Using Historic Photographs

Focus

The main point of this unit is to recognize that photography is an important form of communication. Students practice moving between the visual and written medium. Students learn to recognize and convey content (rather than merely the subject) in images when given the appropriate vocabulary and methods. Students practice skills involved in visual criticism using appropriate terms related to visual elements, principles, and composition of design. Students engage in the process of analyzing and exploring visual images and their relation to societal development.

Rationale

The history of every person, every community, and every culture has something unique to offer. Whether it is values, customs, perceptions, or experiences - there is a world of difference from just one person to the next. Yet this gap becomes smaller when we exchange our stories and history through visual documentation such as photographs.

Photography is about connecting to remembering, creating, and telling life stories and experiences. It provides a means to recall and reconsider local memory, to renew and revisit our connection to place. Out of visual documentation grow identity, connection, and pride. These characteristics form the basis of community life.

Photographs can alter how we see the world and our role in it. They provide a means of viewing society in transition from development to war and peace. Serving as a vehicle to explore different points of view, and engage students in discussion. Photographs reflect the history of the “average person” as well as the famous, their lives, their struggles, and aspirations. It is the history not of textbooks, but of real life.

Purpose

- Capturing the stories of the community
- Preserving information that currently isn’t available
- Focusing and revealing under-represented viewpoints
- Representing multiple perspectives
- Provoking critical discussion
- Providing realism to the study of history
- Fostering an agent of social change
- Creating better understanding among different parts of the community
- Clarifying common goals for the future
- Providing a medium of aesthetic expression
- Creating a tool for scientific or historical research
- Providing a repository for personal experience and memory.

Learning Objectives:

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication:

- Students analyze and interpret the intended meanings, visual images, and themes of different photos
- Students analyze what and how photographs can express and communicate something
• Students experiment with visual images to communicate personal and intended meanings

• Students analyze photographs to infer information about their subjects and discuss the function of photography and other art forms as a mode of expression for both artists and their subjects

• Students explore how photographs can be interpreted as conveying rich stories to the beholder

**Students know and apply principles of design, and sensory and expressive features of visual arts:**

• Students look at the principles of design in photographs and how that reflects and creates an intended meaning

• Students evaluate sensory and expressive features in photographs

• Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions

• Students will discuss how photography is relevant to their lives and culture

• Students will analyze and discuss how photos relate to various historical and cultural tradition

• Students explore the role of photojournalism in relaying news stories that involve death and destruction

• Students analyze and evaluate the characteristics, merits, and meanings of photographs

• Students will interpret and discuss the meaning of different photographs according to its Merits

• Students will explore how photographic images can be used to convey the intentions of the photographer

• Students will explore how photography can be used as a tool to depict social issues in order to provoke action on the part of the viewers of the art

• Students will examine the notion of printing highly graphic photographs related to news events, as well as evaluate photographs and their accompanying stories to determine the purpose and relevance of using such pictures to relay the news

• Students will explore the power of photographs to influence public opinion and emotions
Using Historical Photographs Lesson Plan

Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts

Grade Levels: 4-9

Time Frame: 3 class periods

Materials Needed
Photographs of notable historical figures, places or events.

Reference Materials
Instructions on Analyzing Photographs (Worksheet)

Learning Objectives
Students will:

• Understand how visual images contribute to our interpretation of people, places and events.

• Systematically analyze a photograph to gather data.

• Make inferences from photographic data.

• Research the subject of the photograph to justify inferences.

Procedure:

1. Display photographs to students on overhead screen/computer screen.

2. Provide students with instructions on analyzing photographs.

3. Instruct students to list qualities and characteristics possessed in each photograph by using the analyzing photographs worksheet.

4. Direct students to research the subject matter in their chosen photograph. Each student or group is to research the historical information in their photographs and to report their findings to the class.

5. Instruct students to make a list on large paper to save and display in the classroom.

6. After the reports are shared, have students return to the original list of attributes they developed from analyzing the photograph.

How many of these qualities were verified by their research? Direct students to refer to specific historical events to support their conclusions.

Analyzing a Photograph

Observation:

• Study the photograph for 2 minutes.

• Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items.
• Divide the photo (if possible) into quadrants (4 parts) and study each section to see what new details become visible.

• Use the chart below to list people, objects and activities in the photograph.

• Based on what you have observed above, list 3 things you might conclude from this photograph.

Questions
• What do I exactly see in the photos?

• What has changed since the photographs were taken?

• What has stayed the same?

• What can you tell about the ways life then was different from life now?

• When do you think these photos were taken? Why do you think so?

• In what ways does this photo summarize what was happening at the time they were taken?

• What are your impressions based on the photo?

Primary Photograph Collections:

• Glenbow Archives Photographs
  http://www.glenbow.org/lasearch/photo.htm

• Louise Mckinney Riverfront Photo Gallery
  http://www.louisemckinneyriverfront.com/sub_pages/

• National Archives of Canada
  http://www.archives.ca/

• Alberta Home, Home on the Plains
  http://collections.ic.gc.ca/Pasttopresent/

• Alberta How the West Was Young
  http://collections.ic.gc.ca/Alberta/

• Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation
  http://civilization.ca/