

21st Century Skills

The Reconstruction Era

Lesson 3 *The South During Reconstruction*

Analyze Primary Sources: Photographs

Learning the Skill

Primary means “first.” Primary sources are firsthand or eyewitness accounts. They are sources created at the time of the event, or very soon after. Primary sources give us glimpses into the past.

Primary sources can be letters, diaries, maps, interviews, photographs, and other things. In this lesson you will focus on analyzing photographs.

To analyze a photograph as a primary source, follow these steps.

- 1. Note any labels.** Some photographs are accompanied by information such as the name of the photographer, where the picture was taken, or when it was made. Having this information can help you better understand the picture.
- 2. Study the photograph.** Spend a minute or two just looking at the photograph. Get an overall sense of the image and notice details.
- 3. Make a note of people, objects, and activities in the photograph.** Actually writing this information down can help you get the most meaning from the photograph.
- 4. Draw conclusions.** Based on the information you have noted, draw what conclusions you can. For example, can you conclude anything about what the people in a photograph might be feeling? What any objects are used for? How well any activities are proceeding?
- 5. Formulate questions.** What questions does the photograph raise in your mind? What does it make you curious about? Seek answers to such questions to extend your learning.

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Practicing the Skill Use the photograph to answer the questions below.



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

Sharecropper's home, Arkansas

1. What information accompanies the photograph?

2. What is the main object in the photograph?

3. What conclusions can you draw about the family who lived here?

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Applying the Skill

Answer the questions.



Alabama sharecroppers

4. What information accompanies the photograph?

5. What people, objects, and activities appear in the photograph?

6. What conclusions can you draw from this photograph?

7. What questions could you ask about the people, objects, or activities in this photograph?

