

Dorothea Lange (1895–1965) was an important documentary photographer. She recorded the difficult everyday life of her era to create empathy and shed light on the Great Depression and post-war period. This lesson is designed to teach the importance of Lange's compositional choices—what she included in her photographs, why she included it, and how cropping an image can change the context of a photograph.

Materials

reproductions of Dorothea Lange's photographs (provided in Art Trunk, with additional options available from collections.museumca.org)

pencils

one journal per participant

one L-shaped piece of paper per participant

Suggested Reading for Younger Participants

Rosenstock, Barb. *Dorothea's Eyes: Dorothea Lange Photographs the Truth*. Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2016.

Suggested Viewing for 5th Grade and Up

Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning. Directed by Dyanna Taylor. Arlington, VA: PBS, 2014. DVD. 2 hours. GrabAHunkOfLightning.com

Resource Guide

Oakland Museum of California. *Dorothea Lange Teacher Resources* (especially pages 23–25). PDF. MuseumCA.org/dorothea-lange-curriculum

This activity is adapted from *Dorothea Lange Teacher Resources*.

Instructions for Educators



Display the two versions provided of *Ditched, Stalled and Stranded, San Joaquin Valley, California*. Explain that they contain the same image, but one is cropped and the other uncropped. Discuss how cropping changes the context.



Ask participants to find partners. Give each pair an uncropped photograph by Lange and other necessary materials.



Ask participants to examine their image closely and think about how they would crop it to strengthen its impact on viewers.



Using their two L-shaped pieces of paper as a cropping tool, each pair will mark their image's new borders in pencil.



Ask each pair to record their decision-making process in their journals and title their cropped image based on the message they hope to convey to viewers.