Activities for Photos
Instructions and Guidelines on using photos

About

Photographs are a useful way for teachers to introduce a range of issues and ideas relating to global development.

The following activities aim to stimulate active discussion and critical thinking concerning issues that may be raised in different photographs. They can also be used to address issues relating to images, prejudice and the media.

1. SELECTION

Ask students to select their favourite photograph and discuss with the group the reasons for their choice. To direct the discussion, teachers could include certain conditions. For example, ask students to nominate the photograph that they found most surprising or most shocking. Which photographs would be most likely to appear in a newspaper or a magazine or a schoolbook? Why?

2. CAPTIONING THE PHOTOGRAPHS

A caption can make a big difference to the way a photograph is interpreted. Distribute one photograph to each group and allow them to suggest captions, which will elicit a variety of responses e.g. hope, despair, charity, pity, shock. Ask students to suggest what caption would be used if the photograph were used in the following contexts: tabloid newspaper, charity advertisement, school textbook, or encyclopaedia. Discuss how photographs and captions are used in the media e.g. newspapers, advertising, billboards, etc.

3. DESCRIBING A PHOTOGRAPH

Ask students to work in pairs. One of the students describes a photo in detail to his/her partner without their partner seeing it. The partner draws the photo from the description and then compares it to the original. How is it different? What was omitted? What was added?

4. QUESTIONING A PHOTOGRAPH

Split students into small groups and give one photograph to each group. Mount the photograph in the middle of a large sheet of blank paper. Ask a group leader to note down the questions, which the members feel the photograph raises. Some of the questions may be directly related to the photograph, others only indirectly. The group, then reports on their work to the rest of the class.

5. RANKING

Give a quantity of photographs to each group and ask students to rank them in order, according to agreed criteria, e.g. which they like/dislike most, which say most about an issue, etc. Ranking promotes the skills of discussing, arguing, criticising, defending, comparing and contrasting.

6. SPEECH BUBBLES

Ask students to discuss and agree on three things that particular people in the photos might be thinking or feeling. These are written on slips of paper and placed beside the photograph. After class discussion, the most probable thoughts or feelings for each person can be written on speech balloons cut out on paper and fixed in the appropriate places.

Trócaire
Working for a just world.

Activities for Photos
Instructions and Guidelines on using photos

7. ROLE PLAY

Role play is best undertaken when some of the background work around the photographs is completed. It allows students to develop empathy with those in the photographs. Give a photograph to each group. Ask the students to develop a scene about the life of the people in the photograph, they will need to decide:

- The names of everyone in the picture
- Their relationship to each other
- Whether members of the household or community are not included in the photograph
- How each person in the picture feels
- What each person is doing
- What they are saying

Students decide which roles to take on. They can role play the scene in the photograph and/or extend it to include events that led up to this scene and events that followed it. Each group presents their scene. Allow comments and questions immediately afterwards.

8. ROLE PLAY INTERVIEWS

Distribute the photographs to students. Students each choose a character from the photograph and take on the role of that person. The other students in the group or class ask them questions in role about their life in the selected country.

9. TELL A STORY

Ask each group to choose three photographs from a set. Use these photographs to tell a story, ordering them so that they correspond with the beginning, middle and end of the narrative. Allow plenty of time for discussion before the activity is presented to the class.

10. COMMUNITY MEETING

The group imagines they are living in a country of choice. They are working together to discuss how to improve their situation. Use the photographs to identify what the needs of their community are. Discuss these in role. The group then tries to agree on which needs should be prioritised and tries to suggest ways these needs could be met.

DO

- Use open-ended questions e.g. tell me about this person. What is happening in the picture?
- Extend the questions for the students. For example, if the pictures you are using contain images of houses you might extend the questions as follows - Are the houses as you expected? What thoughts come to you regarding the differences in the houses from the various countries portrayed in the photos? Why are they different? How are they different from your own houses?
- Encourage students to look at details in the picture: What is the landscape like? What about the climate?
- Explore similarities and differences.
- Explore the feelings of people in the photographs.
- Extend the pack by including photographs of other people from different countries around the world. Include people from a variety of social, economic and cultural backgrounds.
- Respond to questions and comments from students in a positive way. Extend their knowledge by giving additional information where appropriate and where accurate information is available to you.

DON'T

- Don't read too much into a photo yourself. Let your students interpret.
- Don't deny difference. If, for example, a student comments on difference in ethnicity, explore the comment further.

For lots of photos of Trócaire's work that you can use to create your own photo packs, go to:

flickr.com/photos/trocaire

or search the education section of the Trócaire website for photo packs on a variety of topics.

For more information on the use of images and messages, read the Dóchas code of conduct at dochas.ie/code.

Trōcaire
Working for a just world.