



Analyze Media: Grades 3–5

OVERVIEW:

Analyzing media is an important aspect of being a critical reader of disciplinary texts, particularly in the social sciences. Whether presented digitally or in print, media—such as charts, graphs, illustrations, photos, animations, videos, and interactive elements—can help a reader determine the main idea of a text, ascertain the author’s purpose and point of view, and evaluate an argument and supporting evidence. Learning how to interpret different types of media is an important part of literacy because media can enhance students’ comprehension of a text. Students who learn to analyze media can develop a deeper understanding when reading. In our increasingly online world, this skill is becoming especially important as students learn to navigate websites to gain information about a topic.

The following strategies are designed to scaffold and support students in analyzing media in social studies texts in *Expedition: Learn!* While each of the mini-lessons below are based on articles and lessons within *Expedition: Learn!*, they can be adapted to meet the needs of your classroom.

Mini-Lesson I

Interpreting Tables and Graphs in Social Studies Texts (20 minutes)

Background: While many students are likely familiar with interpreting images and captions, reading within social studies involves interpreting other forms of media that the authors use to convey important information, including graphs and charts. Before expecting students to use information contained in this type of media, explicit instruction on how to interpret information presented in these formats should be provided. This mini-lesson provides instruction on identifying and reading different types of graphs and charts. For explicit instruction on interpreting other media, see the dedicated *Expedition: Learn!* lessons “Using Timelines,” “Maps and Globes,” and “Using a Map.” The explicit teaching and modeling suggestions below are based on the article “What Is an Economy?” from the *Expedition: Learn!* lesson “What Is an Economy?”

- Share with students that in social studies texts, authors often use different types of media to enhance or support their writing. Explain that media used in social studies texts may include illustrations, photos, videos, maps, timelines, diagrams, charts, and graphs.

- Explain that in this lesson, students will focus on reading charts and graphs. Invite students to turn to a partner and discuss what they know about when and why authors might use a table or a graph in a social studies text. (As needed, display a visual of each type of table or graph referenced.) For example:
 - *Table: a table might be used to show and compare the characteristics of a group of people, a culture area, or a concept, such as types of governments or economies*
 - *Graph: different types of graphs are used in different ways. Bar graphs can be used to compare different amounts, line graphs show changes over time, circle graphs show parts of a whole, and pictographs use pictures to display data.*
- Introduce the text students are going to read, "What Is an Economy?", and share that this text includes a bar graph and a table.
- Explain to students that authors include tables and graphs to help explain an idea, provide examples, or support an argument. Share that knowing how to read a table or graph will help students understand and analyze the information the author includes.
- Display the [How to Read a Table or Graph anchor chart](#). Introduce the steps to students by reading each step aloud and then modeling each step using the graph from the lesson:
 - Step 1: Read the title or heading to learn what the table or graph shows.
 - *The title is "The World's Largest Economies in 2022."*
 - Step 2: Read all the labels on the table or graph.
 - *The x-axis shows the names and flags of ten countries. The y-axis is labeled "Total value of goods and services produced (in trillions of U.S. dollars)." It goes from 0 to 250 in increments of 50 units.*
 - Step 3: Look for a key that explains any symbols or colors.
 - *The symbols here are country flags, but the country names are also included, so I understand what the flags stand for.*
 - Step 4: Look at the data included in the table or graph. Think about what the information is telling you.
 - *I see that the U.S. is the biggest bar, followed by China. After that, there's a big drop before the next bar for Japan. I think this graph is telling me that the U.S. and China had the largest economies in the world in 2022. The other countries in the top ten were Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, India, France, Italy, Canada, and South Korea.*
 - Step 5: Write the main idea of the table or graph.
 - *The U.S. and China have the largest economies in the world by a big margin. The next eight largest economies are one-third to one-fourth the size of the U.S. and China.*
- Emphasize that being able to read the graph helps the reader understand that countries all over the world have economies, and that they vary in size.
- Invite students to view the table in the passage. Ask them to work with a partner, following the steps to read and analyze the table. For example:
 - *The title of the table is "Different Types of Economies."*
 - *The row titles are "What will be produced?," "How will it be produced?," and "Who will get what is produced?" The columns have the names of three types of economies: market economy, common economy, and mixed market economy.*
 - *There are no symbols on the table.*
 - *The data helps me understand that market economies are driven by consumers and producers, command economies are controlled by the government, and mixed-market economies are a combination of the first two. I think the author wanted me to see that there are different ways that economies can run.*
 - *In a command economy, the government makes all decisions about what is produced and who gets these products. In a market economy, these decisions are driven by consumers and producers. In a mixed-market economy, consumers, producers, and the government all play a part.*
- As time allows, encourage students to read the passage and discuss how the information in the graph and table relates to the information in the passage.

Mini-Lesson II

Determine Author's Purpose and Perspective in Media (30 minutes)

Background: When they decide to include media in their work, authors do not choose random things to include; they create or select very specific items to help illustrate their topic and support their main idea. Learning how to view and analyze media to determine its purpose and perspective can help students to identify the main idea of larger pieces. It can also further students' understanding of why different types of media might be included in social studies texts. Note that the modeling and sample responses provided are based on the *Expedition: Learn!* lesson "Roles Models of Civic Virtue."

- Explain to students that when authors choose to include media in their writing, it is done with intention. The media is selected to help illustrate a point, support a main idea, or otherwise help the reader to understand the topic.
- Share that authors choose media for a specific purpose. Invite students to turn and discuss what the word *purpose* means. Ask a student to share their definition or provide one, such as the following:
 - *purpose: the reason something is done or created*
- Explain that along with having a purpose, these pieces of media have a perspective. Share the definition of *perspective* with students:
 - *perspective: the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs people have about a topic*
- Share with students that they will view a piece of media from a lesson and consider the purpose and perspective of the media.
- Screen the video "Science and Civil Rights" from page 4-Build of the lesson. Invite students to pay attention to the topic and why the author might have included this media in the lesson.
- Display and distribute the [Purpose and Perspective in Media organizer](#).
- Write the name of the video in the left-hand column and ask students to identify the topic of the video. Record "Benjamin Banneker" and invite students to do the same.
- Tell students they will view the video a second time, thinking about the purpose and perspective of the Benjamin Banneker video.
- After viewing, invite students to turn and talk with a partner, providing them with questions to answer:
 - What was the purpose of the video?
 - *The purpose was to teach about the life of Benjamin Banneker.*
 - What was the perspective of the video?
 - *The perspective was that Banneker was a very smart mathematician. He was interested in social justice. He was a civil rights advocate.*
- As time allows, invite students to view the letter "Fighting for Change" on page 5-Build of the lesson. Ask them to complete the organizer to determine the purpose and perspective of Banneker's letter to Jefferson.

Mini-Lesson III

Combining Information from Media and Text to Determine Main Idea (30 minutes)

Background: Prior to being taught this skill, students should be able to read and analyze both written information and media. Each Expedition: Learn! lesson contains two written texts, video, and multiple visuals. Because of this structure, students are able to practice combining information they obtain from media and from written text using multiple sources within one Expedition: Learn! lesson. Note that the modeling and sample responses provided are based on the Expedition: Learn! lesson “What Was the Civil War?”

- Remind students that authors often include information in both written text and visuals, including videos, images, graphs, etc. Explain that it is important for students to learn how to read and analyze both written and visual texts.
- Emphasize that in social studies they often need to pull information from both the written texts and visuals in order to fully understand a topic.
- Introduce the text students will read and invite them to create a T-chart in their notebooks, titling one column “Source” and the other column “Big Idea.”
- Model how to gather information from both the text and media and add to your T-chart. For example, after reading page 2-Build, “The Civil War Begins”:
 - Source: “The Civil War Begins” text
 - Big Idea: Southern states believed they had a right to continue slavery. After Lincoln was elected, they left the U.S. and formed their own government.
 - Source: “The Civil War Begins” image
 - Big Idea: The Civil War began when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter, in South Carolina.
 - Source: “The Industrial North” image
 - Big Idea: The North depended on labor from factories.
 - Source: “The Agricultural South” image
 - Big Idea: The South depended on plantations and the labor of enslaved people.
 - Source: “Abraham Lincoln” image
 - Big Idea: Southern leaders were angry when Lincoln was elected president.
 - Source: “Civil War Divisions” map
 - Big Idea: The U.S. was split during the Civil War, with some states in the Union, some in the Confederacy, and some on the border.
- After completing the T-chart, model reading through your notes about the text and media and then synthesizing them to write the main idea. For example:
 - The United States was divided over the issue of slavery, which the Southern economy depended on. After Lincoln was elected president, a number of Southern states left the U.S. and formed their own government known as the Confederacy. The war between the United States and the Confederacy began when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.
- Invite students to practice combining information from the text and media while they read the second text.

Check for Understanding

If you observe ...**Then try ...**

students struggling to interpret the information in a table or graph

working with students to create their own table and graph about the class in order to show how tables and graphs are used to show information. For example:

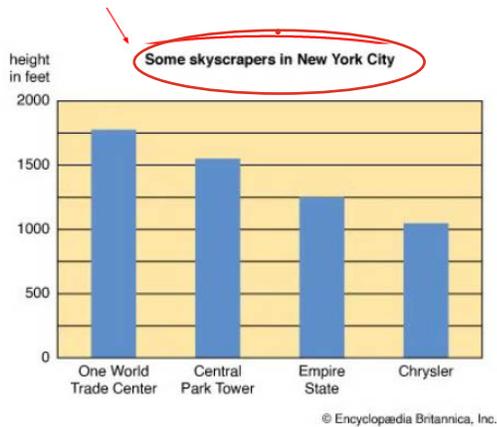
- Poll the class about their favorite foods, giving them four to six options to choose from. Keep a tally on the board, and then ask students to work in small groups to place the information in a table. Once tables are created, work as a class to create a bar graph that represents the information.

students struggling to identify the cause or effect

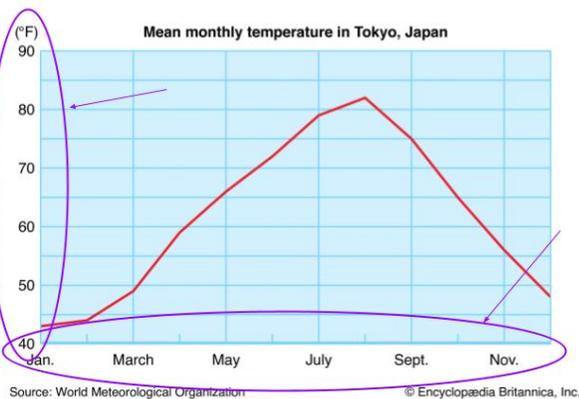
asking students to identify the topic of the media and then giving them binary questions to help determine perspective. For example:

- *Does the author support this, or are they against it?*
- *Does the author like this, or do they hate it?*
- *Does the author think ___ is good or bad?*

How to Read a Table or Graph

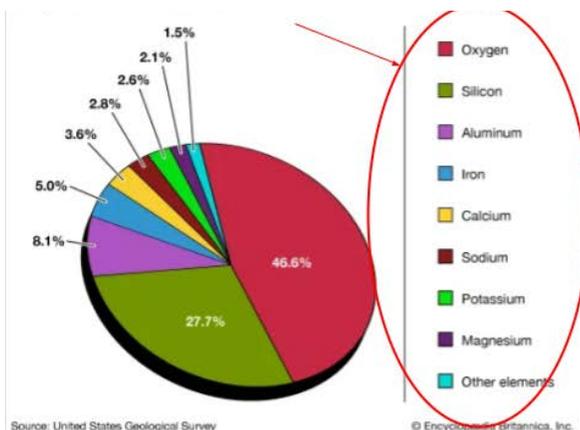


Read the **title** or heading to learn what the table or graph is showing.



Read the **labels** on the table or graph.

- On a table, these are usually column or row headings.
- On a graph, these are usually labels for the x-axis and y-axis.



Study the **key** to know what the symbols or colors represent.

How to Read a Table or Graph

Amounts collected for charity

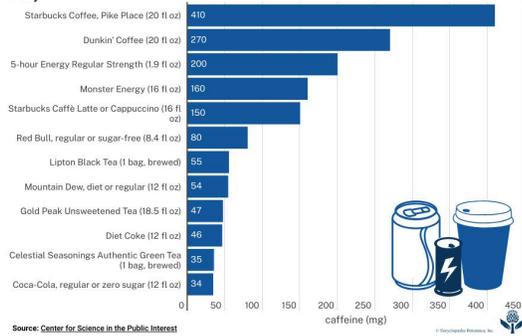
ROOM	AMOUNT
A	\$76.00
B	\$94.00
C	\$37.00
D	\$55.00

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Study the **data** included in the table or graph. Think about what the information is telling you.

Caffeine Content of Popular Drinks

According to the Mayo Clinic, most adults can safely consume up to 400 mg of caffeine a day.



Source: Center for Science in the Public Interest

Write the main idea of the table or graph.

Different drinks have varying amounts of caffeine. In this graph, Starbucks coffee has the most caffeine and Coca-Cola has the least.

Purpose and Perspective in Media

Title	Topic	Purpose	Perspective