



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Visual Literacy: News Media Reading Media Photographs

http://www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/newsmedia/polp_hoto.pdf

Using photographs from newspapers and magazines in class is an excellent way to help students to draw inferences about what they are seeing and about the point of view being presented to them. The following table may help students to understand what is being shown to them.

WHAT DO YOU SEE? (Observations)	WHAT DOES IT MEAN? (Inference)
Nonverbal gestures (arms, hands, fingers)	
Facial expression (head, eyes, mouth)	
Body language (distances, code matching)	
People (age, gender, ethnicity)	
Clothing (type, color)	
Background (objects, setting)	
Camera angle	



Consider the photograph of President Bush. In it, we see the President of the United States flanked by two flags—the U.S. flag and another one that students may not initially recognize as being the official flag of the Presidency. A seal bearing the words “The President of the United States” is affixed to the front of his podium. The President wears a blue shirt, red tie, and dark suit with a U.S. flag on the lapel. His hand, eyes and head are raised, looking off to the right. The photograph has been taken from below, angled slightly upward. Behind him hangs a painting of another U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt.

Each of the elements described above contributes to the meaning of photograph.

- Why is the President filmed from below?
- Why are two flags flanking the President?
- What does the presidential seal contribute to the impact of the scene?
- Why is the painting of Roosevelt clearly visible over the President’s shoulder?
- Why is the President looking upward and to the right?
- Why does the President have a flag pin in his lapel?
- Why is the President dressed in a red tie? A blue shirt?
- What message is the President sending about his role as president?