

Before and After Stories

Language Arts Grade Levels 4 and up

Objectives: In order to understand the essential question of, “How can we read a photograph to find clues about what happened before and after the photograph was taken?” students describe photographs with “active” themes and hypothesize about what happened before and after, then sketch a visual storyboard that solidifies their ideas about the past and future. Storyboards build narratives around single photos and display easily. *Time Needed: 2-3 hours*

Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities:

- 1.9 Narratives (organize and relate a series of events, fictional or actual, in a coherent whole)
- 2.11 Elaboration (students represent their ideas in detailed form)

Grade Level Expectations:

- Narratives W5:11 and W5:12 (relate a story line plot/series of events and demonstrate use of narrative strategies)

Interdisciplinary Connections: Predicting and Hypothesizing skills (S5-6:2) used in science.

Materials & Resources:

- Landscape Change Program* Archive, www.uvm.edu/perkins/landscape
- Images: LS11355, LS06939, LS07022, LS10713, and LS10212 (or others)
- Cat and Spaghetti Photograph (from “Life Smiles Back: More than 200 Classic Photos from the Famous Back Page of America’s Favorite Magazine” by Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., 1988)
- “Reading a Photo” Worksheet (attached)
- Sample Storyboards (found on-line)
- Storyboard Template sheet (attached)

Activities:

1. Hook Your Students Students view “Cat and Spaghetti” photo and write one sentence about what they think happened before and after. Highlight different responses in group discussion.	4. Culminating Activity Students display their storyboards for a peer “Museum Walk” and discuss each other’s work.
2. Introduce Concepts A photograph is one parcel of time. The class uses visual clues and prior knowledge to “read” photographs from the <i>Landscape Change Program</i> using a worksheet (below).	5. Assessment Storyboard (or narrative) evaluated on elements of organization, relevance to photograph, and creativity.
3. Apply Skills Students independently “read” 1 of 4 photographs, fill out worksheets and discuss with peers. <i>Homework:</i> Use template (below) to sketch a narrative storyboard with “read” photo as one of the frames.	6. Extensions Create written narratives around photographs, using storyboards as a starting point.

Author: Alison Novak, Lawrence Barnes Elementary School. **Specialty:** Language Arts.

Before and After Stories

Lesson Plan Details

Detailed summary of curricular format:

“... Each (photograph) describes a discrete parcel of time. This time is always the present. Uniquely in the history of pictures, a photograph describes only that period of time in which it was made. Photography alludes to the past and the future only in so far as they exist in the present, the past through its surviving relics, the future through prophecy visible in the present.”

From *The Photographer's Eye* by John Szarkowski

Photographs – Finding Past and Future in the Present

IN-CLASS LESSON

Objective: Students will be able to “read” a photograph. This entails finding details and visual clues that help explain what happened before and after a photograph was taken.

Goal: To introduce students to the idea that a photograph is just one parcel of time. To teach students that clues from a photo combined with prior knowledge helps us to make inferences about what happened before and after the photo was taken.

Hook/Motivation:

Teacher shows students photograph of kitten in pasta spoon on the overhead and asks students to first write down 1-2 sentences about what they think happened before this picture was taken and then write 1-2 sentences about what they think happened after the photo was taken.

Students share out their ideas and what in the picture gave them that idea. Students will probably have different interpretations about what happened before and after the picture was taken. Highlight this!

Whole Class Instruction:

Teacher leads a class discussion. Even though people say that “every picture tells a story” or “a picture says a thousand words,” in fact a photograph only represents one small moment in time. What did happen before and after the photograph was taken is often left up to the viewer of the photo to decide. The fact that some of us had different ideas about what happened before and after the photo we just looked at was taken shows us that viewers of photographs draw different conclusions about the photograph based on what they know already (prior knowledge) and what they see in the picture.

Teacher introduces “Reading a Photo” worksheet (attached). Sometimes when we look at a photo we miss some of the details and clues in the photo. I’ve made a worksheet with questions that will help us make sure we are paying attention to the clues to what happened before/after the photo was taken.

Teacher puts “Boys With Fish” photograph (LS07022) on the overhead and leads class through the “Reading a Photo” process using the worksheet.

Short discussion of how in looking closely at the photo and thinking about what might have happened before and after it was taken, we are beginning to create a story or narrative around this photo.

Independent Practice:

Students go through the same photo-reading process on their own using their choice of four photographs -- “People Gathered at a Train Wreck” (LS11355), “Ski Jumper and Audience” (LS06939), “A Maple Sugaring Lesson” (LS10713), and “Car Under Collapsed Roof Debris” LS10212.

These particular photos were chosen because they are “active,” do not look posed or staged, would most likely be of high-interest to the students, and seem conducive to telling a story. Other photographs that fit these criteria could be substituted in their place.

Share/Culmination:

After students have completed the worksheet, students who analyzed the same photograph are grouped together and discuss what they found when they looked closely at the photograph and what they thought happened before and after the photo was taken.

It will be interesting to note the different conclusions students draw about the same photo.

Wrap-up by discussing with students the idea that even though we are looking at the same image, each of us bring varying prior knowledge and experiences to the table and so our interpretations are going to be different.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Creating a Storyboard from a Photograph</i></p>
--

TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT (an extension of the in-class lesson/can be done at home or in class)

Objective: Students will be able to use visual clues and their prior knowledge to construct a story about what happened before and after the photograph was taken.

Goal: To show students how to build a narrative around a single photograph.

Hook/Motivation:

Show students examples of storyboards and discuss what a storyboard’s function is. Directors develop a series of rough sketches that shows the sequence of their film or commercial. It’s a way for them to organize their ideas before they begin the actual process of filming.

Whole-class instruction:

Students are going to be using this storyboard format to begin to construct a story around the photograph they have chosen.

Teacher says: You have already done some good thinking about what happened before and after the photograph was taken. In this take-home assignment, you are going to stretch your thinking and begin to imagine the photo as one part of a story or narrative.

Students are responsible for creating six frames building a story around their picture. Each frame must have a rough sketch and a 1-2 sentence caption that explains what is happening in that frame. They can glue their chosen photograph any place in the sequence but what comes before and after it has to make sense based on the close viewing they have done and their prior knowledge.

Students are given a 6-box storyboard template and may or may not be shown sample of what storyboard might look like, depending on how much guidance the teacher wants to give.

Independent Practice (at home/or during another class period):

Students bring home copy of their photo, the “Reading a Photo” sheet that they completed independently, their storyboard template, and directions for the assignment.

When students bring in completed assignment, they should have sketches and captions for all six frames of the storyboard sheet.

Share:

Students will do a small group or partner share of their storyboards with peer feedback around the following questions – Was each frame of the storyboard in sequence? Did the storyboard make sense? Did each frame relate to the photograph? Students may revise storyboards based on peer feedback.

Culminating Activity/Celebration:

Students will do a “museum walk,” circulating and reading and commenting on each other’s storyboards.

Assessment:

The finished student storyboard is assessed based on elements including organization, relevance to the photograph, and creativity. This assessment pertains to Communication Standard 1.9 Narratives and Abstract and Creative Thinking Standard 2.11 Elaboration.

Possible Extension:

Storyboards may be a starting point for a written narrative around the photograph if time allows. Possible lessons for this extension would be about how to add more detail to the frames and strengthen the connections between the frames so that the storyboard would be, essentially, an outline for the written narrative.

Before and After Stories

“Reading a Photo” Worksheet

- 1) Take a quick look at the photograph. Write a sentence telling what this photo is about.
- 2) If there are people in the photograph, describe them. What kind of clothing do they have on? What they are doing?
- 3) Look at the surrounding environment – the ground, the trees, the sky. Describe these things. What season and time of day do you think it is in the photograph based on the environment?
- 4) If there are human-made things in the photograph (cars, buildings, signs, fences etc.), describe them.
- 5) Use your pencil to divide the photograph down the middle vertically and horizontally. Your photo should be split into four sections. Take turns looking at each section carefully. Write down any details about the photograph you now notice that you did not notice before.
- 6) Based on what you learned from looking closely at the photograph, combined with your prior knowledge, what do you think was happening **before** the photograph was taken.
- 7) Based on what you learned from looking closely at the photograph, combined with your prior knowledge, what do you think happened **after** the photograph was taken.

Before and After Stories

Storyboard Template Sheet

MY STORYBOARD

By:

Caption ↕