

Photographs Don't lie: Documenting the Japanese American Concentration Camps

Lesson Author: Jeannine Kuropatkin

Grade Level(s): 8-12

Overview

As the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Primary source photographs impart valuable information about an historical event in a way that the written word cannot. Imagery takes less time to process than text-heavy explanations. As such, images convey ideas with great efficiency.

Images also often elicit strong emotional responses and interpretations. These interpretations can be shaped by a photographer's selected subject matter, staging, cropping, captioning, and manipulation of lighting or color. Furthermore, a photographer's purpose may be dictated by the goals of an employer or restricted by the agenda of an intended audience.

In this lesson, students examine primary source photographs taken by three different photographers of the Japanese American concentration camp at Manzanar. Using image analysis strategies, students interpret the photographs, examining possible biases of the photographer.

After reading the brief bios of the photographers, students use contextualization and critical thinking skills to categorize photographs according to their purpose, intended audience, and photographer. Finally, students create a photo montage that depicts a balanced portrayal of life in the Japanese American concentration camps.

Essential Questions

- To what extent do primary source photographs show unbiased records of history?
- How can a photographer's ideas, attitudes, and beliefs influence the photos they take?
- What factors contribute to different meanings derived from the same photograph?

Student Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Analyze photos of the Japanese American concentration camps to discern purpose and intended audience.
- Explain why photos of the same historical event can lead to different interpretations.
- Create a photo montage that depicts a balanced portrayal of the Japanese American concentration camps.

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Materials

- Printouts of three photos that show different perspectives on the same place; enough copies for groups.
- Photo Analysis Packets A, B, and C; enough copies for each member of a group of three to have one version of the packet.
- Photo Analysis Packet D; class set for groups.
- 3-2-1 Exit Card

Film clips:

- Clip from the film, *And Then They Came for Us* (2017):
 - "Camp through the Photographer's Eye " (23:04-28:48)
NOTE: After registering for a free account, educators can screen the entire film on Facing History's website:
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/and-the-n-they-came-us>

Assessment

- Photo Analysis charts
- Group discussions
- 3-2-1 Exit Card, "Photo Montage of the Manzanar Concentration Camp"

C3 Alignment

This lesson supports the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework:

- D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.
- D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

Prior to Class

Prior to presenting this lesson, students need to have some basic background on the following:

- The definition of and the differences between primary vs. secondary sources. Additionally, students should have some exposure to the concept of primary sources that are images (such as photographs, drawings, and paintings) and how they differ from text-based primary sources.
- Historical events of World War II, specifically the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese military, America's entry into the war, FDR's Executive Order 9066, and the resultant forced removal of Japanese Americans to concentration camps.

Do Now

Divide the students into groups of three. Distribute to each group copies of three photos of a chosen place, each showing different perspectives of the

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Before

place. For example, select three photos of the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Photo A might show a beautiful panoramic beach & cityscape, Photo B shows the run-down favelas, and Photo C shows the Carnival Parade at the Sambadrome.

Ask the students to choose the one locale they would prefer to visit and discuss why some images are more appealing than others.

Note: Do not provide background information to the students about any of the photos. Do not reveal that all three photos are of the same geographic location.

Reveal to the students that all three "Which place would you like to visit?" photos are of the same geographic location.

Next, pose the following questions for discussion:

- How can three photos of the same geographic location result in different interpretations of place?
- To what extent are different interpretations of place due to the photographer's selection and portrayal of images?
- To what extent are different interpretations of place shaped by the viewer's biases, prior knowledge, and life experiences?

During

Task 1: Photo Analysis "Perspectives on Life in the Camps"

To each group of three, distribute a different Photo Analysis packet to each member. Each Photo Analysis packet consists of three primary source photos that depict life in the Japanese American concentration camp of Manzanar.

- Packet A contains photos taken by Ansel Adams
- Packet B contains photos taken by Dorothea Lange
- Packet C contains photos taken by Toyo Miyatake

Note: Do not reveal the identity of the photographers to the students.

Direct the students to examine their assigned photo packets individually, using the Analysis Chart to record their answers to the image analysis questions:

- *What do I observe?*
- *What do I infer?*
- *What do I conclude about life in the camps?*
- *What questions do I have?*

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Group members then take turns sharing their packet photos and answers to their image analysis questions with their group. Students discuss similarities and differences between their respective photo analyses, especially with regards to their conclusions about life in the camps.

After students have time to discuss, reveal to the students that although all the photos were taken at the Manzanar concentration camp, each packet represents the work of a different photographer. Packet A contains photos by Ansel Adams, a well-known landscape photographer who was invited to photo-document Manzanar as an independent photographer. Packet B contains photos by Dorothea Lange who was hired by the government to document the "round up" and "evacuation" process. Packet C contains photos by Toyo Miyatake, a Manzanar inmate, who photographed fellow community members from inside the camp.

Show the students the following film clip from the documentary, *And Then They Came for Us* (2017)

- Dorothea Lange (8:20-12:27)

Pose the following question for a whole class discussion: *How does this knowledge about the photographers lend new insights to the meaning of their photographs?*

Part 2: Photo Analysis "Perspective vs. Bias"

Distribute a Photo Analysis Packet D to each student group.

Note: Share with the students beforehand that Packet D consists of three primary source photos that depict life in the Japanese American concentration camp of Manzanar, with one photo each taken by Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and Toyo Miyatake.

Direct the students to examine the photos in Packet D collaboratively, using the Analysis Chart to record their answers to the image analysis questions:

- *What do I conclude about life in the camps?*
- *Who is the intended audience?*
- *Why did the photographer take this photo?*

Based upon the students' experience analyzing the photos in Packets A-B-C, direct the groups to reach a consensus as to which photographer took Photo D-1, Photo D-2, and Photo D-3, by circling their choices on the

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After

Analysis worksheet. The teacher might poll the class to gauge the collective student results for matching each photo with its respective photographer.

Reveal to the students that Photo D-1 was taken by Toyo Miyatake, Photo D-2 was taken by Dorothea Lange, and Photo D-3 was taken by Ansel Adams.

Pose the following questions for discussion:

- *Did your group agree or disagree about the photographer who took each photo?*
- *How can a viewer's ideas, attitudes, and beliefs influence their interpretation of a photograph?*
- *To what extent are different interpretations of photographs shaped by the viewer's biases, prior knowledge, and life experiences?*

3-2-1 Exit Card "Photo Montage of the Manzanar Concentration Camp"

Distribute a 3-2-1 Exit Card to each student:

- Select three photos that best document what life was like in the Manzanar concentration camp.
- Give two reasons why your choices show a balanced portrayal of life in the Manzanar concentration camp.
- Which one of the photographers (Adams, Lange, Miyatake) was the least biased in representing life in the Manzanar concentration camp? Justify your choice with a brief explanation.

Extensions (optional)

Photographer Biographies

Distribute copies of the Photographer Biographies to the students. As students read each biography, direct them to annotate any phrases that give evidence of the photographer's ideas, attitudes, or beliefs about the Japanese American camps.

Biographies of Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, & Toyo Miyatake:

- Dupêcher, Natalie. "Dorothea Lange." Museum of Modern Art, 2018. <https://www.moma.org/artists/3373>
- Szarkowski, John. "Ansel Adams." Encyclopaedia Britannica online, 1998. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ansel-Adams-American-photographer>
- Kitazawa, Yosuke. "Toyo Miyatake: Capturing the Stories of Japanese Americans in L.A." *KCET Lost L.A.*, October 24, 2019. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/toyo-miyatake-capturing-the-stories>

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Pose the following question for discussion among the trio group members:
How can a photographer's ideas, attitudes, and beliefs influence the photos they take?

Other Government Photographers

Besides Dorothea Lange, the War Relocation Authority hired several other government photographers to photo-document the Japanese American concentration camps. These include Clement Albers, Francis Stewart, Russell Lee, Thomas W. Parker, Charles E. Mace, Hikaru Iwasaki, Gretchen Van Tassel, and Takashi "Bud" Aoyama. Students can dig deeper and research their photographic records of the camps.

Students can start with the Densho Encyclopedia online article, "Government photography of the WRA Camps and Resettlement," by Lane Ryo Hirabayashi,

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Government_photography_of_the_WRA_Camps_and_Resettlement/.

Appendix

- Packet A - Photos #1-#3 / Photo Analysis (3 pages)
- Packet B - Photos #1-#3 / Photo Analysis (3 pages)
- Packet C - Photos #1-#3 / Photo Analysis (3 pages)
- Packet D - Photos #1-#3 / Photo Analysis (3 pages)
- 3-2-1 Exit Card
- Photo Credits

Packet A - Photo #1 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

Photo #1 1943 Manzanar Incarceration Camp Photographer's Notes: Tom Kobayashi, Landscape, Manzanar Relocation Center, California	What do I observe?	What do I infer?
	What do I conclude about life in the camps?	What questions do I have?

Packet A - Photo #2 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #2 1943</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p> <p>Photographer's Notes: Roy Takeno reading paper in front of office</p>	<p>What do I observe?</p>	<p>What do I infer?</p>
	<p>What do I conclude about life in the camps?</p>	<p>What questions do I have?</p>

Packet A - Photo #3 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

Photo #3 1943 Manzanar Incarceration Camp Photographer's Notes: Bridge game, Nurse Hamaguchi and friends, Manzanar Relocation Center, California	What do I observe?	What do I infer?
	What do I conclude about life in the camps?	What questions do I have?

Packet B - Photo #1 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #1 7-1-1942</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p>	<p>What do I observe?</p>	<p>What do I infer?</p>
<p>Photographer's Notes: Making camouflage nets for the War Department. This is one of several War and Navy Department projects carried on by persons of Japanese ancestry in relocation centers.</p>	<p>What do I conclude about life in the camps?</p>	<p>What questions do I have?</p>

Packet B - Photo #2 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #2 7-2-1942</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p> <p>Photographer's Notes: Grandfather of Japanese ancestry teaching his little grandson to walk at this War Relocation Authority center for evacuees.</p>	What do I observe?	What do I infer?
	What do I conclude about life in the camps?	What questions do I have?

Packet B - Photo #3 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #3 7-2-1942</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p> <p>Photographer's Notes: Mealtime in one of the mess halls at this War Relocation Authority center for evacuees of Japanese ancestry.</p>	What do I observe?	What do I infer?
	What do I conclude about life in the camps?	What questions do I have?

Packet C - Photo #1 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

Photo #1 1944 Manzanar Incarceration Camp Photographer's Notes: 3 boys behind barbed wire	What do I observe?	What do I infer?
	What do I conclude about life in the camps?	What questions do I have?

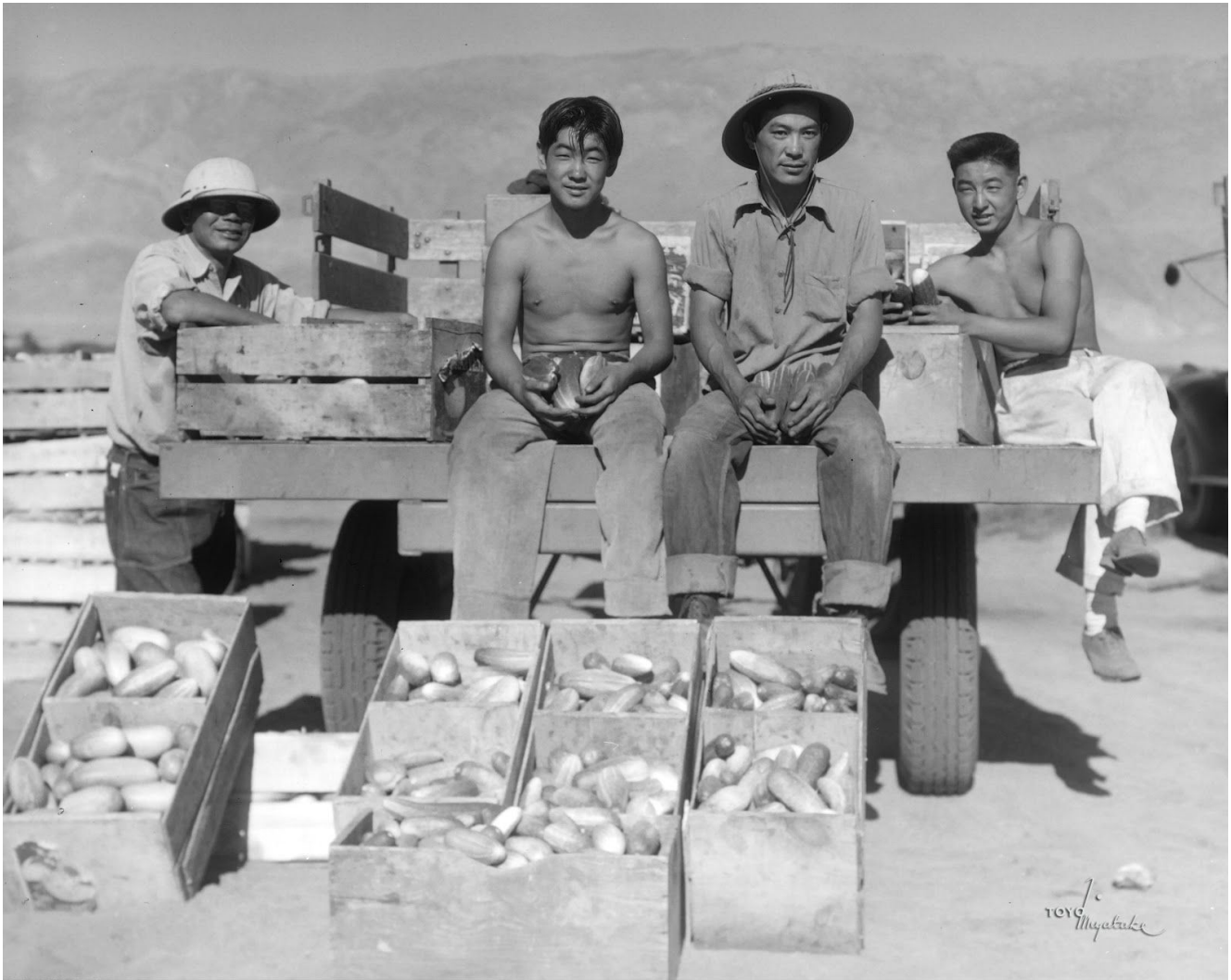
Packet C - Photo #2 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #2 c. 1944</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p> <p>Photographer's Notes:</p> <p>Manzanar Toy Loan Center set up by Quakers; children could borrow toys</p>	<p>What do I observe?</p>	<p>What do I infer?</p>
	<p>What do I conclude about life in the camps?</p>	<p>What questions do I have?</p>

Packet C - Photo #3 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

Photo #3 Unknown Date Manzanar Incarceration Camp Photographer's Notes: Farmers with their freshly harvested vegetables	What do I observe?	What do I infer?
	What do I conclude about life in the camps?	What questions do I have?

Packet D - Photo #1 / Photo Analysis



Directions: After reading the Photographer Bios, examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #1 Unknown Date</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p> <p>Photographer's Notes:</p> <p>Azeka family in front of their barrack, 20-12-1</p>	<p>What do I conclude about life in the camps?</p>	<p>Who is the intended audience?</p>
	<p>Purpose: Why did the photographer take this photo?</p> <p>(Circle One) The photographer is: Ansel Adams / Dorothea Lange / Toyo Miyatake</p>	

Packet D - Photo #2 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #2 Date: 6-29-1942</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p> <p>Photographer's Notes:</p> <p>An evacuee is shown in the lath house sorting seedlings for transplanting. These plants are year-old seedlings from the Salinas Experiment Station.</p>	<p>What do I conclude about life in the camps?</p>	<p>Who is the intended audience?</p>
	<p>Purpose: Why did the photographer take this photo?</p> <p>(Circle One) The photographer is: Ansel Adams / Dorothea Lange / Toyo Miyatake</p>	

Packet D - Photo #3 / Photo Analysis



Directions: Examine the photo, then complete the following image analysis chart.

<p>Photo #3 1943</p> <p>Manzanar Incarceration Camp</p> <p>Photographer's Notes:</p> <p>Corporal Jimmie Shohara has two ribbons: Good Behavior pre-Pearl Harbor, Rifle and Pistol Citations</p>	<p>What do I conclude about life in the camps?</p>	<p>Who is the intended audience?</p>
	<p>Purpose: Why did the photographer take this photo?</p> <p>(Circle One) The photographer is: Ansel Adams / Dorothea Lange / Toyo Miyatake</p>	

3-2-1 Exit Card

Directions: Reexamine all 12 photos in Packets A-B-C-D, then create a Photo Montage that you feel shows a balanced and realistic portrayal of life in the Manzanar Concentration Camp.

- 3 Select three photos that best document what life was like in the Manzanar concentration camp.
- 2 Write two reasons why your photo montage shows a balanced portrayal of life in the Manzanar camp.
- 1 Which one of the photographers was the least biased in representing life in the Manzanar concentration camp? (Adams, Lange, Miyatake) Justify your choice with a brief explanation.

3-2-1 Exit Card – Manzanar Photo Montage

Photo ____ - ____

Photographer:

Photo ____ - ____

Photographer:

Photo ____ - ____

Photographer:

Reason One

Reason Two

(Circle one)

Least Biased Photographer:

Ansel Adams Dorothea Lange Toyo Miyatake

Justification:

Photo Credits

Packet A – Photos Taken by Ansel Adams

Packet A – Photo 1

Adams, Ansel. *Tom Kobayashi, Landscape, Manzanar Relocation Center, California*. 1943. Photograph. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.. *Ansel Adam's Photographs of Japanese American Internment at Manzanar*. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695953/> .

Packet A – Photo 2

Adams, Ansel. *Roy Takeno reading paper in front of office*. 1943. Photograph. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.. *Ansel Adam's Photographs of Japanese American Internment at Manzanar*. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002696030/> .

Packet A – Photo 3

Adams, Ansel. *Bridge game, Nurse Hamaguchi and friends, Manzanar Relocation Center, California*. 1943. Photograph. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.. *Ansel Adam's Photographs of Japanese American Internment at Manzanar*. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695991/> .

Packet B – Photos Taken by Dorothea Lange

Packet B – Photo 1

Lange, Dorothea. *Manzanar Relocation Center, Manzanar, California. Making camouflage nets for the War Department*. 7-1-1942. Negative. National Archives at College Park - Still Pictures (RDSS). *Series: Central Photographic File of the War Relocation Authority, 1942 - 1945, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, 1941 - 1989*. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/538107> .

Packet B – Photo 2

Lange, Dorothea. *Manzanar, Calif.—Grandfather of Japanese ancestry teaching his little grandson to walk at this War Relocation Authority center for evacuees*. 7-2-1942. Photograph. Online Archive of California, University of California Berkeley. War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement. <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft1199n656/?order=2&brand=oac4> .

Packet B – Photo 3

Lange, Dorothea. *Manzanar Relocation Center, Manzanar, California. Mealtime in one of the messhalls at this War Relocation Authority center for evacuees of Japanese ancestry*. 7-2-1942. Negative. National Archives at College Park - Still Pictures (RDSS). *Series: Central Photographic File of the War Relocation Authority, 1942 - 1945, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, 1941 - 1989*. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/538170> .

Packet C – Photos Taken by Toyo Miyatake

Packet C – Photo 1

Miyatake, Toyo. 1944. Photograph. Toyo Miyatake Studio. Manzanar Portfolio. <http://www.toyomiyatake.com/manzanar.html> .

Packet C – Photo 2

Miyatake, Toyo. c. 1944. Photograph. Toyo Miyatake Studio. Manzanar Portfolio. <http://www.toyomiyatake.com/manzanar.html>

Packet C – Photo 3

Miyatake, Toyo. Photograph. Toyo Miyatake Studio. Manzanar Portfolio.

Packet D – Photos Taken by Adams, Lange, and Miyatake

Packet D – Photo 1

Miyatake, Toyo. Photograph. Toyo Miyatake Studio. Manzanar Portfolio.

Packet D – Photo 2

Lange, Dorothea. *Manzanar Relocation Center. Manzanar, California. An evacuee is shown in the lath house sorting seedlings for transplanting. These plants are year-old seedlings from the Salinas Experiment Station.* 6-29-42. Negative. National Archives at College Park - Still Pictures (RDSS). *Series: Central Photographic File of the War Relocation Authority, 1942 - 1945, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, 1941 - 1989.* <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/538031> .

Packet D – Photo 3

Adams, Ansel. *Corporal Jimmie Shohara has two ribbons: Good Behavior pre-Pearl Harbor, Rifle and Pistol Citations, 2 of 2, Manzanar Relocation Center, California.* 1943. Negative. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.. *Ansel Adam's Photographs of Japanese American Internment at Manzanar.* <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001704607/>