

# Gaze Activity

**Teaching Notes:** This discussion and activity may follow the previous one (Framing) or may be used independently. The following activity may be completed using the images of *American Gothic* depicted; however other images may be easily substituted, if you wish. There are many online digital resource sites for visual images, including the Paul R. Jones Collection at the University of Delaware:

[http://www.museums.udel.edu/jones/archive/archive\\_pages/guides/medium.html](http://www.museums.udel.edu/jones/archive/archive_pages/guides/medium.html). Many of the images available at this site have zooming capabilities to allow the viewer to examine portions of the images in close detail. This activity is designed to be used as is or to be adapted to your teaching context. If used as is, time allocated to complete the assignment would be approximately forth-five minutes to one hour. You may choose to complete a portion of it in class or to give it as an out of class assignment. You may choose to use some or all of the discussion prompts below. The images may be printed or reproduced in another format for use in a non-technology classroom setting, but students will need access to a computer outside of class to read the resource links. Additional questions that may prove useful when considering contextual issues such as gaze can be found in the Bank of Questions: <http://www.arhu.umd.edu/vislit/bank.html>.

**In-class Activity:** Working individually, in groups, or as an entire class, discuss the following:

- 1) What were some of the different narratives initially constructed by members of the class for the two images titled *American Gothic*? How did the notion of gaze intersect with these different narratives?
- 2) What elements of the viewer's own identity seemed critical to the emergence of different viewer gazes? Some elements to consider would include age, race, class, academic interest, ethnic or national background, cultural, religious, or geographic contexts of lived experience etc.
- 3) How might *gaze* influence or depend upon what the viewer "saw" or "did not see" (literally or metaphorically) within a given image. Can you give a concrete example using the two *American Gothic* images as they were interpreted by members of the class?
- 4) How many different types of gaze can you identify in Parks' work? In Woods'?

**Activity Extensions:**

- 1) Using images drawn from the Paul R. Jones collection at the University of Delaware [http://www.museums.udel.edu/jones/archive/archive\\_pages/guides/medium.html](http://www.museums.udel.edu/jones/archive/archive_pages/guides/medium.html), or from other sources, ask students to complete the activities for **Frame** and **Gaze** with new images.
- 2) Direct students to identify images that demonstrate the multiple aspects of gaze as described above in points 1-10 and a-f.
- 3) Students may return to images used in online exercises (link to page) and activity plans (link to page) in the Visual Literacy Toolbox in order to identify how frame and gaze are operative.

**Resources:** <http://www.chicagoschoolmediatheory.net/home.htm>

**Online Readings about visual media:** <http://home.comcast.net/~jav.paul/essays.htm>