



## The Things We Touch, The Things We Carry

VTS Discussions and Thinking Routines for Grades 6 – 12 (Listening & Speaking and Writing CCSS)  
Inspired by the Exhibition *Looking In, Looking Out: Latin American Photography*



## About the Photographs in the Exhibition

The scenes of Latin American culture, politics, environments, and individuals are explored in depth in *Looking In, Looking Out: Latin American Photography*. This exhibition, drawn from the permanent collection of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, highlights works by Latin American photographers, or artists who have adopted it as home, so that those from outside the region may look into the lives of Latin America. Through the lens of nostalgia, propaganda, a populist aesthetic, and changing perspectives, photographers illustrate the diverse but often similar spirits of countries in the region.<sup>1</sup>

## Connecting to Students

The photographs in this exhibition invite students to look closely and think deeply; to enter the world portrayed in the images, and to consider themes and ideas that connect to their own lives and experiences.



Flor Garduño, Mexican, b. 1957, *Basket of Light, Canasta de luz*, Sumpango, Guatemala, 1989, gelatin silver print, SBMA

## Connecting the the CCSS

The photographs in this lesson sequence provide engaging entry points for collaborative classroom discourse (ELA Listening & Speaking Standards). Open-ended VTS\* discussions about the images, whether viewed singly or in pairs, prompt students to ask questions and to form and support opinions. Sharing observations and providing evidence for speculations and observations provide a forum in which students can offer and consider multiple perspectives. Shared discussions lead to individual connections to these works of art—connections that can be shaped into fictional and personal narratives and/or poetry.

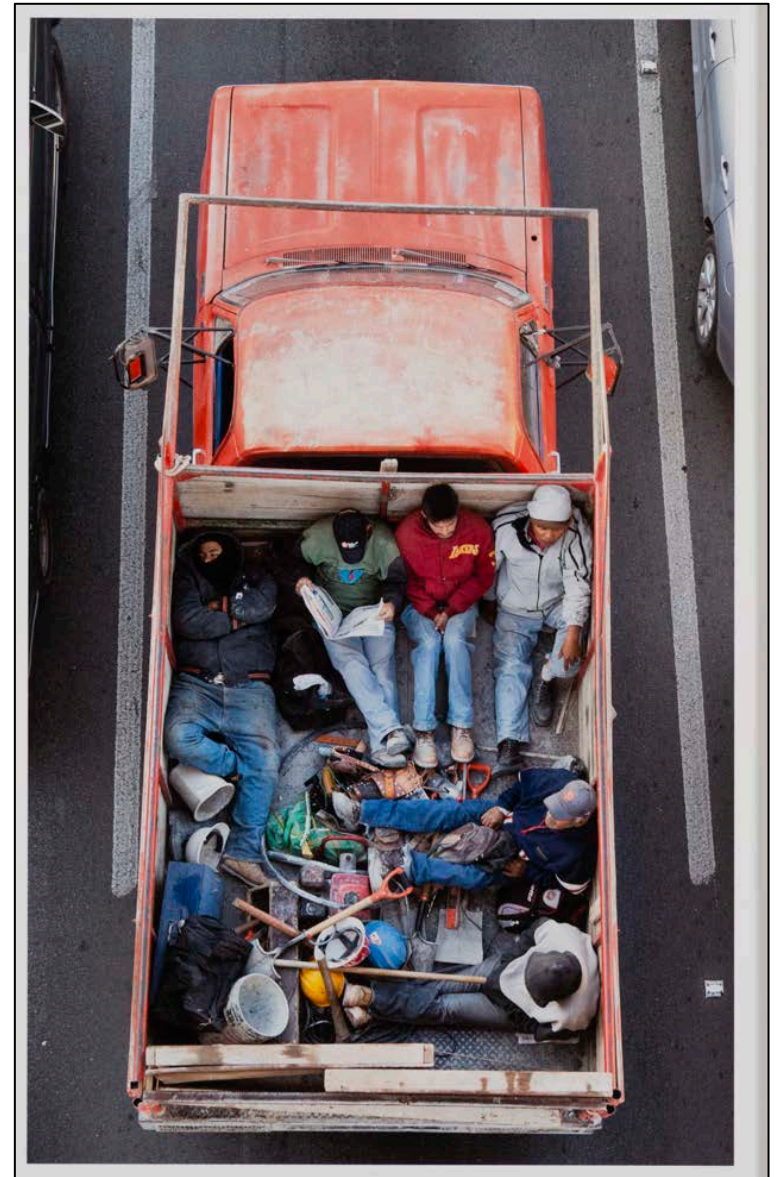
\*Visual Thinking Strategies, see <http://www.vtshome.org>

<sup>1</sup> cite SBMA website



# Exploring Works of Art: VTS Discussion & Thinking Routines

Alejandro Cartagena, Dominican, b. 1977  
(Active Mexico, ) *Car Poolers* 20, 2012  
Inkjet print, ed. 3/10, SBMA



## Introductory VTS Discussion:

Project this image (use the slides in the Image Bank at the end of this lesson sequence), and invite students to look carefully at the photograph.

After a full minute of viewing the photograph, ask the group: *What is going on in this image?* Remind students that there is no one “right” answer – you are interested in their ideas, hypotheses, and responses to the work.

As each student contributes an idea, ask him/her to support the statement with evidence from the work. Ask: *What do you see that makes you say that?*

After a student provides evidence, paraphrase the comment(s), pointing to specifically referenced details. Continue asking for more ideas from other students by asking: *“What more can we find?”*

Following the VTS and Thinking Routine discussions, show students the images with full citations (artist, title, etc.). Initial viewing of the images without titles will contribute to keeping discussions and ideas open-ended. See the Image Bank at the end of this lesson sequence that includes full-size images with and without citations.

\*Visual Thinking Strategies, see <http://www.vtshome.org>



## Thinking Routines

Following the VTS\* discussion, introduce some or all of the following Thinking Routines which trigger specific types of higher-order thinking.

\*Visual Thinking Strategies, see <http://www.vtshome.org>



## Thinking Routine: Objects Tell Stories

In this image there are people *and* objects. Take a moment and look carefully at just the objects in the photograph. What do they reveal about the young men? What are the objects used for – what do they have in common? Are some objects different from others? What are they? How are they different? What do they tell you?

Use the objects to help you determine who these young men are—what they are doing now, and what they might do later in the day. (Note: This photograph was taken in a split second, frozen in time by the snap of the shutter; the photographer was looking down on a busy road when he took the image of the moving truck.)

**Optional Writing Activity:** Chose one of the young men in the back of the truck. Describe him (clothing, physical characteristics, posture, attitude, etc.) so that a reader of your written piece could pick him out from the rest of the group. Write a short fictional narrative in which the young man you selected describes his day, his work, where he is headed, how he feels, etc. Include the use of figurative language (see slide 11) .



## *Same, Same, but Different Thinking Routine*

Students compare and contrast two or more works of art.

Project the following slides. As they view each pair of images, say to students:

*Look carefully at these 2 images. How are they similar? (Consider all aspects of the works of art – settings, subjects, objects, etc.)*

*How are they different? What makes them different?*

*Are they more alike than different? What do you see that makes you say that?*

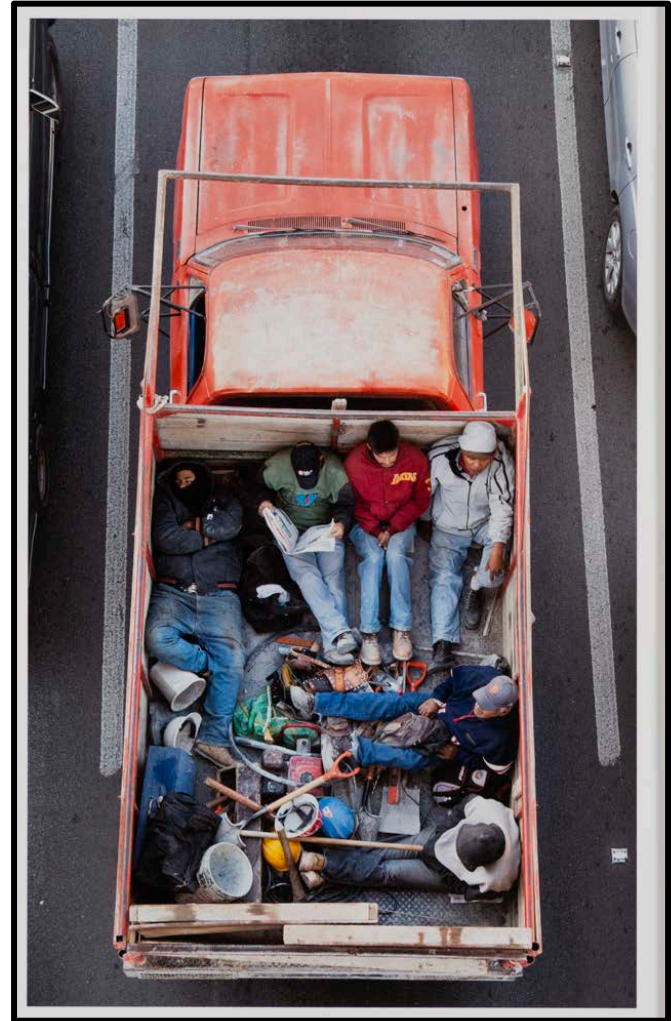
Compare and contrast the settings, the mood, the objects in each photograph, and the postures and actions of the subjects.

Then ask: *What work is demonstrated or implied in each photograph?*

After similarities and differences are pointed out, ask:

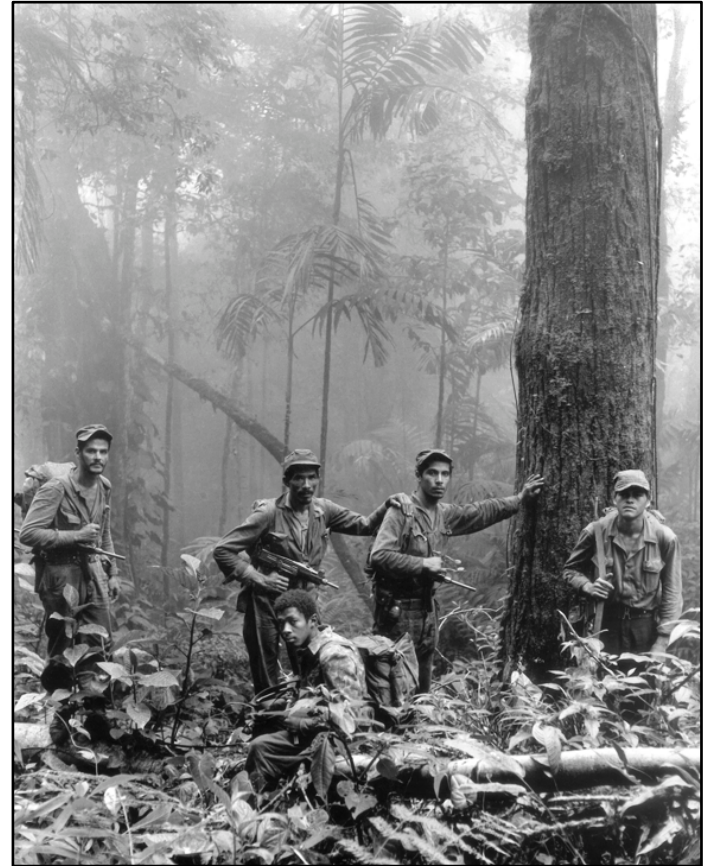
*What do you see that makes you say that?*

**Thinking moves:** compare/contrast, consider fine distinctions, consider nuance, get to the essence, find significance, and demonstrate evidential reasoning





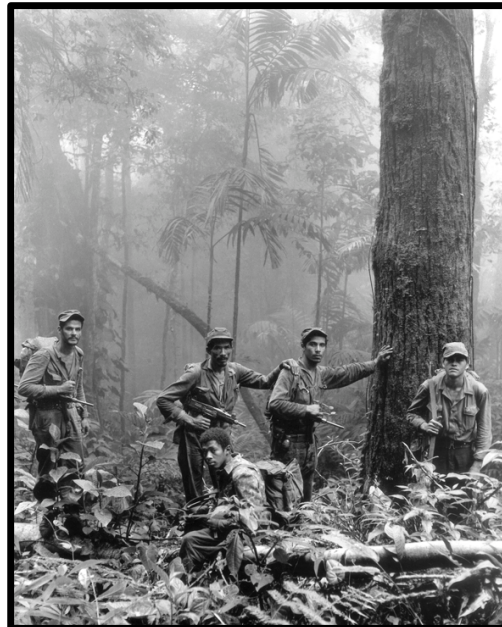






## Using Figurative Language

Use these two Thinking Routines (below) to find conceptual metaphors in the exhibition photographs (see the Image Bank at the end of this presentation.) Compare the subjects, their attitudes, physical features, or their movements to something else as you describe your response to a selected image.



### Symbol Search (A Metaphor Game)\*

*Can you find symbols – creatures, objects, colors, or other details that might represent an idea, concept, or emotion – in this image or work of art? What are they? What do they represent?*

*Thinking moves: think metaphorically, discover the essential message, find significance, make personal connections, think beyond what is presented in the visual stimulus, and demonstrate evidential reasoning*

J Chancer 2012

### The Simile Game\*

*This routine asks participants to look carefully at an image or object, and comparing things, ideas, subjects, themes, etc. to other things using "like" or "as" – in other words – find the similes!*

*Examples:*

*the grapes look like wet beach balls, glistening in the sun  
the moon looks like a comma in the sky  
the twining vine look like calligraphy  
the storm clouds look like a heavy, damp grey blanket that will smother the fire  
the leaf looks like my grandmother's hand-veined, dry, and delicate*

*Thinking moves: compare, think metaphorically, and make connections*

J Chancer 2012



## Thinking Routine: Is This Art?

After viewing the image and considering its narrative qualities (*What is going on in the picture?*), ask students to look again and consider the technical aspects of why this photograph is considered a work of art.

Ask:

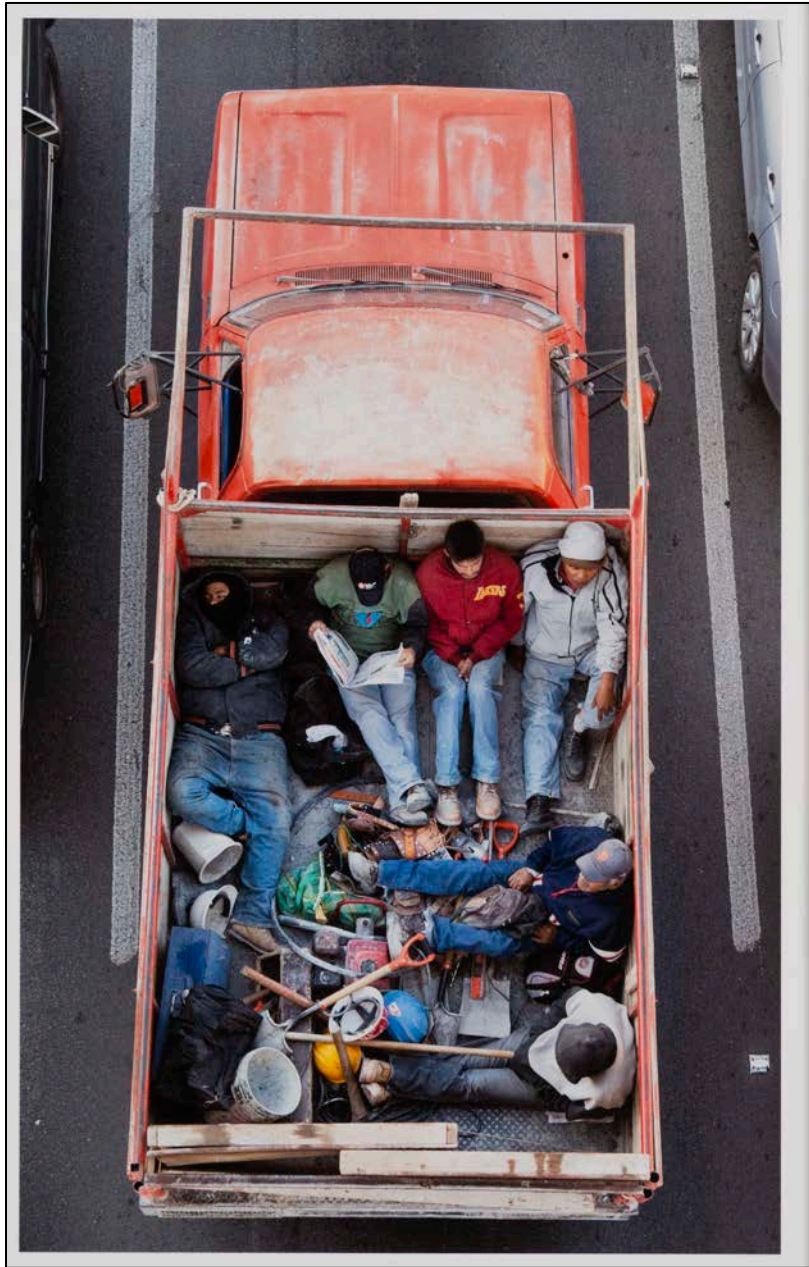
*What visually appeals to you – interests you?*  
*What elements of art and/or design do you notice in the piece?*

*Consider line, shape, color, contrast, light and shadow, movement – what “works” in this photograph?*



# IMAGE BANK

for the lesson sequence







Alejandro Cartagena, Dominican, b. 1977 (Active Mexico, ) *Car Poolers 20*, 2012  
Inkjet print, ed. 3/10, SBMA





Sebastião Salgado, Brazilian, b. 1944, *Mexico, México*, 1980  
gelatin silver print, SBMA







Rodrigo Moya, Mexican, b. 1934  
*Life Isn't Beautiful*, Ixtlera region of northern Mexico  
*La vida no es bella*, Región ixtlera del norte de México,  
1965 (printed 2010)  
Gelatin silver print, SBMA







Raúl Corrales, Cuban, 1925-2006, *Fishing Net, La atarraya*, ca. 1950  
gelatin silver print, SBMA







Raúl Corrales, Cuban, 1925-2006  
*White Hats, Havana, Sombreritos, La Habana, 1960*  
 gelatin silver print, ed. 1/40, SBMA







Rodrigo Moya  
Mexican, b. 1934  
*Guerrillas in the Mist*  
*Guerrilleros en la niebla, Sierra Falcón, Venezuela, 1965*  
(printed 2010)  
gelatin silver print, SBMA







Flor Garduño, Mexican, b. 1957, *Basket of Light*, *Canasta de luz*, Sumpango, Guatemala, 1989, gelatin silver print, SBMA

## Connections to the Standards:

### Writing (Grades 6-12)

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
  - Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
  - Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
  - Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
- Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## Connections to the Standards:

### Listening & Speaking (Grades 6 – 12)

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes.



This lesson was created by Joni Chancer, SBMA Curriculum Consultant.

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