

## ANALYZE A HISTORICAL IMAGE – C. W. JEFFERYS



*Champlain With Astrolabe on the West Bank of the Ottawa River, 1613, by C. W. Jefferys, 1942*

What is your first reaction to this picture?

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What is the first thing you notice?

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What do you see in the foreground?

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What is in the middle ground?

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What is in the background?

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File:[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Champlain\\_with\\_Astrolabe\\_on\\_the\\_West\\_Bank\\_of\\_Ottawa\\_River%2C\\_1613\\_by\\_Jefferys.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Champlain_with_Astrolabe_on_the_West_Bank_of_Ottawa_River%2C_1613_by_Jefferys.jpg).

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How are the elements arranged?

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Who are these people?

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Where are they?

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Why are they there?

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What do the facial expressions and body language tell you about the people in this picture?

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What details help explain what is happening in this picture?

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What is the artist trying to communicate?

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From whose point of view is the picture portrayed? Explain your answer.

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Is it being viewed at, above or below eye-level?

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How does the eye-level affect the interpretation of the image?

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What questions do you have about this picture?

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## CHARLES WILLIAM JEFFERYS (1869-1951)

C.W. Jefferys was a Canadian artist, illustrator and author. He illustrated much of Canada's past and his historical pictures are still used in different ways today. Born in Britain, he came to Canada as a young boy. His family emigrated to Canada in 1878.

Jefferys began studying art when he was 15. At 17 he started getting illustration jobs with the Canadian newspaper *The Globe*. This led to jobs with other newspapers. When he was 23 he was hired as an artist-reporter by the *New York Herald* and he went to live in New York. In his early 30s he returned to Canada and settled in Toronto, Ontario.

Jefferys' legacy to Canadian culture is encompassed in his lifelong work, for example, he:

- illustrated many history books dating from 1903-1950;
- wrote Canadian history books;
- wrote many articles about art, architecture and Canadian history;
- taught drawing at the University of Toronto and the Ontario College of Art.;
- was an important painter;
- influenced members of the Group of Seven and other Canadian artists of the time with his paintings and ideas;
- is recognized for his work by people from around the world.



*Champlain With Astrolabe on the West Bank of the Ottawa River, 1613*

by C. W. Jefferys, 1942

Pen and black ink over pencil on paper

**Learn more** about this image at the following website:

<http://www.cwj Jefferys.ca/champlain-taking-an-observation-with-the-astrolabe>

File:[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Champlain\\_with\\_Astrolabe\\_on\\_the\\_West\\_Bank\\_of\\_Ottawa\\_River%2C\\_1613\\_by\\_Jefferys.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Champlain_with_Astrolabe_on_the_West_Bank_of_Ottawa_River%2C_1613_by_Jefferys.jpg).

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## POSSIBLE STUDENT RESPONSE – ANALYZE A HISTORICAL IMAGE



*Champlain With Astrolabe on the West Bank of the Ottawa River, 1613*, by C. W. Jefferys, 1942

What is your first reaction to this picture?

It reminds me of pictures in some graphic novels. It looks like it could be for a comic book or graphic novel about the past. I like the way the artist has added a lot of detail. The artist is really good at drawing people. I like it.

What is the first thing you notice? I notice the man 2nd from the left of the picture and the round thing he is holding.

What do you see in the foreground?

There are 2 men on the left side of the picture. They almost fill the space and are standing sideways. One man is holding a note pad and writing something. The other is looking up through a round object that is hanging from a branch. There is a fairly big tree behind the man with the round thing. The tree goes off the page at the top left corner. The men are standing on a flat rock. They are wearing old fashioned clothes like from the 1600s. There is a hat and some kind of long gun on the ground in the centre in front of them.

What is in the middle ground?

There is a First Nations man standing almost in the centre. He is standing front view and is holding a bow and looking at the man with the round thing. There is a small evergreen tree behind him. Two men are carrying a canoe on the right and a little bit behind the First Nations man. You can't see many details on the 2 men. They are in shadow because the canoe is on their backs. There are a few trees and bushes in front of them. The details are drawn in a lighter value than in the foreground.

What is in the background?

The background is divided into 3 almost equal horizontal sections. A river disappears in the distance. Rolling hills covered with trees are behind the river. The rest is sky with clouds drawn with thin, light lines.

File:[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Champlain\\_with\\_Astrolabe\\_on\\_the\\_West\\_Bank\\_of\\_Ottawa\\_River%2C\\_1613\\_by\\_Jefferys.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Champlain_with_Astrolabe_on_the_West_Bank_of_Ottawa_River%2C_1613_by_Jefferys.jpg).

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How are the elements arranged?

This is a vertical composition that uses the rule of thirds to organize the space. There are strong vertical shapes of 2 figures on the left third of the picture. The 2 figures are drawn with strong shadows that contrast against the middle ground objects. The man closest to the left looks towards the second man creating an implied line that directs the viewer to the second man's head. His head is placed almost exactly on the intersection of the horizontal and vertical lines dividing the picture into thirds. The First Nations man is placed in the centre of the picture. He looks at the second man creating another implied line directing the viewer to the second man's head. This creates a very strong focal point and emphasizes the theme of the picture. The right side of the composition is drawn in lighter values. The diagonal shape of the canoe moves the eye towards the First Nations man but curves back directing the eye to the lower right side of the picture. This helps to balance the composition. The thin vertical line of a small tree begins in the middle ground and curves slightly directing the eye back into the top of the picture towards the heavier branches of the tree on the left. The patterned horizontal hill shape in the background is placed along the horizontal one third division line. It contrasts against the lighter sky. There is a light dark pattern in the background. The sky is light, the hills are dark, the bottom of the hills is light, the river is dark. If you draw a diagonal line from the bottom left corner to the top right corner, the triangle on the top left is mostly dark values and the triangle on the bottom right is mostly light values.

Who are these people?

From the title of the picture I think the man second from the left is the explorer Champlain. The man on the left is a European helping Champlain. The man in the middle is First Nations probably there as a guide. The 2 men portaging the canoe are either First Nations or voyageurs.

Where are they?

They are somewhere on the west bank of the Ottawa river in what is now east-central Canada.

Why are they there?

They are searching for a route to the sea that would take them to the far east.

What do the facial expressions and body language tell you about the people in this picture?

The Europeans are very focused on taking measurements. They seem confident and in charge. The First Nations man looks a little bit worried because he has his hand over his mouth, his eyes are a bit bulging and he appears to be clutching his bow. The two men portaging the canoe are leaning into their work and appear to be ignoring the others.

What details help explain what is happening in this picture?

The Europeans are wearing clothes with period details so you know that this event takes place sometime in the 17th century. The First Nations man is dressed in clothes that represent the clothing worn by indigenous people in that time period. His bow and arrow and feathers help to identify him as First Nations. The details of the landscape communicate wilderness and rough terrain. The canoe looks heavy because it takes 2 men to carry it. It appears to be made of bark. The circular object is suspended from a branch and it looks like Champlain is trying to steady it. This gives the impression that it is a tricky instrument to use.

What is the artist trying to communicate?

The artist is trying to show how Champlain figured out where he was as he travelled in search of the sea route to the east. It is like a look back in time showing how men from different cultures dressed and what kinds of tools they used. It shows the viewer how the country looked and what challenges the explorers faced. I think the artist is trying to show us what history looked like. It is how he imagines it must have looked.

From whose point of view is the picture portrayed? Explain your answer.

It is told from the European point of view. The picture emphasizes the Europeans and makes them seem strong and important. Champlain is shown very strong and his European helper is doing important writing. The First Nations man looks less confident, almost scared or in awe of the white men and what they are doing.

Is it being viewed at, above or below eye-level?

It is viewed slightly above eye-level. The horizon line or eye-level line passes through Champlain's shoulders.

How does the eye-level affect the interpretation of the image?

It creates depth within the picture because you can see far off into the distance. It makes it seem as if you are looking up at Champlain emphasizing his importance and strength. The other figures are lower in the picture plane making them seem less important.

What questions do you have about this picture?

I wonder why the First Nations man is holding his bow like that?

# DESCRIPTIVE WORDS

## Colour

white	gold	carrot	coral	indigo	brown	dove
ivory	daffodil	squash	peach	cobalt	coffee	fog
pearl	butter	spice	hot pink	teal	carob	black
snow	lemon	red	purple	lapis	walnut	ebony
cotton	mustard	cherry	mauve	denim	chocolate	charcoal
creamy	dandelion	rose	violet	green	cedar	midnight
rice	honey	crimson	lavender	lime	grey	spider
tan	banana	scarlet	plum	pear	shadow	oil
beige	orange	apple	lilac	mint	iron	raven
oatmeal	rust	brick	magenta	sage	cloud	jet black
sand	ginger	pink	blue	pine	silver	ink
yellow	fire	rose	sky	moss	smoke	grease
canary	apricot	salmon	navy	olive	pewter	coal

## Value

light	shade	drab	clouded	stone	somber	mousy
dark	tone	dusty	dappled	ashen	smoky	neutral

## Space

deep	background	foreground	enclosed	serene	atmospheric	boundless
shallow	middle ground	open	peaceful	tranquil	awe-inspiring	mystical

## Shape

organic	complex	figural	sculptural	abstract	2-dimensional	distorted
geometric	delicate	mosaic-like	semi-abstract	simple	irregular	symmetrical

## Line

flowing	loose	horizontal	wide	hatched	gestural	blurry
delicate	delicate	diagonal	thin	heavy	wavy	bumpy
simple	bold	zigzag	skinny	contour	swirly	broken
bold	coarse	curved	rough	implied	spiraling	whisp
thick	hesitant	short	smooth	outline	big	fat
thin	vertical	long	fuzzy	powerful	small	puffy

## Pattern

broken	checker board	flecked	mottled	scalloped	striated	tessellated
candy-striped	dappled	flowery	ornate	serial	striped	symbolic
checkered	decorative	linear	radial	spaced	variegated	symmetrical
crisscross	even	marbled	regular	spotted	well-balanced	hatched

## Texture

abrasive	cottony	fizzy	gritty	layered	ribbed	smooth
barbed	dented	fleecy	hairly	metallic	runny	scaley
blistered	dusty	fuzzy	hatched	mucky	shiny	thorny
bumpy	engraved	furry	irregular	pulpy	scratchy	velvety
chunky	etched	glassy	jagged	puffy	spongy	wavy
coarse	feathery	goeey	knobbed	pocked	silky	woven

**Focal Point** – a main point of interest in the artwork

**Rule of Thirds** – a way to add structure to a composition

Artists use the rule of thirds to organize the key elements of their composition as a way to make the composition more dynamic and interesting.

- divide the picture plane into thirds, vertically and horizontally
- place the key elements of your image along or near these lines or where they intersect



**COMPOSITION** - *the arrangement of elements in an artwork using the principles of design*

**Repetition & Rhythm** – principles of design

In art repetition is used to unify and strengthen the composition. Repetition is the repeated use of similar elements or motif. A MOTIF is a unit in an artwork, e.g., tulip shape, heads, leaves. Rhythm is the repetition of related motifs to create a sense of movement. Rhythm is sometimes confused with PATTERN. A pattern repeats motifs, but it is decorative and flat. Rhythm gives the feeling of movement, pattern is still. Rhythm can be:

**RANDOM** – a motif is repeated in no obvious order

**REGULAR** – the spaces between motifs are equal and the same motif is repeated in a predictable way

**ALTERNATING** – the spaces between a motif are different, or a second motif is added

**FLOWING** – wavy, curved shapes are repeated and the movement of lines or shapes is gradual

**PROGRESSIVE** – the motif changes each time it is repeated with some kind of gradual change, e.g., in shape or colour

**Balance** – a principle of design

Balance is the arrangement of elements in such a way that the parts seem equal in weight or importance. In art there are two types of visual balance, FORMAL, when similar or equal elements are placed on either side of an imaginary central axis, and INFORMAL, when unlike elements or objects are organized so they seem to have equal weight. Formal balance creates STABLE compositions. ASYMMETRICAL balance creates DYNAMIC compositions and is achieved by working with visual weight.

**SYMMETRY** – the composition has identical elements on either side of a central axis

**APPROXIMATE SYMMETRY** – the composition has very similar elements on either side of a central axis

**ASYMMETRY** – two sides of the composition are different but are arranged so that their weight appears equal

**RADIAL** – the composition has elements that are evenly spaced around a central point.

Something has **VISUAL WEIGHT** because it has the ability to attract more attention than something else. Things gain visual weight because of their:

**SIZE and OUTLINE** – the bigger the shape and more complicated the outline the more weight it appears to have

**COLOUR** – the purer, warmer and brighter the colour the heavier it appears; VALUE, darker tones appear heavier

**TEXTURES** – rough surfaces appear heavier

**POSITION** – large shapes close to the centre can be balanced by smaller shapes farther away.



# **COMPOSITION** - *the arrangement of elements in an artwork using the principles of design*

## **Emphasis** – a principle of design

In art emphasis is used to draw attention to particular parts of the work. It helps unify the work by controlling the sequence in which various parts are viewed. Artists may emphasize an ELEMENT, colour or texture for instance, or an AREA. When an area is emphasized it is called the FOCAL POINT. This is the first area to attract attention when the work is viewed. Emphasis can be created by the use of:

**CONTRAST** – very different elements are placed near each other

**LOCATION** – objects are placed close to the centre of the visual plane (we tend to look at the centre first)

**CONVERGENCE** – other elements appear to point toward the area that is being emphasized

**ISOLATION** – an object or element is placed off by itself

**UNUSUAL** – unexpected objects or elements are placed in the area being emphasized

## **Contrast** – a principle of design

Contrast is the use of differences to make a work interesting. Related elements are placed beside each other in order to draw attention to their differences. The more the difference, the greater the contrast. Contrast can be used to create balance, visual interest, or a focal point. It leads the viewer's eye into and around the artwork. Contrast can be created by the use of:

**COLOURS** – placing complementary colours beside each other

**TEXTURES** – placing extremely different textures such as smooth and rough beside each other

**VALUES** – placing black beside white, or dark colours beside light colours

**LINES** – placing extremely different lines such as sharp lines beside fuzzy lines

**SHAPES** – placing geometric shapes beside and organic shapes

**SPACES** – placing large spaces beside small spaces

## **Variety** – a principle of design

Variety is used in artworks to make them more interesting. Artists use irregularities to create intricate and complex relationships in their work. This ensures that an artwork is intriguing and not boring. Variety depends on unity to be sure the image does not simply become chaotic and unreadable. Variety can be created by the use of:

**OPPOSITION** – include opposites or elements that have strong contrasts

**CHANGE** – an object's size, point of view, or angle

**ELABORATION** – add intricate and rich details to some sections of the work

**CONTRAST** – place related and significantly different elements beside each other

# COMPOSITION - *the arrangement of elements in an artwork using the principles of design*

## Movement – a principle of design

Movement and rhythm are similar and refer to the way the viewer's eye travels through an artwork. Artists arrange the elements in specific ways to lead the viewer from place to place, often to a focal point, throughout the work creating optical movement. Movement can be created by the use of:

**DIRECTIONAL LINES** – objects and elements are placed in such a way as to cause the viewer's eye to follow a path

**EDGES** – fuzzy edges and indistinct outlines are interpreted as being in motion

**SHAPES** – multiple, overlapping shapes or shapes placed on an angle suggest movement

**COLOURS** – placement of contrasting colours throughout the composition attracts the viewer's eye

**SIMILAR VALUES** – the eye moves from areas that are similar, to areas that are different.

## Unity & Harmony – principles of design

Unity is the arrangement of individual elements in such a way that they seem to work together as one whole. The various elements are arranged within the work so that it feels as if it *works*. This feeling occurs when you get the sense that if you changed a thing it would ruin the artwork. Harmony is achieved by combining elements in such a way as to highlight their similarities. Unity can be achieved by the use of:

**SIMPLICITY** – when there are very few variations in elements

**REPETITION** – when similar elements or objects are repeated throughout the work

**PROXIMITY** – when elements are placed close together limiting the amount of negative space around shapes

**CONTINUATION** – when shapes or elements are placed in a way that causes the eye to create a continuous line or edge

## Proportion – a principle of design

Proportion is the spatial relationship of one or more elements to another, or to the whole in an artwork with respect to size, number, colour and so on. The ancient Greeks developed *the golden section* a mathematical ratio used to achieve *ideal proportion*. They used this ratio to achieve beauty and balance in artworks and architecture. When the relative size of elements within an artwork seems wrong or out of balance we say it is 'out of proportion'.

Artists use correct proportions in their works when they want them to look realistic. Sometimes artists deliberately change proportions by EXAGGERATING or DISTORTING them. This can be a powerful way to get across a particular message. Masks are good examples of artworks that exaggerate proportions of the face to create a powerful effect.

Proportions of the human body are usually measured in the length of one head – from the tip of the chin to the top of the skull. The body is about 7.5 head lengths tall. If a figure looks strange it is usually because the head is too small or too large for the rest of the body.