Questions for Visual Rhetoric

* What is the historical, cultural, social or economic context of the visual? How might I determine it? How does absence of or misunderstanding of this context contribute to misreading?
* Do I feel compelled to speculate about the creator’s gender, ethnicity, creed, age, etc. As I interrogate the work? How might answers to these change or complicate my reading?
* What is the works creator trying to accomplish; can I summarize the work’s purpose or message?
* Why did the creator organize the work in the way that s/he did? What clues do I have to answer this question?
* What features of the work first captured my attention and why? How might that response be made relevant to the reader?
* What do I like best/least about the work? Is my personal “reaction” relevant to the assignment? If not, can I reframe that response with scholarly assessment criteria?
* What is the overall tone and mood of the work?
* What is the point of view of the work; how might I infer it?
* Can I infer the creator’s state of mind when s/he drafted this work? What role, is any, should biological knowledge of the creator play in my reading of the work?
* How does the work reveal the creator’s attitude toward the subject and its audience? Why did the creator choose this medium rather than another?
* Is the message of the work specific or universal? Can a case be made for both?
* Is there a secondary message in the work? If the creator included print text, how does the text add to or possibly complicate the visual text?
* If the work was constructed with color, what do the hues convey?
* How can this visual further a claim I want to make in an argument?

Adapted by Sherry Wynn Perdue for the *Write Space Resource Guide* (2007) from Shirley Counsil’s Language and Composition Advanced Placement Consultant Handout, “Questions for Visual Works.” Lester Faigley’s *Picturing Texts* the inspiration for both resources.