

This micro-lesson can be approached from three different directions:

1. focus on using photos only in the archives; the most basic approach
2. focus on having students connect their own photography with historical photos; an intermediate approach
3. focus on photographs and identity expression; a more complex approach

Numbers one and two are standalone micro-lessons, whereas number three is best suited for those who are engaging with the larger identity assignment.

Photos only:

1. Either as a whole or in small groups ask the class if the statement “a picture is worth a thousand words” is true and why?

The concept is for students to look beyond just what is in the picture. What can photos tell us about people’s lives, values, culture, artifacts, what things looked like etc.

2. After students have brainstormed on the value of photos ask them to review one of the photos you have selected from our list of possibilities.

First have your students make general observations, if there are people in it who are they, what are they doing? Where was the photo taken? Is it staged or spontaneous? What is the mood? Clothing, buildings etc.

Then ask your students to interpret the photo: How does the photo fit into the War more broadly? What attitudes are suggested by the Photo? What else can we learn that is not explicit about the photo?

If you would like to extend this assignment you could have your students select a photo of their choosing from the archive and complete a short article on the photo based on the questions above. Students should be able to connect the content of the photo, people, mood etc with larger issues of the war. This may require some additional research on their part into the historical context section of the website.

Connecting Student Photography with History

This assignment is based largely on *The Historical Thinking Project* “Imaging Community” assignment linked at the bottom of the page.

The purpose of this activity is to have students critically engage with the community and space they live in. There are limits to this assignment, but it is our hope students will draw historical connections to the places they live.

1. We have selected a list of photographs from the archive that depict landscapes in the Victoria area during the First World War. Ask students to choose one picture

and have then replicate the historical picture as best as they can. Eg angle, lighting etc.

2. Either as a class or in small groups discuss the ways the community has changed or stayed the same. Then ask the students if over the course of time things have improved or declined?

The answers should be ambiguous, there should be some good and some of bad. We want to encourage students not to conceive of the course of history as an ever present progression 'forward' or 'backward' but as a shifting landscape that is open to their own interpretations.

Photographs and Identity:

1. Have students discuss the profile photographs they found for their person. What are they wearing? Was it a staged photo or spontaneous? What is the mood of the photo? Etc.
2. After having determined some basic information about the photo have them dissect or analyse the photo. Why was the photo taken? What does the photo tell you about your person? What kind of cultural values can we extract from photo (eg focus on clothing, especially for photos of women)?
3. Lastly have them connect their own use of profile photos; for example, on Facebook or Twitter as expressions of identity. Introduce them to the concept that identity is not a fixed fact, but rather a performance. Ask students to examine how their own avatars are performances of their identities and then have them speculate as to the performativity of their historical person's identity. Ask them what cultural values we can infer from this line of speculation and do they think this is a useful exercise for revealing historical evidence? Finally, ask them if there are problems with projecting modern day expressions of identity like Facebook or Twitter profile pictures onto the past? How could they round out their understanding of the photograph in the historical world of Victoria?

Additional Resources:

The Canadian War Museum "Photographs as History"

<http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/guerre/photograph-analysis-e.aspx>

The Historical Thinking Project "Imaging Community" <http://historicalthinking.ca/lesson/341>

The Historical Thinking Project "Thinking about Community and Change Through Then and Now Photographs" <http://historicalthinking.ca/blogposting/610>