



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume I: Writing, Knowing, Seeing

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## See It Again for the First Time

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.01.02  
by Caitlin M. Dillon

As a seventh-grade Language Arts teacher I face difficulties teaching students to (1) observe details (well), (2) form visualizations that are sufficient for comprehension and retention of images/texts, and (3) demonstrate age-appropriate levels of critical thinking. Research has led cognitive scientists to conclude that when we see an image or read a text, we construct mental representations of the characteristics of the image or the description provided by the text, and use those mental representations to retain characteristics of the image or text in memory. We use the mental representations to make connections, comparisons and inferences, and to draw conclusions. When students are given practice observing details in visual images and are guided toward making inferences about their observations, they develop greater ability to observe images and texts, retain their observations and inferences in memory, and develop critical thinking skills. This unit is intended to help build comprehension and retention skills by enhancing observation and visualization skills, using oral and written responding to visual and written texts (e.g., the painting and the poem entitled *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*). It could be taught for two to three weeks or as individual lessons, and is adaptable for students of any level.

(Developed for Language Arts and Writing, grades 6-8; recommended for Language Arts and Social Studies, Middle School and High School grades)

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