ANALYSING HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Key learning

Photographs can play a particular role in understanding History. Photographs are not neutral, but reflect messages the photographer wants to convey. The meaning the viewer attaches to a photograph will also be influenced by their own perspectives. In historical research it is important to take an active role in analysing a photo, using a methodical process.

Focus: Significant Photos

Have students choose a photo/s from the Crowther Collection and use a methodical process such as the following to explain the significance of the photo. Students should also use their own historical imagination and their knowledge of the Gallipoli campaign.

Questions

1. **Observing**

   a. *Who is the photographer?*
   b. *Does the photograph have a title?*
   c. *When was the photograph taken?*
   d. *Where was the photograph taken?*
   e. *What is in the photograph?*
   f. *Who is in the photograph?*
   g. *Are there particular elements that influence the reading of the photograph e.g. Line, shape, space, contrast etc.*

2. **Analysing**

   a. *What draws your eye immediately in the photograph? What are the focal points?*
   b. *What information is there in other less obvious details?*
   c. *If there are people in the photograph, how do they look? What do facial expressions, body language, clothing suggest?*
   d. *What can be seen in the background? Are there symbols, landmarks, writing that are part of the photo?*
   e. *What is the overall 'mood' of the photo?*

3. **Interpreting**

   a. *Reflecting on information so far from the observations and analysis what exactly is happening in the photograph?*
   b. *What do you think is the intent of the photographer?*
   c. *Why was the photo taken at this time?*
   d. *Why did the photographer select this perspective?*
   e. *What do you think might be left out of the picture?*

4. Concluding

   a. *What do you think is the value, the significance and the importance of the photograph?*
   b. *Does the meaning of the photograph change when we look at it now, compared to when it was taken?*
   c. *What does the photo add to your knowledge of history?*

Task

Judging a book by its cover: A photo worth a thousand words

The Allport museum is commissioning a historian to write a book on William Crowther and his war experiences. The target audience for the book is students aged approx. 12 – 18. The publishers want an original photo for the book's cover. Your task is to analyse the photos on the website and recommend the cover photo for the book. You are asked to annotate your photo in terms of:

- drawing audience attention through particular elements such as line, shape, space or contrast
- containing significant people, symbols and/or landmarks in the foreground and background
- symbolising a particular 'mood' reflected by the Crowther diaries
- adding perspective and meaning to the historical, social and cultural context of the time
- reflecting a pivotal aspect of the diaries
- being intriguing through focal points
- other reasons of choice.

As an extension activity you may appropriately Photoshop your selection to highlight elements and aspects of the chosen photograph.

Australian Curriculum

History - Year 5 & 6 Historical skills

Identify and locate a range of relevant sources (ACHHS101)

Develop texts, particularly narratives and descriptions, which incorporate source materials (ACHHS105)

Identify points of view in the past and present (ACHHS104)

Use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) and digital technologies (ACHHS106)

History Year 9 – Historical Understanding & Historical Skills

An overview of the causes of World War I and the reasons why men enlisted to fight in the war (ACDSEH021)

The places where Australians fought and the nature of warfare during World War I, including the Gallipoli campaign (ACDSEH095)

The impact of World War I, with a particular emphasis on Australia (such as the use of propaganda to influence the civilian population, the changing role of women, the conscription debate) (ACDSEH096)

Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources (ACHHS169)

Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources (ACHHS171)

Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past (ACHHS172)

Identify and analyse different historical interpretations (including their own) (ACHHS173)

Develop texts, particularly descriptions and discussions that use evidence from a range of sources that are referenced (ACHHS174)

English – Year 5

Navigate and read texts for specific purposes applying appropriate text processing strategies, for example predicting and confirming, monitoring meaning, skimming and scanning

Use comprehension strategies to analyse information, integrating and linking ideas from a variety of print and digital sources (ACELY1703)

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience (ACELY1704)

English – Year 6

Compare texts including media texts that represent ideas and events in different ways, explaining the effects of the different approaches (ACELY1708)

Analyse strategies authors use to influence readers (ACELY1801)

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience(ACELY1714)

English – Year 7

Analyse and explain the ways text structures and language features shape meaning and vary according to audience and purpose(ACELY1721)

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of subject matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas (ACELY1725)

English – Year 8

Analyse and evaluate the ways that text structures and language features vary according to the purpose of the text and the ways that referenced sources add authority to a text (ACELY1732)

Use comprehension strategies to interpret and evaluate texts by reflecting on the validity of content and the credibility of sources, including finding evidence in the text for the author's point of view (ACELY1734)

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate (ACELY1736)

English – Year 9

Explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts (ACELY1745)

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that present a point of view and advance or illustrate arguments, including texts that integrate visual, print and/or audio features (ACELY1746)

English – Year 10

Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences (ACELY1752)

Choose a reading technique and reading path appropriate for the type of text, to retrieve and connect ideas within and between texts (ACELY1753)

Use comprehension strategies to compare and contrast information within and between texts, identifying and analysing embedded perspectives, and evaluating supporting evidence (ACELY1754)

Visual Arts – Years 5 & 6

Explain how visual arts conventions communicate meaning by comparing artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks (ACAVAR117)

Visual Arts – Years 7 & 8

Present artwork demonstrating consideration of how the artwork is displayed to enhance the artist's intention to an audience (ACAVAM122)

Visual Arts – Years 9 & 10

Present ideas for displaying artworks and evaluate displays of artworks (ACAVAM129)