

Using Images as a Source for Historical Information: How to use the Collections

By Kathleen Honda

Overview

Students can form an immediate relationship with the people of Jim Crow and the issues central to the era by examining images from the various collections offered in the Jim Crow Image Gallery. Viewing and analyzing the many faces of Jim Crow provides students with a meaningful introduction to this tumultuous period of time. This lesson is suited for middle and high school students.

Curriculum Standards

As defined by the NCSS National Curriculum Thematic Strands, this lesson addresses the following themes:

- Culture--cultural concepts such as adaptation, assimilation, acculturation, diffusion, and dissonance
- Time, Continuity, and Change--analysis and reconstruction of the past, examining its relationship to the present
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions--understanding the paradigms and traditions that undergird social and political institutions

Time Required

- One class period to read the background essay and discussion following
- One to two class periods for students to examine their own photograph and one from the Jim Crow Image Gallery
- One class period to share interpretations

Materials Needed

- Internet Connection
- Printed out copies of the images on the **Jim Crow Image Gallery**

The Lesson

Anticipatory Set

Ask your students to bring to class one of their favorite photographs that they have personally taken of someone.

Procedures

1. Ask the students to take out their pictures and really take a good look at them. Have students take a few minutes to list the reasons why they like their picture- the color, the subject, the light, the contrasts, the memory, etc.
2. After sharing some of these reasons, have them answer the following questions: What kinds and sources of information does the picture contain? What story does your picture tell? What does it reveal about setting--location, time period, time of day? About the mood of the subject? About the tone? About the relationship between the subject and the

- background? About what's going on in the picture? Why did you take the picture? What were you trying to document?
3. Pictures tell a story, both about the subject, and the photographer who takes the picture. Have students read the essay, **Using Images for Historical Purposes**.
 4. After reading the essay, go through the exercise suggested in the essay with the home page image of the man ascending the **movie theatre staircase**. It would be helpful to make the image into an overhead, or show the image online projected onto a screen.

Some helpful prompts:

- What is a one-sentence description of this picture?
 - What are details in the picture that give you an indication of the subject's background, economic standing, profession, age.
 - What is the relationship between the various people in the picture if there is more than one?
 - What is the mood of the subject(s)?
 - What occasion is this image documenting?
 - What is the purpose of the photographer in snapping this shot?
 - What details reveal specifics of the time period in which the photo was taken?
 - How is the subject interacting with the background?
 - What is the quality of the photo? What does that reveal about the subject?
 - To what degree are the themes of Jim Crow revealed in this photograph?
5. Teachers can select random images from any of the collections or select a collection in its entirety to give to the students for examination. To use an entire collection would be a good way to closely examine one topic of study from multiple perspectives. For example, the "Separate But Equal" collection could illuminate all the facets of the effects of segregation on the people.
 6. Teachers may also choose at this time to give the students information on the photographer if provided and any information from the captions, allowing the students to compare their interpretations with the original intent of the photograph.

Extension Activity

Once students have written up their observations, teachers can then point them to areas of the site where students can learn more about a particular topic.

For example: Topic--Separate But Equal Collection: Jim Crow Court Cases map, Images, gateway links, the map, and lesson unit on *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Assessment

An informal teacher assessment of the students' application of the process of looking at images can be made during the discussion.