

Visual Analysis

Photographers (and lots of amateur photographers wandering around with mobile phones) want to take pictures that are interesting to look at, but what makes an image interesting? You probably know it when you see it, and you may even think consciously about it when you take pictures. For this activity, let's look closely at a photograph to figure out what makes it draw and hold your attention. (Or, if it doesn't hold your attention, to figure out why not).

When you look at the photo, what is the first thing you notice? This may be different for different people. Some people are very attentive to color, while others may notice particular images (Can you spot a puppy picture from a mile away?) or even shapes. So there's no right answer. With a partner, or in writing on your own, describe what draws your attention and explain why it attracts you. If you're working with a partner, notice any differences in your perspectives. Then, continue looking at the photo to see what you notice next, and next after that. Here are a few questions that might draw your attention to elements of the photo that you hadn't noticed.

- Why do you think the photographer chose to show a sheet of photos that the scientist was comparing to a specimen? What effect do the multiple images have on you as a viewer?
- Why do you think the photographer chose to include only the hands of the scientist, rather than the whole person? What different message would a different photo—one that showed a scientist sitting at a table comparing the specimen to the photos—convey?

Now try it yourself. Using a mobile phone, try taking your own photos in different ways, similar to the different ways the photographer might have created this image. When you've got four or five different shots of (more or less) the same thing, decide which you like best, and why you like it best. Create a display - either printed or electronic - that shows the different images, including your favorite and why you think it's the best.

Common Core Standard(s) met:

RI.9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

