

Brooklyn Bridge, 1929 by Walker Evans [1903-1935]

1. Would most people recognize the image in this photograph as a bridge if it were not titled? Is this the shape they visualize when they think of a bridge?
2. Why not?
3. When most artists create a picture of a bridge, what view do they show of it?
4. Where was the camera when this photograph was taken?
5. Where is the lamppost in this art?
6. Where is the point to which all the cable lines seem to lead?
7. Is this point centered in the photograph?
8. Is the balance in this picture symmetrical or asymmetrical?
9. Have you ever seen windows that were shaped like the arches on this bridge? Where did they see these?
10. Gothic cathedrals were the great engineering achievements of medieval Europe. What might the presence of Gothic arches in the Brooklyn Bridge have symbolized?
11. Evans wanted his photographs to show the national character of America. How does this photograph satisfy his aim?
12. Until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, photography was primarily a means of documentation and was not considered art. The photographer who took this picture considered photography to be an art form. Do you agree with him? Use this photograph to support your reasoning.
13. Evans used a modern medium (photography) to create a modern image of a famous structure. When he had studied art in Paris, he saw modern European art that featured abstract, simplified forms. How is this photograph like abstract modern art?

Historical Connections: modernism in America; history of the city, especially New York

Historical Figures: John and Washington Roebling

Geography: East River; topographical issues that impeded the construction of the bridge (for example, deep bedrock underneath the caisson on the Manhattan side of the bridge)

Science: civil engineering; late nineteenth-century inventions

Literary Connections and Primary Documents: "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," Walt Whitman (secondary); *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald (secondary); *The Bridge*, Hart Crane

Arts: Abstraction; Futurism