

Is a Picture Worth A Thousand Words? Engaging with Visual Culture

Activity 4 Handout: Reading a Building

- First consider the age of the building, try and research the construction date, what other buildings were built in the same period?
- The style in which it was constructed – this might be a tricky one, as the building may well have been altered over time, or it might be an eclectic mix of styles.
- What ornamentation or decorative detail is there on the façade or interior – this might be understood in conjunction to the style.
- What spaces make up the building – how many rooms are there and how is the interior structured? What materials have been used to construct the building, and how do they affect the overall appearance and viewer response?
- What is the building's location and site, and how do surrounding buildings and landscape frame the building? What is its relationship to the surrounding area?
- What is the purpose or use of the building, and who are the inhabitants or users of the building and its spaces? – consider different social, economic or work groups.
- Finally, are there any interesting stories or narratives connected with this building, on a local or national basis?