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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2006 Volume I: Photographing America: A Cultural History, 1840-1970

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## War Photography: Propaganda, Outrage, and Empathy

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.01.01

by James P. Brochin

This unit asks students to respond to war photographs of three types: those that have been or can be used as propaganda, those which cause outrage in the viewer, and finally, those which instill in the viewer a feeling of compassion for the victims of war, of whatever nationality. History is the study of facts, who, what, when, where, and why, cause and effects, and the great themes such as hope, loss, justice, individual rights, poverty, aggression, and power. Photography has been seen to carry a "burden of truth that no other medium possessed." Such phrases as "a picture is worth a thousand words" and "seeing is believing" express the undeniability of photography. Photography, being relatively new among the expressive arts, is in its own class. Photography is expected to accurately represent what is really there to express the truth about the nature of war. Students will develop and demonstrate an ability to describe and analyze war photographs, the goal being to transform their viewing of photographs, and perhaps even their viewing of the world, from the point of view of a mere observer, to the point of view of an engaged witness.

(Developed for Journalism, grade 11; recommended for High School U. S. History, World History, and Journalism, grades 10-11)

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