

A CREATIVE APPROACH TO THE CLASSICAL PROGYMNASMATA

Writing Rhetoric

SCOPE & SEQUENCE

Overview of Writing & Rhetoric

What are the *progymnasmata* (*progym*)? Derived from the same root for gymnasium and gymnastics, the word means “preliminary exercises. it is a writing system so dynamic, so effective, that it outlasted the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. It even survived into early modern times and is extraordinarily relevant today.

The goal of the *progym* is to prepare students for the art of writing well and speaking persuasively. In this series, you can expect your students to grow in all forms of modern composition—narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive—while at the same time developing unique rhetorical muscle. Each exercise is intended to impart a skill (or tool) that can be employed in all kinds of writing and speaking. The exercises are arranged from simple to more complex, and what’s more, the exercises are cumulative, meaning that later exercises incorporate the skills acquired in preceding exercises.

Paul Kortepeter, academic dean and teacher at The Oaks Academy developed the Writing & Rhetoric curriculum for his K–8 school many years ago and has used it consistently since then. For several years, Classical Academic Press, with Christine Perrin as the series editor, has been collaborating with the author on expanding and developing these books comprehensively. This development has been essential, since the exercises are abstract and were created for another culture. The author is systematically translating the exercises into our cultural needs/language/context in ways that you will immediately see once you look through the first several books in the series.

The Writing & Rhetoric (W&R) series has been on a 2-book-per-year continual release for the past 4 years. Currently books 1–8 are available for purchase. In the publishing industry, book projects can be ahead of schedule or behind schedule due to a variety of factors. We are working very hard to release the last 4 books in this series while meeting educators’ expectations with superior pedagogy and student results. Below are the projected release dates for books 9–12; they are deemed reliable but not guaranteed:

Writing & Rhetoric Book 9: Description & Impersonation: scheduled release in December 2017

Writing & Rhetoric Book 10: Thesis Part 1: scheduled release in Late Summer 2018

Writing & Rhetoric Book 11: Thesis Part 2: slated for Summer 2019

Writing & Rhetoric Book 12: Mock Trial/Attack & Defend a Law: slated for Fall 2019

Predicated on the belief that you cannot properly teach skills without content, the Writing & Rhetoric method relies on whole stories, context, and thought. Since rhetoric is like a ship with three sails—thinking, writing, and speaking—conversation and speech are essential to the written word and the thought that develops that word. In addition, the way you feel about a story is part of what it is teaching you and part of what will inform your own writing (which is really the highest form of reading).

Each skill taught in the W&R series carefully builds on a previous one—the incremental preparation is key to this method. For instance, narrating a story orally each time you hear it leads naturally to identifying beginning, middle, and end, which leads naturally to outlining. Each skill is tied to the story and to this process of developmental return.

Typically, a school will alternate this program (on a weekly basis at first) with a grammar program and with dialogic reading ([click here](#) to jump to the article about dialogic reading that appears at the end of this document). Grammar is strongly reinforced by the Writing & Rhetoric curriculum, but it does not fully cover a grammar program for 3rd–8th grades. This is true of most writing programs.

Compare/Contrast with Susan Wise Bauer Program

To compare and contrast this program to Susan Wise Bauer's program (*Writing with Ease*, etc.), which we respect greatly, for contrast we would point mainly to the contextual approach of W&R, which uses whole stories (not excerpts). There is a strong speaking/oral component to W&R, and it begins the *progymnasmata* in 3rd grade as opposed to high school. Finally, it employs the skill of narration or "telling it back," a practice that requires students from an early age to pay attention and to internalize the story or narrative they are listening to or reading. The W&R series is also much more compact and does not require a parent taking dictation for each writing assignment in the early years. Like Susan Wise Bauer's program, it separates the mechanical skill of writing and the intellectual skill of thinking. It likewise believes that thought and writing are coextensive and thus involve comprehension and careful development. It also relies heavily on imitation.

Descriptive Trajectory for writing in grades K–12

- Dialogic reading to children by adults (see explanation of dialogic reading at the end of this document)
- Decode words and sentences
- Mechanical aspect of writing (copy work and dictation separate skill set for several books)
- Comprehend increasingly more complicated material
- Narrate what you have read throughout the program
- Summarize—highly related to comprehension and sequence
- Amplify—learn how to expand and contract material to fit the necessary space and point of view
- Draw connections—between and among stories
- Make thesis-driven arguments—support and develop and conclude—be always conscious of the opposing argument
- Think about writing as a kind of thinking that only happens with reading/thought/conversation /repeat—engaging the question or academic problem: John Bean's book *Engaging Ideas* fully explicates how this works. All upper school teachers should have a copy of this.
- Conversation, mutual exchange, union, and virtuous action as the *telos* of talk and writing

How the *Progym* Develop Each Stage of Modern Composition

For a fairly comprehensive list of the many elements of a standard English and Language Arts curriculum covered in the W&R series, [click here](#).

1. Fable—Narrative
2. Narrative—Narrative with descriptive elements
3. Chreia & Proverb—Expository essay with narrative, descriptive, and persuasive elements
4. Refutation & Confirmation—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, and expository elements
5. Commonplace—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, and expository elements
6. Encomium & Vituperation—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, and expository elements
7. Comparison—Comparative essay with narrative, descriptive, and expository elements
8. Description & Impersonation—Descriptive essay with narrative, expository, persuasive, and comparative elements

9. Thesis—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, expository, and comparative elements
10. Attack/Defend a Law—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, expository, comparative, and technical elements

The following lists indicate some of the major objectives for the exercises found in each book. Because W&R books 10–12 are in the development stage, there is currently less information available regarding what those books will cover.



Book 1 Fable

A fable is a short story with a moral.

- Expose students to the form of fables as well as culturally important examples.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading short texts.
- Give students practice copying texts accurately.
- Strengthen working memory through dictation, thus improving storage and manipulation of information.
- Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through question and answer and through exercises in summary and amplification.
- Give students opportunities to creatively imitate sentences and whole fables.
- Introduce the concepts of main idea and character traits.



Book 2 Narrative I

A narrative is a longer story that answers the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

- Expose students to different forms of narrative writing as well as culturally important examples.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading short texts.
- Give students practice in copying texts accurately.
- Strengthen working memory through dictation, thus improving storage and manipulation of information.
- Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through question and answer and through exercises in summary and amplification.
- Give students opportunities to creatively imitate sentences and narrative sections.
- Introduce the concepts of plot (beginning, middle, and end), dialogue, and description.

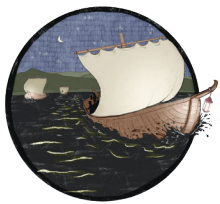


Book 3 Narrative II

A narrative is a longer story that answers the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

- Expose students to different forms of narrative writing as well as culturally important examples.

- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading short texts.
- Strengthen working memory through dictation, thus improving storage and manipulation of information.
- Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through question and answer and through exercises in summary and amplification.
- Give students opportunities to creatively imitate sentences and narrative sections.
- Deepen the concepts of plot (beginning, middle, and end), dialogue, and description.
- Encourage students to create their own fables and narratives with solid guidelines.
- Widely and regularly require students to think critically.



Book 4 Chreia & Proverb

A proverb is a wise saying or a short, clever insight into human behavior. A chreia is a short essay or remembrance that praises the author of a saying or the doer of an action and shows why the saying or action is useful.

- Expose students to various proverbs, pithy sayings, and life stories, especially from the Middle Ages, and challenge the notion that this period of history was unrelentingly dark and morally ignorant.
- Develop students' appreciation for the usefulness of concise sayings and actions and how these ideas impact their lives. To demonstrate that ideas and words influence actions.
- Introduce students to the expository essay using a six-step outline. The predetermined outline helps students to organize their thinking into patterns of ideas.
- Give students opportunities to creatively imitate and reshape proverbs and sayings.
- Develop the concept of biographical narrative.
- Introduce the idea of paraphrase as well as comparing and contrasting.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading short texts.
- Strengthen working memory through dictation, thus improving storage and manipulation of information.
- Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through questions and discussion.



Book 5 Refutation & Confirmation

A confirmation is a short essay that defends certain parts of a narrative as believable, probable, clear, or proper. A refutation is a short essay that attacks certain parts of a narrative as unbelievable, improbable, unclear, or improper.

- Paragraph writing using Chreia structure (5-6 paragraphs) with different content
- Students learn to refute and confirm each story:

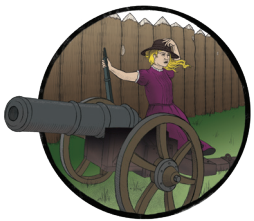
Refutation essay

- Establish the 5 W's: Who, what, when, where, why

- Arguing/prove the story is unbelievable, improbable, unclear, improper

Confirmation essay

- 5 W first: demonstrate the Who, what, when, where, why
- Arguing the story is believable, probable, clear, proper
- Expose students to various forms of narrative writing as well as culturally important stories from the early American period.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading short texts.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through discussions and exercises in evaluation and critical thinking.
- Review the concepts of narrative, plot, character, fable, parable, fairy tale, history, myth, and ballad, with an additional focus on legend and the introduction of biography.
- Introduce the concepts of argument versus quarrel and refutation versus confirmation. Refutation and confirmation correspond to persuasive (or argumentative) essays in modern writing theory. They were extracted from two parts of classic oration by the same name.
- Give students opportunities to creatively assess and critique narratives by weighing believability/unbelievability, probability/improbability, clarity/lack of clarity, and propriety/impropriety.
- Reinforce the ability to summarize and paraphrase for greater rhetorical flexibility.
- Strengthen working memory through recitation, thus improving storage of information. Memory is essential to any oration delivered with rhetorical power.
- Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.
- Continue to make use of the persuasive essay using a four-step outline. The predetermined outline helps students to organize their thinking into patterns of ideas.
- Introduce students to the concepts of revision, proofreading, and joint critiquing.



Book 6 Commonplace

A commonplace is a persuasive essay that attacks or defends certain aspects of human nature

- Commonplace essay parts:
 - Thesis**
 - Two supporting arguments
 - Contrary (two opposing ideas)
 - Soliloquy of character’s thoughts
 - Compare to similar type of weak person and still find this one worse argue why readers should reject pity
 - Epilogue appealing to opposite or consequence, or justice
- Expose students to various forms of narrative and nonfiction writing, as well as culturally important stories from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of American history.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading multiple texts.

- Aid student reading and recall by teaching techniques for annotation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through discussions and exercises in evaluation and critical thinking.
- Introduce research by giving students multiple texts to read and having them summarize, outline, lift quotes, and create a thesis from the material.
- Enable students to write well-crafted, six-paragraph persuasive essays—with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion—attacking general types of wrongdoing and defending general types of virtuous behavior. This includes the development of an awareness of transitions and tone.
- Argue for or against a general (common) fault or virtue of human nature (or a type of person)
- Changing a statement to a thesis with following practice in identification
- Comparing two characters
- Categorical attack
- Finding thesis and putting it into own words
- Finding a title from the vice
- Demonstrate the use of pathos to engage the emotions of readers.
- Practice the concepts of thesis and supporting arguments. This includes practicing the anticipation of opposing arguments.



Book 7 Encomium & Vituperation

An encomium is an expository composition praising the virtues of a specific person or attacking the vices of a specific person. A vituperation is an expository composition condemning a specific person or thing.

- Encomium/vituperation essay parts:
 - Hyperbole and thesis
 - Background detail/biography and autobiography
 - Poor qualities categorically/good qualities
 - Career—background supportive content
 - Contrast to a better person / worse person
 - Conclusion—exhort audience to avoid imitating this person/imitate this person
- Expose students to various forms of biographical, autobiographical, and other nonfiction writing as well as culturally important narratives from the Civil War era and the period of westward expansion that took place in nineteenth-century American history.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading diverse texts.
- Aid student reading and recall by teaching techniques for annotation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through discussions and exercises in evaluation and critical thinking.
- Introduce research by giving students multiple texts to read and having them summarize, outline, lift quotes, and create a thesis from the material.
- Support students in writing well-crafted, six-paragraph persuasive essays—with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion—alternately praising and blaming the character and careers of specific historical figures. These essays include the development of an awareness of transitions and tone.

- Guide students through the process of writing a brief biographical research paper—with introduction, factual chronology, conclusion, and bibliography.
- Finding supportive details
- Demonstrate the use of pathos to engage the emotions of readers. This includes the use of hyperbole, a rhetorical device.
- Practice the concepts of thesis and supporting arguments.
- Encourage students to map (prewrite) their arguments before they write a paragraph.
- Support the development of invention (inventing topics and ideas to write about) and demonstrate how to use quotations in a crafted piece of writing.
- Continue the development of revision, proofreading, and joint critiquing.
- Reinforce grammatical concepts such as prepositional phrases and simple and compound sentences, as well as provide practice recognizing and repairing sentence fragments and run-on sentences.



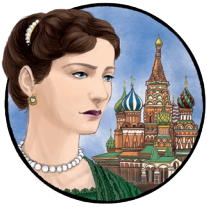
Book 8 Comparison

An essay contrasting the virtues of one person and the vices of another.

- Expose students to various forms of biographical, autobiographical, epistolary, and nonfiction writing as well as culturally important narratives from American history during the Gilded Age until the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading diverse texts.
- Aid student reading and recall by teaching techniques for annotation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through discussions and exercises in evaluation and critical thinking.
- Enhance research skills by giving students multiple texts to read and having them summarize, outline, lift quotes, and create a topic from the material.
- Introduce students to the practice of identifying similarities and differences and making connections between people, ideas, objects, and historical events.
- Support the development of invention (inventing topics and ideas to write about) and demonstrate how to use quotations in a crafted piece of writing.
- Encourage students to map (pre-write) their information before they write a paragraph.
- Support students in writing well-crafted, six-paragraph comparative essays—with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion—analyzing the similarities and differences between two subjects. These essays include the development of an awareness of transitions and tone.
- Practice the concepts of topic sentence and narrative overview.
- Strengthen the skill of deriving information from texts and organizing and summarizing it in expository paragraphs.
- Strengthen the use of pathos to engage the emotions of readers, as introduced in the previous book in this series, *Encomium & Vituperation*. This includes the use of analogy, a rhetorical device.
- Continue the development of revision, proofreading, and joint critiquing.
- Reinforce grammatical concepts such as prepositional phrases and simple and compound sentences, as well as provide practice recognizing and repairing sen-

tence fragments and run-on sentences.

- Practice sentence manipulation and imitation, in particular simplifying sentences, creating appositive phrases, and changing passive voice to active.
- Aid in the development of vocabulary and analysis of language.
- Reinforce the ability to summarize and paraphrase, as well as to amplify through description, for greater rhetorical flexibility.
- Strengthen working memory through recitation (*memoria*), thus improving storage of information and rhetorical power.
- Employ a number of rhetorical devices—analogy, simile, metaphor, chiasma, hypophora, parallelism, and anastrophe—for more thought-provoking writing and speaking.
- Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language by practicing sentence variety.
- Strengthen students’ oratory skills by providing opportunities for public speaking and for working on delivery—volume, pacing, and inflection.
- Encourage students to see the relationship between writing and speaking as they consider their ideas orally and to use oration as an aid to the process of revision.
- Practice tone and inflection by means of dramatic reading.



Book 9 Description & Impersonation

A description is an essay in which the writer appeals to the five senses. An impersonation is an ancient rhetorical exercise in which the writer imitates the character of a person chosen to be portrayed. In this book, impersonation consists of pretending to be a figure from history and writing an essay as if you were that person.

- Expose students to various forms of descriptive, process, fiction, nonfiction, biographical, and autobiographical writing as well as culturally important narratives from American history during the early- to mid-twentieth century.
- Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading diverse texts.
- Aid student reading and recall by teaching techniques for annotation.
- Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through discussions and exercises in evaluation and critical thinking.
- Enhance research skills by giving students multiple texts to read and having them summarize, outline, and create a topic from the material.
- Support the development of invention (inventing topics and ideas to write about).
- Encourage students to map (prewrite) their information before they write a paragraph.
- Strengthen descriptive capabilities with an emphasis on specific, vivid words and sensorial language.
- Emphasize the importance of “showing” in addition to “telling.”
- Support students in writing descriptive essays focused on people, nature, and processes, as well as a short story focused on a character in a natural setting.
- Support students in writing well-crafted, four-paragraph descriptive essays featuring the modes of appeal. Ethos is used in the first body paragraph, pathos in the second, and logos in the conclusion. These essays include the development of an awareness of transitions, tone, and writing style.

- Practice the concepts of topic sentence and narrative overview.
- Practice the use of sequence words.
- Strengthen the skill of deriving information from texts and organizing and summarizing it in expository paragraphs.
- Continue the development of revision, proofreading, and joint critiquing.
- Reinforce grammatical concepts such as subordinating conjunctions, gerunds, colons, and semicolons.
- Practice sentence manipulation and imitation.
- Aid in the development of vocabulary and analysis of language.
- Strengthen students' power of observation.
- Reinforce the ability to summarize and paraphrase, as well as to amplify through description, for greater rhetorical flexibility.
- Strengthen working memory through recitation (*memoria*), thus improving storage of information and rhetorical power.
- Employ a number of rhetorical devices—alliteration, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, aetiologia, anthyphora, parallelism, repetition, anaphora, epistrophe, expeditio, and illustration and conclusion—for more thought-provoking writing and speaking.
- Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language by practicing sentence variety.
- Strengthen students' oratory skills by providing opportunities for public speaking and for working on delivery—volume, pacing, and inflection.
- Practice tone and inflection by means of dramatic reading.
- Encourage students to see the relationship between writing and speaking as they consider their ideas orally and to use oration as an aid to the process of revision.

Books 10 & 11 Thesis Parts 1 & 2

A thesis is a thematic composition arguing two sides of an issue.

- Students will learn to notice thesis in other's work
- Thesis essays will include:
 - Attention grabbers: narrative, questions, descriptions, illustrations, proverb
 - Thesis
 - Confirmation—2 arguments that support the thesis (appeal to authority—other people's words)
 - Refutation—2 antithetical arguments
 - Conclusion—reaffirm thesis
- Students will bear down hard on learning how to make an argument with integrity and fullness, this is a finishing/deepening skill that has been taught all along.

Book 12 Mock Trial: Attack/Defend Attack a Law

An argumentative essay detailing the pros and cons of a specific law

What Is Dialogic Reading?

by Prof. Elizabeth Stilwell, Cornell University

“Adults can enhance young children’s language and literacy skills through use of a strategy known as dialogic reading, which allows children to become participants in telling the story. Dialogic storybook reading is intended to be used with individual children, or small groups of children. Children are encouraged to engage physically with the book. The adult begins by starting with the pictures, and then moves to the text. For example, as children look at the cover of the book, the adult may ask the child to predict what will happen in the story. Adults elicit comments from children and respond. Children do most of the talking. The adult asks open-ended questions like “Why do you think Rosie doesn’t see the fox?” The adult then expands on the child’s responses by commenting on what the child says, such as, “Yes—that is a rabbit jumping over the cabbage patch.” The adult encourages further conversation by thinking aloud about the story, making comments like “I wonder how the boy is feeling with all of those crows buzzing around him . . .”

This process of sharing dialogic reading deepens children’s engagement with story and text through enjoyable interactions with an attentive adult. It can be contrasted with the scenario of an adult sharing a book with a child by reading as the child sits quietly and listens the entire time. This non-interactive form of reading often takes place with the adult reading to a large group of children. Reading with individual children, or with small groups of children, allows for more interaction, and for children’s active engagement with the text, pictures and most important, the characters, events and ideas in the book.”¹

1. Elizabeth Stilwell, “What Is Dialogic Reading?” *Education 2400 Book Buddy Reflections*, Cornell University. Available at <http://blogs.cornell.edu/childlit/2011/03/02/what-is-dialogic-reading/>.



The following is a fairly comprehensive list of the many elements of a standard English and Language Arts curriculum covered in the W&R series.

- Asking and answering questions to demonstrate understanding of the text
- Recounting stories and fables from diverse cultures
- Describing characters in a story
- Determining the meaning of words (in some cases by using word origins) and phrases, including figurative language, as they are used in a text
- Distinguishing one's point of view from the point of view of story characters
- Explaining how an illustration enhances the text
- Providing reasons to support an opinion
- Writing narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences
- Using dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations
- Asking and answering questions to demonstrate understanding of the text
- Summarizing the text
- Describing in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text
- Comparing and contrasting the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations
- Writing informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly
- Establishing a central idea or topic
- Composing a topic sentence and creating an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped into coherent paragraphs to support the writer's purpose
- Introducing a topic or text clearly, stating an opinion, and creating an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose
- Providing reasons that are supported by facts and details
- Providing a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented
- Asking and answering questions to demonstrate understanding of the text
- Summarizing the text
- Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- Drawing evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research
- Experiencing both the reading of a story (sight) and listening to it (hearing)
- Identifying a variety of genres including description, history, short story, biography, autobiography, and letter
- Analyzing text that is organized in sequential or chronological order
- Demonstrating an understanding of texts by creating outlines, summarizing, and paraphrasing in ways that maintain meaning and logical order within a text
- Comparing and contrasting two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text
- Determining a theme from details in the text, including how characters in a story respond to challenges

- Supporting claim(s) with clear and logically organized reasons and relevant evidence by using credible sources, facts, and details, and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text
- Identifying similarities and differences between two characters (historical figures), objects, and events, drawing on specific details in the text
- Determining a thesis from details in the text, including how characters in a story respond to challenges
- Increasing knowledge of vocabulary by considering word meaning, word order, and transitions
- Articulating an understanding of several ideas or images communicated by the literary work
- Critiquing the credibility of a character, historic figure,
- Drawing evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research
- Participating civilly and productively in group discussions
- Writing informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly
- Introducing a topic or text clearly, stating an opinion, and creating an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped into coherent paragraphs to support the writer's purpose
- Developing the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples
- Providing a concluding statement or section that follows from the topic or argument presented
- Using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic
- Establishing and maintaining a formal style
- Using appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts
- Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- Avoiding plagiarism through summary and providing basic bibliographic information for sources
- Developing and strengthening writing (with some guidance and support from peers and adults) as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach
- gathering relevant information from multiple sources, and annotating sources
- using technology as an aid to revision and oration
- using pictures and photos to analyze and interpret the past