

Photographs as History: Photo Analysis Lesson Plan

Description: Students learn to analyze photographs from the First World War. Students choose a photo from the official First World War photograph collection and create a presentation in which they analyze the photo from the perspective of the photographer. In the conclusion of the lesson, students are asked to consider the role photographs can play in the study of history.

Recommended Grade Range

All provinces and territories except Quebec: Grades 7 to 9

Quebec: Secondary 1 to 3

Prerequisites: This lesson should follow previous discussions and lessons on the First World War.

Objectives:

- Students will analyze a photograph, making observations about its content;
- Students use these observations to draw conclusions;
- Students will use their historical imagination and their knowledge of the First World War to give a presentation in which they analyze a photo of their choice from the perspective of the photographer.

Estimated Time: 4 or 5 class periods

Materials Required:

- Overhead transparencies of two official photos (if the equipment is available, you can project the image from the web site), or photocopies to hand out, downloaded from the resources section;
- Projector (if not using photocopies);
- Internet/computer lab access for 1-2 class periods *OR* printouts of photos for students;
- Copies of the War Photographer Worksheet;
- For background information on photo analysis, see Library and Archives Canada's Learning Centre section on decoding photographs.

Lesson:

Note: Before starting the photo analysis, you may wish to review previously learned First World War material with students.

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Explain to students that they will be looking at photos from the First World War and analyzing them. This is one way historians research the past, as photos can provide information that enriches our historical understanding.

Show the class one of the photos you have selected, and tell students that it was taken by an official Canadian war photographer. Model an analysis of the photograph for the class by clearly describing the people, objects, and setting of the photograph, and then inferring from this the mood of the photo, what additional information the caption provides, and why the photo might have been taken.

Now, show students a second photo. This time, guide students through an analysis of the photograph based on what has just been modeled. Use questions to prompt students to contribute their observations. Prompts may include:

- What is the caption?
- Are there people in the photograph?
- What do they look like?
- Who might they be?
- What are they doing?
- Where are they? What is in the background?
- Is the photo posed or spontaneous?
- Why might the photographer have taken the photo?
- What message do you think the photographer was trying to get across with this photograph?
- What if a new caption is written? Does the caption change how the photo is viewed?

Book one class period in the computer lab (you may need two), and ask students to select a First World War photo that interests them from the Official Photographs section of the Canadian War Museum's *Canada and the First World War* Web site. Alternatively, distribute printouts of a different photo from the archive to each student. Students will use their photo to do their own photo analysis.

Once students have selected or been assigned their photographs, distribute the War Photographer Worksheet. Ask students to complete the worksheet using their photos.

Students should present their findings to the class speaking as the photographer who took their photo. They should explain why they took the photo, how the content of the

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photo reflects their intended message, and describe the setting in which they took the photograph.

Wrap-up:

Ask the students to consider the usefulness of photographs in the study of history? What do they add? What are the weaknesses of photographs? What role does the photograph play in documenting events?

Assessment:

Based on both the presentation and the completed worksheet:

- Students should be able to describe the visual elements of the photograph, and draw conclusions about the message the photograph conveys.
- Students should also be able to use their historical imaginations to 'get inside the head' of the photographer.

Extension Activities:

- Students use disposable cameras to create photo essays that describe their lives.
- Students act as newspaper reporters, creating news story based on the events depicted in one or more First World War photos. Remind students to be descriptive - newspapers were one of the only sources of news during the First World War.

War Photographer Worksheet Analyzing Photos

In 1916, Lord Beaverbrook founded the Canadian War Records Office (CWRO). The goal of the CWRO was to publicize and record the Canadian contribution to the First World War. As part of this work, photographers were sent into the field to take photos of Canadians at war.

Your photo was taken by a CWRO official war photographer. Look at your photo and answer the questions below.

1. Are there people in the photograph?

2. What are they doing?

3. What expressions are on their faces? What is their body language?

4. What objects are in the photograph?

5. Where was the photograph taken?

War Photographer Worksheet Analyzing Photos

6. Where was the photograph taken? Where is the photographer standing in relation to the subject (above, below, in front of, beside, etc.)? How would the picture change if he or she was standing in a different place?

7. Is this photo spontaneous or posed? How can you tell?

8. What is the general mood of the photograph? How can you tell?

Part II

Imagine you are the official war photographer who took this photo for the Canadian War Records Office. It is an official photo. Answer the following questions.

1. Why did you take this photo?

2. What story does your photo tell?

War Photographer Worksheet Analyzing Photos

3. What did you leave out of this photo? What is outside the frame and why?

4. When you took this photo, what sounds did you hear, odours did you smell, textures did you touch, emotions did you feel? (Hint: The photo might provide clues that will help you answer some of these questions)

Photographs as History - Photograph Analysis Lesson Plan

Description: Students analyze official Canadian First World War photographs and make connections to issues, values and events reflected in the photographs. Students demonstrate their knowledge of photo analysis and the First World War by writing a short magazine article based on an event or phenomenon depicted in a photo of their choice.

Recommended Grade Range

All provinces and territories except Quebec: Grades 10 to 12

Quebec: Secondary 4 and 5

Prerequisites: This lesson should follow previous discussions and lessons on the First World War.

Objectives:

Students will:

- analyze a photograph, making observations and inferences;
- connect the photographs with the historical context in which they were produced;
- develop magazine articles to demonstrate their knowledge of the First World War.

Estimated Time: 3-4 class periods

Materials Required:

- Overhead transparencies of two official photos or copies to hand out, downloaded from the resources section;
- Projector (if not using photocopies);
- Internet/computer lab access for 1-2 class periods or printouts of photos;
- Copies of the Photograph Analysis Worksheet;
- For background information on photo analysis, see Library and Archives Canada's Learning Centre section on decoding photographs.

Lesson:

Note: Before starting the photo analysis, you may wish to review previously learned First World War material with students.

Warm-up

Write the following question on the board:

- *Is a photo worth a thousand words? Why?*

Ask students to break into groups of three or four to brainstorm responses. When groups have had time to discuss and respond to this question, reconvene the class for a discussion of the student groups' responses. Possible answers include:

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- Photos can show us how people lived during the war;
- Photos can tell us new information about what people thought was important during the war;
- Photos can reflect the values and cultures of the time;
- Photos help us understand what life was like in the past;
- Photos can give us information about how objects were made or used, and how they looked in the past.

Main Activity

Explain to students that they will be analyzing photos from the First World War and show the class one of the photos you have selected, with its title. First, ask students to make general observations about the contents of the photo.

- Are there people in the photograph?
- Who are they?
- What are they doing?
- What expressions are on their faces?
- What are they wearing?
- Is the photo posed or spontaneous?
- What objects are in the photograph?
- What is the relationship between the people and the objects?
- Where do you think the photograph was taken?
- What is the overall mood of the photo?
- Where is your eye drawn?

Next, ask students to interpret the photo (and its title) in its historical context.

- How does this photograph fit into the broader events of the First World War?
- What attitudes does this photo suggest about war in general?
- How do you think photos such as this affected people back in Canada?
- How might this photo contribute to Lord Beaverbrook's goal of recording the Canadian war effort?

Repeat this process with the second photo. Once again, prompt students with questions about the content of the photo, as well as their interpretations of it within its historical context.

Now that they have practiced photo analysis, students will write a magazine article on an

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issue or event depicted in a photograph of their choice. Book one class period in the computer lab (you may need two) to allow students to select a First World War photo that interests them. Once photos have been selected, distribute the Photograph Analysis Worksheet as a tool to guide students in their photograph analysis.

Through interpretive analysis of their photographs, students should be able to identify an issue or event emergent from the photo. Possible topics raised by the photos include:

- War-time propaganda;
- Soldiers' living conditions;
- Canada and the British Empire during the war;
- Medical care at the front;
- Canadian soldiers in a specific battle;
- Women's contributions to the war effort.

Through library and internet research (at least one class period and homework time as necessary) and analysis of their chosen photo, students develop a short magazine article (2-3 pages) discussing an issue or event related to their photo.

Teachers may also wish to have students present their articles to the class.

Assessment:

- The student should be able to write a detailed description of the contents of the photo.
- The student should be able to draw conclusions from the contents of the photo; for example, the message the photo sends, the mood it conveys, etc., and how these are created by the content of the photo, the way it is arranged, the lighting, etc.
- The student should be able to connect the content and messages in the photo to events or issues from the First World War, and provide a clear summary of this connection using appropriate supporting research.

Extension Activities:

- Photocopy students' articles and photos, and bind/staple them together to create a class magazine.
- Students analyze images from recent conflicts (from newspapers, the internet, magazines), and compare them to First World War images. Have depictions of war changed? Have values changed? What similarities are there between photographs from the two eras? What differences?

Photograph Analysis Worksheet

Are there people in the photograph?

What are they doing?

What expressions are on their faces?

What objects are in this photograph? What is the relationship between the objects and people?

Where was the photograph taken?

Where is the photographer standing in relation to the subject (above, below, in front of, beside, etc.)? How would the picture change if he or she was standing in a different place?

Is this photo spontaneous or posed?

What is the general mood of this photograph?

Based on your knowledge of the First World War:

Photograph Analysis Worksheet

Who are the people in the photograph?

What is the situation of the people in the photograph? Provide evidence from the photo that tells you this.

What message do you think the photographer was trying to convey?

Why is this photograph important to history?

What questions does this photograph raise?

Write your own caption for the photograph:



Draining Trenches

In rain-soaked northern France and Belgium, trenches during much of the year degenerated into muddy ditches. This added to the misery of trench life, and could also result in the collapse of trench walls and parapets.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-256



Funk Hole

Two Canadian soldiers in a front line trench in the Hill 60 sector. One soldier is reclining in a dugout entrance or funk hole, a depression carved into the trench wall.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-608



A Dry Trench

This trench, named Netley, is a good example of a dry trench with well-maintained duckboards. Trenches in poor drainage areas like Flanders could be filled with water for weeks on end despite the best efforts of soldiers to drain them.

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CWM 19920044-963



Demolished German Trench

The body of a dead German soldier lies near the entrance to his dugout. While the entrance is intact, the sides of the trench have collapsed. Common items such as an entrenching tool, a water bottle, and ammunition pouches lie scattered on the ground. The numbers on the dugout frame may refer to the unit designation or to the dugout's number in relation to a trench map.

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CWM 19920044-195



Festubert Landscape

This photograph of the ruined battlefield near Festubert was taken in the spring of 1919. The Canadians fought at Festubert in May 1915, but no official photographers accompanied them to the front. The ground still shows the scars from the heavy fighting, four years after the battle.

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CWM 19920044-938



German Prisoners as Stretcher Bearers

Prisoners were often pressed into carrying the wounded off the battlefield, as shown by this photograph taken during the 1916 Battle of the Somme.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-147



Canadians Advance

Canadians of the 29th Infantry Battalion advance across No Man's Land through the German barbed wire during the battle of Vimy Ridge, April 1917. Most soldiers are armed with their Lee Enfield rifles, but the soldier in the middle carries a Lewis machine-gun on his shoulder.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-915



Vimy Fortifications

A German machine-gun emplacement of reinforced concrete on the crest of Vimy Ridge, and the Canadians who seized it.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-917



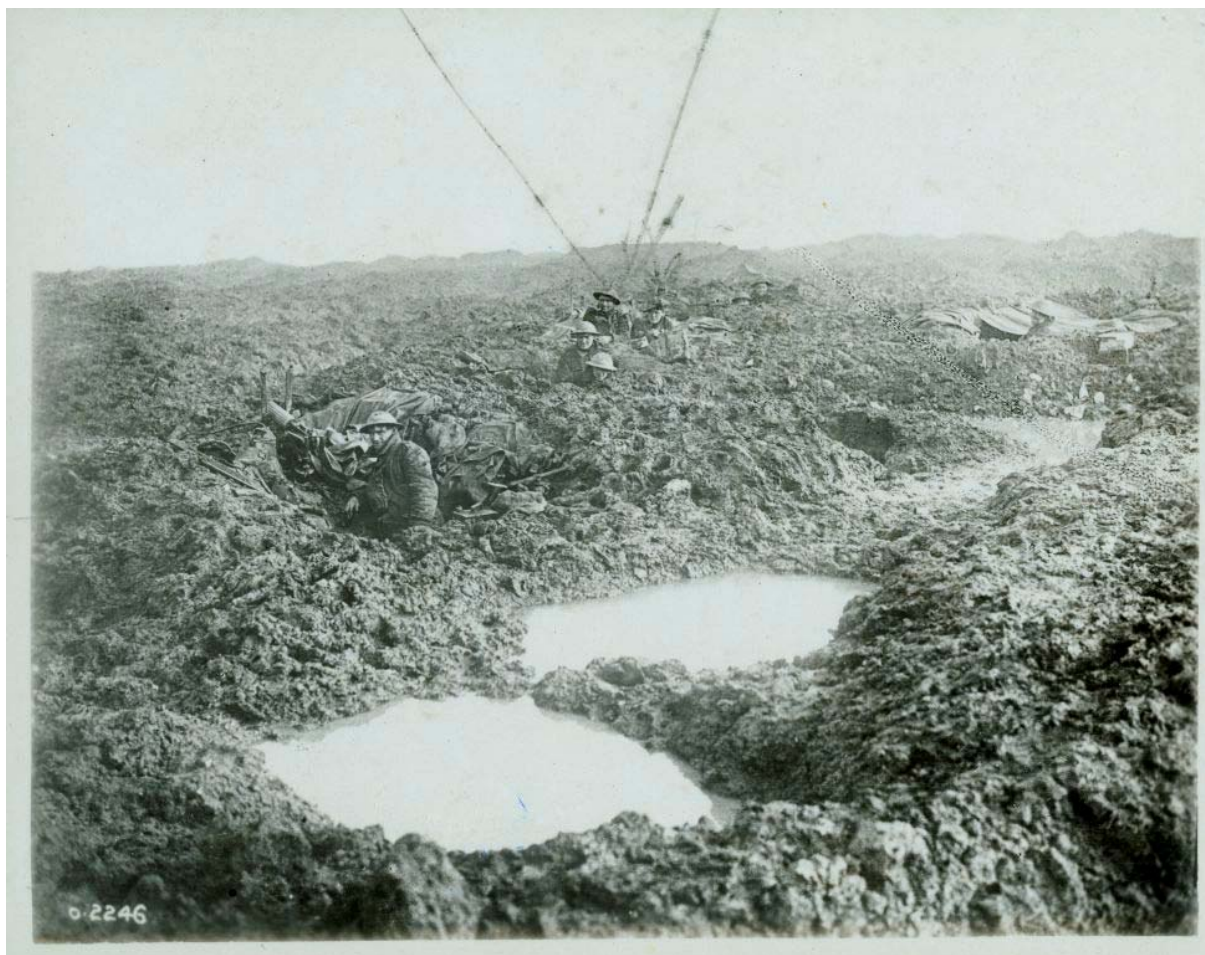
Passchendaele Mud

Mud, water, and barbed wire illustrate the horrible terrain through which the Canadians advanced at Passchendaele in late 1917.
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The Injured and the Dead

A wounded Canadian soldier being carried from the front past several grave markers.
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In the Mud

Troops of the Canadian 16th Machine Gun Company hold the line in atrocious conditions on the Passchendaele front in late October or early November, 1917.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19930013-509



Repairing Guns

Members of the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade clean and repair an assortment of machine-guns: a captured Maxim MG-08 (centre); Vickers Mk 1 (left); Lewis Mk 2 aircraft machine-gun (right). Machine-gun crews were equipped with a cleaning kit, tool kit, and spare parts wallet for each machine-gun that they were issued, and it was the crew that was responsible for minor repairs to worn or broken parts and the daily cleaning of the gun. Despite this cleaning and repair, the average lifespan of a water-cooled barrel in a Vickers machine-gun was between 15,000 and 20,000 rounds. If more rounds were fired than this, the gun would steadily lose accuracy and effectiveness.

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CWM 19930013-847



Resting in a Shell Hole

Exhausted Canadians rest in a shell hole during the Battle of Amiens in 1918. These six infantry soldiers must be far from the front lines as several soldiers are sitting dangerously exposed.

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CWM 19930012-407



Resting in Mons

Members of the 42nd Battalion take a rest in the Grand Place, Mons, on the morning of 11 November 1918. Belgian civilians welcomed the Canadians as liberators. The flags of the Allied nations are in the background, including those of Japan and the United States.

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Mustard Gas Victims

The extensive bandages on these wounded Canadian soldiers may indicate that they have suffered the effects of flame or mustard gas. Mustard gas burned the lungs, but also caused serious external blisters and disfigurement.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-540



Returning on a Tank

Members of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles return from combat piled on a tank in this posed August 1918 photograph. At the Battle of Amiens, where this photograph was taken, Canadians experimented with transporting infantry to the front inside the tanks, but carbon monoxide exhaust and the crippling heat left most of them vomiting and unable to fight.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19930012-528



After a Trench Raid

This photograph, probably taken at dawn, shows three Canadian soldiers with camouflaged faces coming out of the line following a night trench raid at Avion in July 1917. The soldiers have camouflaged their faces, most likely with pieces of burnt cork. From late 1915, Canadians participated in hit-and-run assaults on German trenches, known as trench raids, to gather intelligence, capture prisoners, and kill the enemy.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-595



Pigeon Message

These two soldiers are sending a message by pigeon, which was an effective means to communicate from front to rear, and back again. However, pigeons could become confused in heavy artillery shelling and succumbed easily to lethal poison gas.

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CWM 19920044-617



Unloading Heavy Shells

Soldiers unload howitzer shells from a truck. A horse team appears to be waiting in the background to pull the shells closer to the front, probably along roads impassable to trucks.

George Metcalf Archival Collection, CWM 19920044-647



Pack Horses

Members of the 20th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, stand beside their pack horses, loaded with 18-pounder shells. This photograph was taken before the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917. At Vimy, the Canadian gunners had an estimated 1.6 million shells and every one had to be carried forward to the guns.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-848



Washing Day

Two soldiers work on their laundry. Approximately 1,000 black soldiers served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War, most of them in Nova Scotia's No. 2 Labour Battalion. Labour battalions worked behind the lines, carrying out essential support and supply roles.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-725



Kite Balloons

Helium-filled kite balloons offered important intelligence for forces on the ground. They were tethered to a spot behind the lines and winched up and down. An observer stood in a wicker basket below the balloon to study and photograph the front from hundreds of metres in the air. The ropes hanging from the balloon were used by ground crew to secure the balloon when it was winched down.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-117



Returning from the Front

A war-weary and muddied Canadian returns alone from the front. Cigarette in mouth, the soldier glares in the direction of the photographer.

George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920085-028



Break Before Moving Up the Line

A Canadian soldier sits with his dog, reading the day's paper. The packed equipment suggests that he is waiting to move up the line and to the trenches.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-430



Entertaining Comrades

A Canadian soldier entertains comrades with a homemade instrument. Music and singing were popular pastimes.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-548



Getting into Character

A member of the Maple Leaf Concert Party in France applies lipstick and gets set to perform. Without women at the front, men took on the role of female characters. These cross-dressing performers were extremely popular with the soldiers.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-864



Pull!

An officer urges on soldiers of the 72nd Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada in the tug of war finals at the Canadian Championship Athletic Meet in France in 1917.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-860