

Teacher Guide:

“Collateral Damage” Homelessness in Philadelphia

Overview

This primary source set focuses on a series of photographs documenting homelessness in Philadelphia. The goal is to guide students through the process of analyzing documentary photographs. This set also challenges students to explore visual imagery as a form of activism, reflect on civic responsibility, and practice empathy.

This primary source set is meant to be a flexible resource. It is expected and encouraged that you adapt and utilize the set in a way that best fits your needs. As such, this guide contains suggested essential questions, objectives, activities, etc., that you may use or ignore. Pick and choose what will work for you and your students!



Big Ideas

- Images are powerful tools for communication, reflection, and change.
- Photography can raise awareness and provoke social action.
- Visual literacy is a critical skill in understanding contemporary and historical media.



Essential Questions

- What stories can photographs tell?
- How can art and media influence public perception and policy?
- What is the role of citizens and organizations in addressing social issues?
- How do we analyze visual sources with a critical and empathetic lens?



Possible Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze and interpret documentary photographs by using visual literacy skills to identify the photographer's perspective and intent.
2. Make inferences based on visual evidence.

3. Engage in critical thinking about the ethics and impact of visual media
4. Reflect on personal reactions to images and connect them to broader civic issues.
5. Create a short, creative response applying their understanding to their own lives or communities.



Suggested materials

- Printed copies or digital access to primary source set
- Glossary handout or slide
- Chart paper or sticky notes (optional)
- Devices with internet access (optional for extension activities)

Instructional Guidance

This section outlines the skills that each activity focuses on and provides some optional pacing guides to help you gauge how you might use this set in your classroom.

Skills & Focus

This primary source set is designed to gradually deepen students' visual literacy, empathy, and critical thinking. Each activity builds on the last—moving from observation to interpretation, and finally to personal action. That said, you may find that due to time constraints or other factors, you are only able to use 1 or 2 of the photos and their corresponding questions. Here's an overview of each document and its instructional focus to aid your decision-making. Below, you can find suggested pacing guides for 1 day, 2-3 days, and 4-5 days.

Activity	Description + Skills Practiced
Document 1: Title & Initial Inference	<p>Students identify the title and date of the photo series (clearly labeled), then make predictions based on the title. This provides an accessible entry point and frames the set.</p> <p>Skills: Comprehending basic information, making predictions, inferring meaning based on titles</p>

Document 2: Guided Visual Analysis	<p>Using a See-Think-Wonder format, students move from close observation to interpretation and question generation.</p> <p>Skills: Observing visual details, making inferences, asking critical questions</p>
Document 3: Photographer vs. Subject	<p>Students step into the shoes of both the photographer and the subject. This fosters empathy and prompts discussion about power and storytelling.</p> <p>Skills: Perspective-taking, synthesizing viewpoints, analyzing representation and intent</p>
Document 4: Inferring Without Certainty	<p>Students examine a photograph without a confirmed setting and are asked to make meaning from incomplete visual evidence. The purpose is to help students wrestle with ambiguity and consider how space and context shape interpretation.</p> <p>Skills: Drawing conclusions with limited information, interpreting signs, evaluating how setting influences message</p>
Respond & React	<p>Students engage in discussion-based reflection about the impact(s) of the photo series. Prompts encourage synthesis, critical empathy, and personal connection. This activity can be completed as a group discussion or written response.</p> <p>Skills: Synthesizing ideas, evaluating emotional and ethical implications, expressing informed opinions</p>
Apply: Take Action	<p>Students choose a final response format—paragraph, visual campaign, or speech/video—to raise awareness about an issue and propose action.</p> <p>Skills: Applying analysis to real-world issues, communicating insights through writing, design, or speech, proposing informed actions</p>

Suggested Pacing Guide—1 Class Period (45-50 min)

Warm Up (5-10 mins)

- Warm Up: Why do we take photos? OR What stories can a photo tell that words can't?
- Verbally introduce Harvey Finkle and his background
- Preview 2-3 glossary terms

Core Activity (35 mins)

- **Document 1** – As a whole class, identify title and date; make predictions based on title (5 min)
- **Document 2** – Have students complete See-Think-Wonder with a partner (10–15 min)
- **Document 3 OR 4 (choose one)**—Photographer vs Subject perspective comparison or reasoning with ambiguity (15-20 minutes)

Closure (5 minutes)

- Exit ticket: Quick-write—What did this photo series make you think or feel?
- Optional homework: Begin Respond & React or Apply section

Suggested Pacing Guide—2-3 Class Periods (90-120 min)

Day 1: Introduction & Entry Analysis (45 mins)

- **Warm-Up:** Why do we take photos? OR What stories can a photo tell that words can't? (5 mins)
- Read over background paragraph and discuss with students. Have them annotate the paragraph by highlighting/underlining one piece of background information they think is important, circle any words they don't know yet, and/or write one question they have about the photographer (5 mins)
- Preview vocab terms (5-10 mins)
 - You could go over them all, highlight a few that you think are most essential, and/or have your students draw/ find images to represent vocab words
- **Document 1-** Analyze document and answer questions as a whole class. Optional: Discuss student predictions. (5-10 mins)
- **Document 2-** Students complete see-think-wonder 10–15 mins)
- Debrief: Quick pair share and/or exit ticket—What are you starting to wonder about this photo series? (3- 5 mins)

Day 2: Deepening Analysis- Perspective & Ambiguity (45 mins)

- **Warm up:** What CAN a picture tell us? What CAN'T a picture tell us? (5 mins)
- **Document 3:** Perspective activity (photographer vs. subject) (15-20 mins)

- **Document 4:** Setting & grappling with ambiguity (10 -15 mins)
- **Respond & React:** Choose 2–3 of the prompts for journal reflection or small group discussion to wrap up (5 – 10 mins)
- Optional closure: Ask, "What message do you think the photographer wanted to communicate?"

Day 3: Take Action (Optional extension) (30 mins)

- Warm up: How is this photo series a form of activism? (5 mins)
- Go over assignment options (5 mins)
- Students begin working on one option
- May be completed as homework



Suggested Pacing Guide— 4-5 Class Periods (180+ min)

Day 1: Context + Document 1 (Title Page Analysis) (45 mins)

- **Warm-Up:** “What do photos do that words can’t?” or “Why do you take photos? (5 mins)
- Introduce Harvey Finkle and context. Read background paragraph and /or watch [Harvey Finkle: A Career in Photography \(youtube\)](#) (5- 10 mins)
- Vocabulary preview: Go over terms and definitions. Have students find/ draw a picture or use each of the words in a sentence. (10 -15 minutes)
- Analyze **Document 1** as a class (title, date, photographer’s intent) (10 mins)
- **Exit Ticket:** “What do you predict the rest of the photo series will show?”

Day 2: Deepening Analysis (Documents 2–3) (45 mins)

- **Warm up:** Yesterday we talked about collateral damage? What is an example of collateral damage?
- **Document 2**—See-Think-Wonder + discuss in pairs/ small groups (15-20 min)
- **Document 3-** Photographer vs Subject, comparing perspectives (20-25 mins)
- Whole class debriefs

Day 3: Wrestling with Ambiguity + Message (Document 4 + Respond & React) (45 mins)

- Warm up: What CAN we learn from a photograph? What CAN'T we learn from a photograph? (5 mins)
- Document 4: Make inferences about setting + intent with little information (encourage students to lean into the discomfort of not knowing & making educated guesses) (10-15 mins)
- Respond & React: Give students time to preview questions and journal/collect their thoughts. Then, have a small group/ whole class discussion about the questions. (20-25 mins)
- Optional closure/exit ticket: How can photojournalism be a form of activism?

Day 4–5: Application & Assessment (45 mins +)

- Students complete the **Apply: Take Action** section
- Use the checklist to self- or peer-edit
- Optional share-out, gallery walk, or community issue brainstorm

Scaffolding & Supports

For Diverse Learners:

- Use sentence stems and modeled responses
- Provide glossary with visuals
- Break questions into chunks
- Offer images with annotation tools
- Encourage oral or visual responses as alternatives to written responses

For Further Enrichment:

- Have students research another photojournalist (e.g., Jacob Riis, Dorothea Lange, Gordon Parks)
- Create a photojournalism exhibit or digital slideshow of an issue in their own community (opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration)

Assessment Suggestions

Formative:

- Exit tickets
- Written responses to questions
- Participation in group discussions

Summative:

- Written responses to Respond & React portion of packet
- Apply: Take Action assignment (rubric based on the provided checklist)

Connect to Standards

This list is just a starting point for identifying how the lesson might connect to Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

Arts and Humanities

Grades 4–8:

- Standard - 9.2.3.A / 9.2.8.A: Explain the historical, cultural, and social context of an individual work in the arts.

- Standard - 9.2.3.D / 9.2.8.D: Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective.
- Standard - 9.2.3.E: Analyze how historical events and culture impact forms, techniques, and purposes of works in the arts (e.g., Gilbert and Sullivan operettas).
- Standard - 9.2.3.F: Know and apply appropriate vocabulary used between social studies and the arts and humanities.

Grades 9–12:

- Standard - 9.2.12.A: Explain the historical, cultural, and social context of an individual work in the arts.
- Standard - 9.2.12.D: Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective.
- Standard - 9.2.12.F: Know and apply appropriate vocabulary used between social studies and the arts and humanities.
- Standard - 9.4.12.B: Describe and analyze the effects that works in the arts have on groups, individuals, and the culture (e.g., Orson Welles' 1938 radio broadcast, War of the Worlds).

English Language Arts (ELA)

Grades 6–12:

- CC.1.2.6–12.A: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary.
- CC.1.2.6–12.B: Cite textual evidence to support analysis.
- CC.1.4.6–12.G: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- CC.1.5.6–12.A: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics and texts.

Social Studies

Civics and Government

- 5.2.C.A: Identify key ideas about citizenship and civic life.
- 5.2.C.D: Explain how active participation in civic life can address community needs.
- 5.3.C.K: Describe the role of citizens in the political process.

History

- 8.1.6–12.C: Analyze the influence of continuity and change in historical periods.
- 8.4.6–12.C: Evaluate how societies have addressed human rights issues over time.