child for a moment. No need to move, just take the same position – left hand at your side, right hand up near your mouth."
- 9 Ask the students to voice the thoughts of the person in the image, one at a time: "Now, I'm going to walk up to each of you in turn, like a camera moving in for a close-up shot. As I pass, can I ask you to take your hand away from your mouth for a moment, and speak out loud what you think the child's thoughts might be." When all students have had the chance to speak, invite them to relax.
- 10 Ask, "What did we find out about the historic moment shown in this photograph? What do we still want to know more about? What are we curious to understand?" Use these questions as the starting point for further inquiry. Provide further information about the Native Land Court and why it was created.^{*} As a writing activity, students could be invited to imagine another moment, twenty years into the future, where the child (now an adult) writes a letter to a member of their whānau (family), sharing their memories of that earlier time. Compare students' writing with accounts of the Native Land Court proceedings, and encourage critical discussion on how stories change depending on who is telling them.

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EXAMPLE 2 EVACUEES



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- 1 Show the students the image: "I'd like to show you a photograph taken of children being evacuated at the start of World War Two."*
- 2 Give the students a little bit of background, but not too much: "The evacuees were taken out of the big cities and into the countryside to keep them safe from the bombing raids."
- 3 Invite the students to take a look and see what they notice. Focus on observation and description, not on guessing what's happening: "Take a look and see what you notice."
- 4 Discuss the picture with the students, asking them to concentrate on what they see, not on what's going on. Ask them to say more: "Could you say a bit more about that? What made you think that? Etc."
- 5 Draw attention to anything the students might have missed or which isn't immediately obvious: "Some of the children seem to have labels, like this girl at the front, and others don't. I wonder what this badge is on the boy's arm." Etc.
- 6 Provide some key information about the image and the area of study, but not too much, just the main aspects: "The evacuees, some as young as five, were separated from their families and found homes with people in the countryside. While some of the children might have seen it as an adventure, others must have been frightened, don't you think?"
- 7 Ask the students to write down the thoughts of the people in the image: "Can I ask you to choose one of the children in the photograph and to write down what you think they might be thinking. It doesn't have to be very long. For example, "I wish I was home with my mum. What will the family be like? I hope they're nice." Etc.
- 8 Ask the students to stand up and represent the people in the image: "Could I ask you to stand up for a moment and gather together here at the front of the class. I'm going to ask you to imagine being one of the children in the photo. You don't have to do much, just stand as they're standing."
- 9 Ask the students to voice the thoughts of the people, one at a time, as you walk by: "I'm going to walk among you, like a camera tracking in a film, and as I walk past can I ask you to voice the thoughts of the evacuees."
- 10 Invite reflection and consider a follow-up activity such as writing or a piece of art, maybe including a diary entry, a letter home, or a report in a local newspaper.

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DEEPENING REFLECTION

Reflection is vital for students' learning, so every time you use a key, or sequence of keys, remember to include time for students to think about, talk about, write or draw about what their learning has been. Here's a list of four strategies you can use to take critical reflection beyond a simple discussion. These strategies almost feel like keys in their own right, except they don't stand alone and don't involve moving into an imagined world. Think of them as ways of consolidating the learning. Try adding one or more of these at the end of your sequence. They add a welcome sense of ritual and seriousness, and provide evidence of students' thinking for assessment purposes.

- * **Find an essence** Invite students to come up with a six-word poem or statement that sums up their response to the context. Share the poems or statements with the group, and discuss.
- * **Mark a moment** Invite students to stand somewhere in the space where they experienced an 'aha' moment, received assistance from another student, or grappled with a tricky idea. Share the moments with the group, and discuss.
- * **Think again** Invite students to think critically with questions such as: does this sort of thing happen today / in real life? Whose perspective have we focused on, and why? Whose stories did we not hear today? And who else might have a perspective on what we've been learning – what would their views be? Invite reflection on personal learning by asking: what could we take away from our story to use in our own lives?" Invite reflection on how particular groups have been depicted during the session, particularly if this tended towards archetypes or stereotypes: what stereotypes did we play into? What did our story say about ... [insert reference here]? How does this compare with what we see in other stories and the wider world? Ask: what are you left wondering about? What questions do you have? Is there anything else we should talk about before we close?"
- * **Speak some wisdom** Invite students to gather in a circle – standing is often best as it adds to the sense of ritual. Introduce an object or artefact that represents a character from the context you've explored. Invite students to give advice to the character, speak as the character (if appropriate), or give a short reflection on what they have learned from the character. To keep things safe, make it clear that it's OK to pass. Hand the item around the circle from person to person. Close the activity with your own words. Carefully put the item away.

We would love to hear how you use this key in your teaching

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