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Building a Just and Sustainable World

EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LEARNING

Images, photos, and pictures stimulate the mind. For the viewer, they offer a chance to connect and question. They also offer potential for play and imagination, and pulling the observer into purposeful messages.

Most often, newspaper and magazine readers quickly glance at photos and their captions. With this YES! lesson plan, you and your students can luxuriate—and pause—to truly understand an image, its message, and why it's interesting (or not).



EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LEARNING

Message in a Bottle

Step One: What do you notice? (before the facts)

Ask your students to make sense of the photograph by trusting their instincts of observation and inference. In doing so, the photograph offers possibilities and interpretations beyond a typical reading where the reader glances at the picture to reinforce their interpretation of the picture's title or caption. Do not introduce any facts, captions, or other written words outside of the image. You may hear: plastic bottles, blue bottle caps, a kid in a hoodie, red fire extinguisher, a cobbled street.

Step Two: What are you wondering? (thinking about the facts)

After you've heard what your students are noticing, you'll probably hear the peppering of questions: What is in those bottles? What will they be used for? Why is there a fire extinguisher? Why is there so much blue? This is a good time to reveal the photo's caption, accompanying quote, and facts about the actual situation. Watch how the conversation shifts from what they believe to be true to discerning the facts about the photo.

Photo caption:

"Donations of vinegar, lemons, water and a milky antacid are collected at several points along the edge of Gezi Park on June 2, to treat victims of tear gas." Photo by Fabien Tepper, photographer, artist, blogger.

Photo facts:

The Turkish government recently announced its plans to raze nine-acre Gezi Park in Istanbul to build a new shopping mall. Gezi Park is the last park left in Taksim Square, the hub of Istanbul, where people of all ages spend leisure time and play.

In response to the announcement, tens of thousands of protesters, who became known as the Gezi Park Resistance Movement, gathered to protect the park. They constructed a library, clinic, and kitchen from donations and volunteer labor. Riot police evicted demonstrators using tear gas grenades, water cannons, and violence after the government banned demonstrations in Taksim Square.

Tear gas is released from grenades or aerosol cans so that the liquid becomes spray. Tear gas irritates mucous membranes in the eyes, nose, mouth, and lungs. Breathing through a cloth soaked in lemon juice or vinegar can bring relief. A solution of half antacid/half water is the best remedy, and can be sprayed in the eyes and nose; it can also be used as a mouth rinse.

Supporters of the Gezi Park Resistance Movement started a Twitter hashtag campaign, and tear-gas-readiness supply donations quickly came in. Eventually the police closed down the demonstration. Hundreds of people, including children, were arrested and detained.

Step Three: What next? (jumping off the facts)

1. A protest is an expression of objection to events or situations. What do you think of protestors? Have you ever protested for or against something? If so, how did you plan or organize your protest?

2. Parks are important to cities and neighborhoods. Do you have a favorite park? How would you feel if you learned that it was being demolished to become a shopping mall or an office building? What might you do to try to save it?

3. What is a 'Twitter hashtag campaign'? What other social media campaigns have been used successfully? How do you use social media? How might you use social media to advocate for a cause?