

Reading an image as an argument

A completed visual annotation that separates what is visible from what the framing asks the reader to believe.



ACTIVITY PROMPT

Choose one illustrated plate. Identify a visible fact, explain the plate's visual argument, and ask what a different frame might reveal.

COMPLETED MODEL

"The people and wagon occupy the lower part of each frame while the birds command most of the sky."

TAGS

Composition | Scale | Agency

OBSERVATION

The figures are small and low in the composition. Repeated birds occupy the broadest and brightest field.

INTERPRETATION

The scale makes the journey look less heroic than exposed. The family moves, but the environment - and the reader's knowledge of the birds - controls the emotional frame.

QUESTION

Would the scene feel different if the plate placed us at eye level with the family instead of above and behind them?

How the thinking moves

Use this model to study the sequence of decisions. Do not copy its answer; repeat its movement with your own evidence.

STEP 1	Record only what is visibly present.
STEP 2	Name one formal choice: scale, angle, sequence, color, or omission.
STEP 3	Explain the claim produced by that choice.
STEP 4	Test it by proposing a different frame.
STEP 5	Return to the prose for support or complication.

Why this model works

The response first names formal evidence, then treats composition as a choice rather than decoration. The question tests the interpretation by imagining an alternative.

Student self-check

EVIDENCE	I named a specific detail and accurately situated it.
INTERPRETATION	I explained why the detail matters instead of only summarizing it.
COMPLICATION	I left room for another reader or another piece of evidence.
MEDIUM	I explained what this interface, image, or map makes visible.

Citation and AI disclosure

Suggested citation: Watkins, Marc. *Reading Faulkner in the Age of Thinking Machines*. Interactive digital collection and teaching resource, 2026.

Project: As I Lay Dying Illustrated Reader. <https://6a5ce3d728d4a4f0c324b23d--as-i-lay-dying-illustrated.netlify.app/#/>

Literary source: Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1930.

AI disclosure: Marc Watkins conceived, directed, selected, revised, and takes responsibility for this resource and the linked projects. Generative AI systems assisted with interface prototyping, code generation and debugging, visual asset development, and editorial scaffolding. OpenAI Codex assisted with the gallery and PDF production. Watkins reviewed and shaped all outputs. Student-facing activities do not require generative AI, and students should cite any AI use required by their course or institution.