

Questioning Images – Teacher Guide

Note: While Step 1 should always be the starting place, the other steps may be completed out of order or repeated.

1 Describe the Situation

- Before analyzing an image for meaning, ask students to simply describe what they see. Give students time to examine the image closely. Without interpreting the image, answer the 4 Ws (Who? What? Where? When?). The fifth W, “why” is an analytical question that will come later in the process.
- Ask students to describe how the image makes them feel. If the image provokes strong emotions (positive or negative), this demonstrates a specific intent behind using it and is a sign that you should investigate it further.

2 Identify the Source

- Identify the type of image (Is it a tweet? An Instagram post? An image from a print publication?).
- Name the source of the image. Can you determine who created the image?
- Search Google and Wikipedia to learn more about the source and its reputation.

3 Interpret the Meaning

- Now that students have established the basic facts of the image, they can begin interpreting it.
- What is happening in the image? What story is it telling?
- If the image is accompanied by text, ask students to consider how the words affect the overall meaning. How does the addition of words change your understanding of the image?

4 Analyze the Purpose

- This final step asks students to think about the image within a broader social and cultural context. Does it intend to persuade, inform, entertain or mislead?
- Ask students to consider other possible interpretations of the image. How might others be influenced by the image?