

# Visual Analysis Support

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Being able to analyze visual images—like paintings, photographs, political cartoons, and posters—is an important skill for understanding history. These images are more than just art; they are historical evidence created during or about a specific time. They help us see what people valued, feared, or believed, and they often show details that words alone can't capture.

Learning to "read" an image helps us think critically, ask good questions, and make connections between the past and the present. Just like a primary source document, a historical image tells a story—if you know how to look closely!



Source: W.D. Cooper, "Boston Tea Party", 1789. Public Domain.

**Step 1 - Brainstorm: Read the source information and list what you know.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Questions to consider when making observations and inferences:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOK 1</b></p> <p><i>Identifying what is explicitly shown</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the physical setting?</li><li>• How are the elements arranged?</li><li>• Are there any words present? What do they identify?</li><li>• Who are the people? Are they representing a specific person or a larger group?</li><li>• What objects or items do you notice?</li><li>• What colors, textures, or patterns stand out?</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOK 2</b></p> <p><i>Noticing patterns, making basic connections</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do color schemes or use of light and shadows convey meaning? (light = good, dark = evil)</li><li>• Are there any obvious or hidden symbols? (e.g., stars and stripes, Uncle Sam, broken chains)</li><li>• What is the mood or tone of the image?</li><li>• Are the people or items shown in realistic or exaggerated ways? Why?</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOK 3</b></p> <p><i>Analyzing purpose, audience, and perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who is the author and/or audience? How does this impact the message of the image?</li><li>• What is the purpose of the image?</li><li>• What message do the symbols convey?</li><li>• Why did the artist include specific elements?</li><li>• Is there anything missing from the image? How does that impact its meaning?</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOK 4</b></p> <p><i>Contextualizing and developing interpretations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the historical context of the image?</li><li>• How does the artist's message relate to the political, social, or cultural issues of the time?</li><li>• How might different people at the time have interpreted this image differently?</li><li>• How does this image compare to another source from the same time period?</li><li>• What questions does this image raise that we could investigate further using other sources?</li></ul>



# Visual Analysis Support



**Step 2 - Focus:** Find the most prominent element in the image. Describe your observation, then connect with your prior knowledge, and finally infer what the artist is hoping to convey.

Observe	Connect	Infer

**Step 3- Zoom In:** Separate the image into quadrants in order to take note of even minor elements the artist included and make notes of elements and messages in each section.

Top Left	Top Right
Bottom Left	Bottom Right



# Visual Analysis Support

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Source: W.D. Cooper, "Boston Tea Party", 1789. Public Domain.

**Step 1 - Brainstorm: Read the source information and list what you know.**

1. The Boston Tea Party was a protest.
2. Colonists dumped tea.
3. It was against the Tea Act.
4. It showed the changing relationship.

Questions to consider when making observations and inferences:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOK 1</b></p> <p><i>Identifying what is explicitly shown</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the physical setting?</li><li>• How are the elements arranged?</li><li>• Are there any words present? What do they identify?</li><li>• Who are the people? Are they representing a specific person or a larger group?</li><li>• What objects or items do you notice?</li><li>• What colors, textures, or patterns stand out?</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOK 2</b></p> <p><i>Noticing patterns, making basic connections</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do color schemes or use of light and shadows convey meaning? (light = good, dark = evil)</li><li>• Are there any obvious or hidden symbols? (e.g., stars and stripes, Uncle Sam, broken chains)</li><li>• What is the mood or tone of the image?</li><li>• Are the people or items shown in realistic or exaggerated ways? Why?</li></ul>
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# Visual Analysis Support (Exemplar)



**Step 2 - Focus:** Find the most prominent element in the image. Describe your observation, then connect with your prior knowledge, and finally infer what the artist is hoping to convey.

Observe	Connect	Infer
The most prominent element is the colonists actively dumping tea overboard from the ships.	This reminds me about what I learned about how colonists attitudes toward the British were changing.	I think the artist is showing the unity and strength of their actions as they stood up for their rights.

**Step 3- Zoom In:** Separate the image into quadrants in order to take note of even minor elements the artist included and make notes of elements and messages in each section.

<p>Top Left</p> <p>Calm sky and background ships suggest normal life; might symbolize a change "brewing"</p>	<p>Top Right</p> <p>The crowd on the boat is active and focused; shows teamwork and advanced planning</p>
<p>Tea crates are broken and floating; shows the damage done to British property</p> <p>Bottom Left</p>	<p>Water splashing, boxes being thrown; shows motion and anger, signaling protest in action</p> <p>Bottom Right</p>

