

Reading a Visual Document: Guiding Questions  
“What’s going on here? What do you see that makes you think so?”

What do you see?

1. What people, objects, and activities do you see?
2. How are they arranged?
3. Describe the people in the image.
4. How are they dressed?
5. What are they doing?
6. What are the expressions on their faces?
7. What is the physical setting?
8. Describe the objects in the background?
9. What other details can be seen?

What do you think?

1. Read any words in the image for clues.
2. Why do you think the image was created?
3. Are there any clues to when this image was created?
4. What do you already know about the time period depicted in the image?
5. What occasion or event is being shown?
6. Did people pose for this image or was it a candid portrayal?
7. What might have happened just before the event being pictured?
8. What might happen just after?
9. Does anything in this image relate to your personal experience?

What do you want to find out?

1. After studying the image, making careful observations and drawing on prior knowledge, what questions remain?
2. What would you like to know to help you better understand this image?
3. What resources can help you find out about this time and about the beliefs of people living in this era?
4. What other documents might help you place this image into historical context?