



We Are Part of a "Bigger Picture": Children Critically Examine Photographs

Curriculum Unit 06.01.10
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The ability to examine, describe and evaluate one's surroundings is a skill that can be refined through teaching. It is in second grade, when children reach seven and eight years old that they begin to notice not only themselves, but also their role in the world around them. They notice that they are part of a society, whether it is in their school, their families or their communities. In second grade, teachers can guide students in discovering their world and how to develop their role as a valued member of any group. Children at this age can become critical thinkers, not only about subject matter but how it concerns them. With this unit, second grade students will learn to notice their surroundings by examining children represented through different photographs.

Photography of Children

Children have often been the subjects of photographs. The earliest images of children, captured in daguerreotypes, children were photographed sitting stiffly on a chair, usually unsmiling showing no movement due to the nature of the photograph being taken. Children when photographed would wear clothes showing their social class and detail in the image, which is clear and precise. As the photographic process advanced, children were photographed to persuade public opinion or expose injustice, giving a voice to such a silent group. Children were also photographed artistic subjects.

Throughout the evolution of photography, there is no doubt that children are an important and necessary subject to study. Children are active and interesting, especially to other children. Pictures of other children can spark discussion and interest with a group of students that may be reluctant to talk.

Even if we come from a different country, state, city or culture, we all have one thing in common: we were all once children. We all needed to learn to stop and notice our surroundings and see how it affects us. We all had to make our way, test our limits and find our place within our world. All children must do the same. What better way to do this than to closely examine children from different times in history, different countries and different photographic techniques?

The Unit

This student-centered unit begins with examining photographs of children taken by Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis, in sweatshops and factories and will take the students through several different forms and mediums of photographs of children in the world. Students will examine, analyze, critique and produce images that represent their world. Students will look at pictures of children struggling against unjust social opinion. They will see images of a child mourning for his father and compare two images that seemingly have the same subject. They then will look at a photograph taken of a child doing a typical child activity. They will have to explain why this image is not so typical and is so extraordinary. Finally, the students will apply what they have learned about photography to their own world in a culminating activity.

Unit Goals

Overall, students will develop oral vocabulary necessary to critically analyze photographs and therefore strengthening this strategy to transfer to other areas of study.

Unit Objectives

- The students will examine and discuss a variety of photographs.
- Through carefully guided discussion, the students will evaluate the photographs to discover how and why the image was taken.
- The students will create a visual and written account of their own lives.

Using photographs

Photographs are a universal medium that everyone can relate to. People collect pictures of moments to remember in their lives, or display pictures that somehow reflect something personal about them. As one flips through a stack of photos, many memories ascend. Children are no different. Children collect images that show milestones in their own lives or to remember people and places that mean something to them.

Our children are surrounded by images every day. They have simple icons they can recognize like the "Golden Arches" or the square form of a favorite sea-dwelling cartoon character. Children register several messages with a simple glance at it these types of images. There is no need for the child to pause and interpret the image. However, photographs, even in our personal collections, require a deeper viewing for a better understanding of the image.

Photographs can elicit many responses and trigger discussion among a group that may need some coercing to speak. They are not as straightforward as they seem. They are excellent open-ended resource; there

classroom implications are endless. Since the population in this class is comprised of many English language learners, photographs are the perfect medium to extract oral production.

Examining the Photographs

Several images have been chosen to evaluate during this unit. The images are all of children engaging in work, leisure or play. Some photographs were chosen for their 'shock' value or for the depiction of visual content. The photographs all include a subject that interests children. The students can relate to the subject matter, they see themselves mirrored in the curriculum and this makes the learning more meaningful. Since the students in my classroom are primarily Hispanic and black, some images have been chosen that represent their culture. The photographs can be changed to reflect the culture in any classroom, or to introduce a new culture.

These images will be shown either using an LCD projector, on large posters or regular snapshot size pictures depending on the learning activity. Each image can be grouped with several other images, and this unit is not limited to only the ones described below. Many of the images are of some sort of historic interest, so a discussion or background information into some of these images is necessary. Students will want to know when a picture was taken and why some of the images serve a purpose to the viewer. This can be either explained to the students or they can research information on their own.

Lewis Hine: Sadie Pfeifer, 48 Inches Tall

Taken in November of 1908 this photograph shows a girl at work. These types of photographs were part of an effort to end child labor. Several photojournalists including Lewis Wickes Hine took pictures documenting the exploitation of this group. Children, many of which are under the age of ten are shown working in textile mills, coal mines and sweat shops. Several pictures were taken at this time showing children in various deplorable conditions

This is a photograph of a little girl working on a textile machine. The machine extends from the left side of the photo and disappears into the background, behind the girl's head. The image shows a row of windows behind the girl, undoubtedly illuminating her machine as she works. Her hand, which is completely in focus, touches the machine almost in the center of the photograph. She stands several feet down from another worker, possibly a supervisor. She is facing the camera showing a tattered dress and a face that looks beyond her years.

When children in second grade view this photo, they are able to tell you what they initially see, but in order to get the students to develop a deeper understanding of this image, and a method to explore other images later on in this unit, the teacher must guide the first viewing. This image has a certain 'shock value' and that is why it should be shown first. As they view the photograph they will be encouraged to guess what this child's life is like.

This image will be shown alone, using an LCD projector. By enlarging the image the students can visually examine and reflect on the photograph, rather than glance at the image and toss it aside. As a larger image several aspects of the photography become more noticeable.

Before the students are exposed to this picture, it is necessary to review how they are going to view the image. A mini-lesson on looking versus glancing using various iconic symbols can be used. The teacher can flash a few cards with pictures of McDonald's golden arches or cereal boxes and ask the students what they

are. Then the teacher can show a picture briefly (perhaps one of Lewis Hine himself taking a photograph of children) and ask the students what that was. Most likely the students will be unable to give an answer as strong as the first two answers. The teacher should show the students how important it is to look at all parts of the photograph as well as the whole photograph.

When the photograph is first introduced, the students should take one or two minutes to view the picture without saying a word. This is to give them time to absorb the entirety of the image without bias from other viewers. They won't have to sway their attention to what the speaker is saying. Then the students should be given one question to discuss with a partner. The question is: "What do you see here?"

As the students discuss the picture, the teacher can mingle among the students asking questions, or probing further into the student's thought. The teacher can ask the students' to describe what they think is happening here, and to explain why they think so. What is it about the photo that makes them think one thing or another? There may be several questions coming from the dyads and as they ask, the teacher can write them down to be posted. These questions generated by the students themselves are excellent interjections into conversations later when discussions begin to dull.

John Gutmann: The Artist Lives Dangerously (1938)

The next photograph to be highlighted is a photo titled *The Artist Lives Dangerously* by John Gutmann. This picture shows a boy drawing in chalk in the parking lane of the street. There is a car passing him as he draws his figure of a man on the pavement. The figure accompanied by a smaller figure of what can be viewed as a child who is standing with the man.

This picture is chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is a picture of a child doing a common activity that children do, although the picture was taken during another time period. Present day students can relate to this. Also, the child seems to be about seven or eight years old and is drawing a recognizable figure on the street.

The picture is also interesting because of the location and composition of the photograph. The figure in the photograph is almost more visible than the child drawing it. It is almost as if the boy is part of the street and the figure is not.

Students can relate to this photograph. They've drawn on sidewalks and driveways with chalk, so they will find this boy's actions familiar. Students will probably notice the obvious: the child is on the street, not on the sidewalk. The title of the photograph should be highlighted as the students discuss the picture in a small group. The car passing in the photograph looks as if it is terribly close to the child. This photograph can generate several questions and much discussion.

Alan Lomax: Mexican Girls, San Antonio, Texas and Jack Delano: Children in slum, Utuado, Puerto Rico

These two photographs were chosen to use as a comparison exercise to generate discussion and analyze. Alan Lomax took the first photograph in 1934 and it is of two girls dancing in San Antonio, Texas. The girls look about ten to twelve years old and are wearing dresses with white socks and Mary Jane style shoes. One girl is hopping with a foot out in front of her and the other looks as if she has just finishing moving, as her dress is still blown up in movement.

The expression on the girls' faces is the reason for the picture being chosen. Both girls have an expression of slight amusement, but they seem to be serious about their role in the picture. It seems as if someone told them to dance and that the picture was very important. They are standing straight up, looking directly at the camera.

The second picture is of two Puerto Rican children taken by Jack Delano in 1942. The two girls stand against the boards of the side of a house. The resolution of the picture is so clear, one can see the grain of the wood and almost feel what the girls feel as they lean against the house. One girl looks about six years old and the other looks about three. They are wearing tattered dresses, but seem to have the most genuine grin, as if someone had just told them something very flattering.

Both of these photographs have a certain 'feel' to them. Although the younger girls in the slum are wearing tattered dresses and the word 'slum' is used to describe it, the girls seem happy and loved. The girls in the Lomax photograph seem neat and clean, as if they are at a party. Both photographs have a familiar feel to them, almost like they are part of the viewers family and this is a photograph of a family event.

These pictures can be used to compare the subjects and compositions of the photos. The pictures are both of two girls, apparently from the same time period, but are so drastically different. There are the obvious reasons such as the age and dress of the girls, but there is also a difference in resolution, use of shadow and light, and point to which the eyes are drawn. The students can compare these two photographs and discuss them using questions they generate themselves and those the teacher facilitates during the discussions between partners.

Artist Unknown: Dr. Martin Luther King and the Children's Crusade

During the civil rights movement, children played an important role in the struggle for freedom. Children were called upon to protest against segregation and they showed extraordinary courage under very dangerous circumstances. Children as young as six years old were imprisoned for protesting or pummeled with high powered water hoses as they peacefully demonstrated resistance and civil disobedience. There are several images that were recently made available from an Alabama newspaper. However, it is a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. walking with children that will be the introductory photograph for discussion followed by one of the Alabama newspaper images.

This picture was taken with Dr. King and several other African American and white adults and their children. They are shown walking in the street and the line of people seems endless. Dr. King has his arms on the back of two of the three children and they are holding notebooks and a briefcase. The children's faces show expressions of fortitude, just as the adults who are walking behind him. The picture is taken at an angle that makes Dr. King and the rest of the followers seem larger in the head and shoulder area and smaller or shorter in the legs and feet area. It is almost as if the picture were taken from the back of a truck and the photographer is placed much higher than the subjects and is shooting down.

It is assumed that students in the second grade already know Dr. Martin Luther King by sight. It is unfortunate if they don't, but it does happen and perhaps before the discussion of this photograph the teacher can review with the students this important contributor to the civil rights movement and his accomplishments in American history.

This picture should be discussed with the teacher in a small group. The teacher with a group of four or five students can discuss what they are seeing in the picture. Since the students have already discussed the first

image, the teacher can use some of the questioning techniques from the first viewing to promote discussion of this photograph.

This picture should be coupled with the second picture of this movement period, the photograph of children being sprayed by a high-powered water hose. In this picture children about high school age are running from a fire hose being sprayed at them. As stated before this picture was recently released with a collection of staff photos taken during this struggle. Children played an active role during this movement. Not only did they support adults as they challenged the laws and customs of Alabama, they risked their lives to during the events of that time.

Artist Unknown: John F. Kennedy Jr. Salutes His Father

Many Americans alive in the 1960's can remember the day John F. Kennedy was shot and the image of his son saluting him as his casket moved by during the funeral procession. There are many images of this child's pose and the one that has been chosen for this unit includes JFK Jr. standing next to his mother and sister. Included in the image are several of his family members behind him, as well as some servicemen.

This image tells a story even to those who are unfamiliar with it. John F. Kennedy Jr.'s mother is standing next to him dressed in black. Jacqueline Kennedy has a black veil draped over her head indicating a mournful stance. Although she is centered in the photograph, it is clearly John F. Kennedy Jr. who is the subject. He is wearing a light blue coat, and seems to be standing a foot in front of the line of his mother and sister. This three year old is not holding his mothers hand, as most small boys would. His stance is that of a soldier. One hand is saluting, while the other is straight down the side of his body.

The students should examine this picture as partners or in small groups with the teacher. Since Jacqueline Kennedy is in the picture and is draped in black, the students can discuss when this picture was taken, what may be going on and why this photo is so famous. Other images of the Kennedy family can be included when examining this photograph, so the students can get an idea of how the Kennedy family was in constant public view. They were one of the first examples of image quality in a now highly visible world. (Lubin, 2006)

Teaching Method

I teach in a dual language second grade classroom in an urban district. My classroom is made up of a very unique population, where as half my students are Spanish speaking children and the other half of my class are English-speaking children. The students spend a week in my classroom receiving content-based instruction in English. They then switch classrooms with another group of students with an equal make-up of language dominance who have spent the week learning content embedded instruction in Spanish. This switch happens every week, forming our full immersion program in the second grade.

Since I have these second language learners in my class, I emphasize interaction between the students, and guided discourse or instructional conversations, with an expert, possibly the teacher or another adult in the classroom. Instructional conversations in the classroom are just that, a conversation between the students and teacher with an instructional goal (Goldberg, 1991). However the design and delivery of the conversation is not a simple as that. An instructional conversation (IC's) needs to be carefully constructed by the teacher to

draw on the students' experience, knowledge and language ability. When children are given the time to manipulate and experiment with the language they gain a deeper understanding of the content and language structure. Interaction also lays the foundation for valuable written production. Using a variety of photographs to center guided conversations for students to compare and discuss can be the perfect catalyst for interaction.

Effective pedagogy for teaching second language learners requires that teachers use a variety of teaching techniques while imbedding language in content. This unit follows this theory. Students will work in small groups, participate in carefully guided conversations and work on cooperative activities as they develop skills to critically examine photographs. Taught early enough in the school year, these skills have the potential to provide the students with strategies they can use

Classroom Activities

Unit sequence

1. Introduction: the students will identify the essential elements of the photograph as they develop the skills needed to examine the pictures throughout the unit.
2. Essential Questions: the students will use essential questions in guided discussion to evaluate the images.
3. Application of Skills: the students will apply observational skills to cooperative learning activities.
4. Synthesis of Unit: the students will create photo stories illustrating their lives using the styles of photography studied.

Activity plan: Introduction to unit

Content Objective:

The students will examine two photographs.

The student will compare common visual images to the photographs.

Language Objective:

The students will discuss a photograph as they view it.

The students will generate a list of questions and strategies of how to view the image.

Procedure:

To demonstrate to the students that they have memorized many images, the teacher should flash a few images to the students, in a whole group and elicit responses. Images should include those that the students see everyday, for example, McDonald's, Dunkin Donuts, Sponge-Bob Square-Pants, and other such images that the students instantly know. Then the teacher should explain that sometimes, when we look at pictures, we need to stop and give it a "closer look." The picture of Lewis Hine should be flashed to the student in the same amount of time as the icon images. The teacher then asks the students what they saw. As the student realize that they haven't seen enough the teacher should further explain that some photographs are important enough to look at a different way.

Since this unit allows students to reflect on their view of the world, the students will begin by learning how to examine the photograph. In a whole group, the students will look at the photograph, which ideally would be enlarged and projected using an LCD projector. This allows the entire class to participate and for those students that may be reluctant they can listen as the class generates questions and explores the photograph beyond the initial or superficial glance.

During this lesson, *Sadie Pfeifer, 48 Inches Tall* should be viewable by the whole class. Firstly the students should take one minute to look at the picture. This should be timed. Then they should discuss with a partner what they see. The teacher should circulate through the group listening to the students as they talk about the image. After a few minutes, the teacher should ask the students to tell the group what they see. The teacher should introduce the essential questions, or the questions that will be asked during the entire unit. The teacher should ask the students those questions in reference to this photograph but should also tell the students these questions will be used every time they view a photograph. The students may be able to generate their own questions. The following list is only a preliminary list. Other questions can (and should) be added to it.

List of Essential Questions:

1. What do you see? Describe everything you see in the photograph.
 2. Why do you think the person/people in the photograph are doing, thinking, looking at, and saying?
 3. Why did the photographer take this picture? What was the photographer thinking?
 4. Why do you think this photograph is special? Why would someone hang this on a wall?
- * Questions are simple, but open-ended to produce conversation.

Activity plan: Essential questions

Content Objectives:

The students will apply the essential questions as they view a photograph.

Language Objective:

The students will practice discussing the photographs in a small group.

The students will record their impression of the photograph.

Procedure:

Students should meet with the teacher for an instructional conversation. While the rest of the class is engaged in activity centers, the teacher should meet with no more than four students to guide them in an exploration of the photograph. The teacher should first review the essential questions with the students. Perhaps posting the questions on chart paper for the students to refer to during the conversation will stimulate the natural flow of the conversation.

The teacher should introduce the photograph *The Artist Lives Dangerously*, by John Gutmann. This photograph should be reproduced so each student has a copy to hold in his or her hands and examine. Within the small group, the teacher is the facilitator, navigating the conversation so all students have an opportunity to speak and all students answer the essential questions. During the course of the conversation, very often students will generate their own questions or critique of the photograph. This is the foundation of the unit. The students should be encouraged to record their thoughts in a journal, possibly with the reproduction of the image affixed to the page.

This activity can be used several times before the students participate in a cooperative learning activity. When the teacher is present in the small group, much of the necessary modeling and practice for independent work can be mastered. The other photographs highlighted in this unit can be used with the groups, until the students have mastered not only the procedure for examining the photograph, but the mere skill of listening and participating as a valued member of a learning community.

Activity plan: Application of skills

Content Objective:

The students will compare two images to identify similarities and differences.

Language Objective:

The students will discuss their comparison of the images.

Procedure:

At this point in the sequence of the unit the student have evaluated several photographs now have the necessary skills to examine the photograph with a critical eye. The students will now compare two photographs to examine their similarities and differences. This activity can be done in a number of ways, however the students will gain so much language development if they are allowed to work together to

produce a graphic organizer such as a Venn diagram outlining the photographs. The students will work in groups of four and will be responsible for producing the graphic organizer. They will be responsible for a visual representation of the graphic organizer as well as an oral portion. The teacher can either require that they students present the graphic organizer or simply observe students as they work collaboratively.

Activity plan: Synthesis of Unit.

Content Objective

The students will create a short photo essay illustrating their environment using the styles of the photographers studied.

Language Objective

The students will prepare and present a short explanation of their photo essay to the class.

Procedure

Since the student have now examined, interpreted, compared and evaluated photographs from different periods, the students by now will be eager to record and share their world. This portion of the unit not only requires student to self reflect, but it can also serve as an assessment piece. When the students finish their projects, the teacher can evaluate the images the students have chosen to share but also their in-class presentation can give the teacher an indication of the students' oral development.

Depending on the budget, this activity can be done in one of two ways. One way is to ask students to choose photographs they have taken themselves to present to the class. The students should be told that the pictures must be able to answer the essential questions and they must be taken by them. This presents a few problems. Students are tempted to bring in pictures of themselves, so they can share an important event in their lives with their friends. Although this activity is valuable, it is not part of the purpose of this unit.

Since I work in a low socio-economic area, funds to buy each student a camera can be hard to come by. A call to a national retail chain may help absorb some of the cost of disposable cameras, and perhaps asking the PTO to fund the remainder of the project. Some parents may be able to donate a camera, and fund-raising can provide additional finances. Each student should have their own camera with a minimum of 12 exposures.

The students should review each of the previous activities, the essential questions and all the photographs explored throughout the unit. Then, students should be instructed on how they are going to document their world. The students should be reminded that a good photographer does not simply take a snapshot of their family and friends. Photographers carefully examine their surroundings and finds what represents their portrayal of the world. An interesting photograph leads the observer to look closely and critically at the image.

The students should be given a camera and told to take pictures of their surrounding world. Their assignment is to document their world, what they see everyday, what they want to share with everyone that tells the observer about them. Out of twelve photographs, the students should pick their five favorite pictures, caption them with any description and mount. The photographs can be presented to the class in a formal presentation or they can be displayed like a gallery where family and friends can view the students work and listen to the presentations.

An example of this project can be found at www.cap.ac.uk/.

Implementation of New Haven Public Schools Performance Standards

Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language

Content Standard: 1.0 Communication

Performance Standard 1.2

Students will use spoken and written English as well as their native language for personal expression and enjoyment.

Performance Standard 1.3

Students will use English and their native language to practice and extend their communicative competence.

Content Standard 2.0: Content Areas of the Curriculum

Performance Standard 2.1

Students will use English and their native language for classroom interaction and activities.

Performance Standard 2.2

Students will use English and their native language to obtain, process, construct and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form.

Performance Standard 2.3

Students will use English and their native language to derive meaning and apply knowledge.

Content Standard 3.0: Cultural Contexts

Performance standard 3.1

Students will vary language, register, and genre according to audience, purpose and setting.

Performance Standard 3.3

Students will extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence.

Language Arts /English

Content Standard 2.0 Writing

Performance Standard 2.1

Students will demonstrate strategic writing skills that ensure successful communication.

Content Standard 3.0 Speaking

Performance Standard 3.1

Students will demonstrate strategic speaking skills in order to ensure success in verbal communication.

Social Studies

Content Standard 1.0: Diversity

Content Standard 5.0: History

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(Educational Practice Report No. 2). Washington, DC: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning

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CA: University of California Press.

Orville, M. (2003) *American Photography* . US: Oxford University Press

Sontag, S. (1977) *On Photography.* New York: Picador

Websites

www.cap.ac.uk/

· This website reports on a project where children from all over the world were given cameras and their choice of subjects were analyzed.

www.museumca.org/global/art/collections_dorothea_lang.html

· This website contains collections of pictures of migrant worker families and explanation of why the pictures were taken.

www.photographymuseum.com

- This website has a database of several images to use in the classroom.

www.historyplace.com

- This is a website that contains several famous images including those of John F. Kennedy.

www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/hine.html

- This website describes the background of Lewis Hine a photographer who documented the working conditions of child labor.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

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