

## Lange's Iconic Photograph *Interactive Rubric*

---

To answer this assessment, students must consider various aspects of the photograph's reliability and also think about other information that could help them evaluate the reliability of the image. In question 1, students must explain that Lange may have been influenced by the Resettlement Administration's desire to increase support for its programs. In question 2, students need to identify an aspect of the photo that suggests Lange's influence over its content. Finally, in question 3, students must identify one more piece of information that would help them evaluate the reliability this photograph and justify their choice.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
Proficient	<p><b>Question 1:</b> Student identifies relevant background information and explains why it might call the reliability of the photo into question.</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> Student identifies a relevant aspect of the photograph and explains why it would call the reliability of the photo into question.</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Student identifies relevant information and explains how it would help to determine the reliability of the photograph.</p>
Emergent	<p><b>Question 1:</b> Student identifies background information that might call the reliability of the photo into question but does not provide a complete explanation.</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> Student identifies a relevant aspect of the photograph but does not explain why it would call the reliability of the photo into question.</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Student identifies relevant information but does not adequately explain how it would help to determine the reliability of the photograph.</p>
Basic	<p><b>Question 1:</b> Student does not identify background information that might call the reliability of the photo into question.</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> Student does not identify a relevant aspect of the photograph.</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Student does not identify relevant information.</p>

<https://beyondthebubble.stanford.edu/assessments/langes-iconic-photograph/rubric>

## Proficient Samples

Student P

**Question 1:** Why might the background information above lead you to question the photograph's reliability?

Since the administration wanted support for its program, photographers could have just staged migrant people. This photo could have been posed and carefully planned out.

*This student provides a plausible explanation for why the photographers could have staged the photograph.*

Student A

**Question 1:** Why might the background information above lead you to question the photograph's reliability?

The background info. may lead me to question the photograph's reliability because it states that Dorothea Lange took these photos to rally support for the Resettlement Administration. Therefore, there is a bias for the Resettlement Administration and this photo may have been staged so people would support this program.

*This student makes a connection between the intent of the Resettlement Administration and how Lange took the photo.*

Student F

**Question 2:** What is one feature of the photo that might lead you to question its reliability? Explain your reasoning.

One feature of the photo that might lead me to question its reliability is the way her hand is posed on her face and the way her children are both hiding their faces. It looks posed and artificial. The photo doesn't look like a candid, honest shot.

*This student raises reasonable questions about the way the children are posed.*

## Proficient Samples

Student J

**Question 3:** What is one thing you would want to know about Dorothea Lange or how she took this photo to better determine its reliability?

Precisely where did she take the photo (in a home setting, a photography studio, a field, etc.)?

This would help me determine the reliability of the photo because The photo could have been taken in a photography studio; easily suggesting that the photo was taken with a certain purpose. The fact that Lange focused on the family and excluded a background makes it easier challenging to decipher.

*This student identifies two relevant features of the photo and explains why they might call the reliability of the photo into question.*

Student M

**Question 3:** What is one thing you would want to know about Dorothea Lange or how she took this photo to better determine its reliability?

I would want to know if Lange staged this picture or if this is really how she saw the mother and her children.

This would help me determine the reliability of the photo because if Lange set this picture up by telling the mother and children to look this way, then this picture would be much less reliable. It would be hard to know if their emotions are real. Are these people really troubled or were they asked to act for the camera?

*This student has identified a relevant piece of information that would help to determine the reliability of the photo and provided a clear explanation for why this information would help corroborate the photo.*

## Emergent Samples

Student D

**Question 1:** Why might the background information above lead you to question the photograph's reliability?

The background information above might lead me to question the photograph's reliability because the photograph might be biased in favor of Franklin Roosevelt's agencies. This might not be the whole story/facts about the Dust Bowl.

Although the student correctly notes that the photograph might favor FDR's programs, he does not explain what about the background information led to this theory.

Student N

**Question 1:** Why might the background information above lead you to question the photograph's reliability?

I might question the photographer's reliability because in the background info they say "this agency hired photographer Dorothea Lange to take pictures that would build support for its programs." That makes me think that maybe FDR only wants to seem like he is trying to help.

This student has identified the crucial piece of background information but has not fully explained how it might call the reliability of the photo into question.

Student O

**Question 2:** What is one feature of the photo that might lead you to question its reliability? Explain your reasoning.

In the photo, Florence Thompson seems to pose for the camera facing her. If the picture is taken at a moment when no one is knowing, then the photo wouldn't turn out to be so fine and perfect.

Although this student raises the possibility that the photo is staged, she does not explain how this would affect its reliability as a historical source.

## Emergent Samples

Student H

**Question 2:** What is one feature of the photo that might lead you to question its reliability? Explain your reasoning.

One reliability that I question is that the photograph is only showing two kids and a baby. There is no proof of her having 2 children.

Questions about what who Lange chose to include in this photograph are central to some historians' theories about the authenticity of this image, but the student has not explained why this would make the photo less reliable.

Student K

**Question 3:** What is one thing you would want to know about Dorothea Lange or how she took this photo to better determine its reliability?

How did Dorothea Lange meet this woman? What was the story behind this picture?

This would help me determine the reliability of the photo because it would tell me how she met this person & if this photograph was staged.

This response is definitely headed in the right direction. Unfortunately, the student only provides a very brief, incomplete explanation.

Student B

**Question 3:** What is one thing you would want to know about Dorothea Lange or how she took this photo to better determine its reliability?

I would ask Dorothea Lange to take the picture with the background included.

This would help me determine the reliability of the photo because with the background, it'll give a better look at where she is and these other sad families to prove that the place was really from the Dust Bowl and people are really suffering a lot.

Additional information about the context of the photo would certainly be helpful, but this student mistakenly believes that the photo is from the Dust Bowl and wants verification of that fact.

## Basic Samples

Student G

**Question 1:** Why might the background information above lead you to question the photograph's reliability?

It doesn't show enough background information of Dorothea Lange, anyone can take pictures of stuff. We don't know if she took any photography class or stuff like that.

*The student does not explain how this would affect the reliability of the photo.*

Student Q

**Question 1:** Why might the background information above lead you to question the photograph's reliability?

I question why photographs were needed as during the time of the Great Depression many were suffering as it was already well known, but the background tells of only 1 farm worker.

*Instead of considering the background information, this student questions the purpose of such a photograph. This student also does not seem to understand that the government was seeking to build support for aid programs by showing the plight of Dust Bowl migrants.*

Student E

**Question 2:** What is one feature of the photo that might lead you to question its reliability? Explain your reasoning.

One feature of the photo that leads me to question the reliability is why are they so dusty when they are in California. It should be cleaner than before. I think the program purposely made them look really poor and dirty so the program can get more support from the reader.

*This student has concluded that migrants should be cleaner in California. Unfortunately, this document provides no evidence to support that conclusion.*

## Basic Samples

Student L

**Question 2:** What is one feature of the photo that might lead you to question its reliability? Explain your reasoning.

Florence Thompson shows her emotion in the photograph. She should have been happy about moving away from the Dust Bowl.

*This student questions the reliability of the photograph because it does not match her preconceived notions of Dust Bowl migrants.*

Student C

**Question 3:** What is one thing you would want to know about Dorothea Lange or how she took this photo to better determine its reliability?

I would like to know where in Nipomo, California this was taken.

This would help me determine the reliability of the photo because the location of the Dust Bowl was in the Great Plains, far from California.

*Although factually correct, the student has not explained how the location of the Dust Bowl helps determine the reliability of the photo.*

Student I

**Question 3:** What is one thing you would want to know about Dorothea Lange or how she took this photo to better determine its reliability?

Does she know the situation of the Dust Bowl first hand?

This would help me determine the reliability of the photo because if she didn't know the situation first hand, she might have just made assumptions of what it was really like.

*This student does not explain how these possible assumptions would influence the content of the photo.*