

SUPPORTING MULTIMODAL LITERACY: SUPPLEMENT 8

Photojournalism Analysis Questions*

Initial Questions

- What is your first impression of the subject in the photograph? Do you have a positive or negative reaction? What feelings or beliefs does the photograph bring up for you?
- How does the photograph shape your understanding of the subject it references?
- What kind of reaction do you have to the people in the photograph (if there are any)? What does their body language express to you?

Contextual Elements

- Who might be the intended audience for this photograph? How might considerations about audience have shaped the choices the photographer made?
- Where is the photograph displayed (alongside a news article, in a museum)? How does the location of the photography affect how the audience perceives the content?
- What is the purpose of the photograph? Was it meant to send a message about a certain news-related or historical topic?

Photographic Elements

Focus – Which aspects of the photograph are in the clearest focus? Which are out of focus?

Light – How does light highlight (or obscure) certain aspects of the photograph? How would you describe the lighting (harsh, dim, hazy, soft)? How does lighting shape our understanding of the subject?

Repetition – What colors, shapes, or features related to the subject are repeated or create a pattern? Why might the photographer have chosen to repeat this imagery?

Shape – What kinds of shapes (organic or geometric) are present in the photograph or suggested by the composition of the photograph?

Camera Angle – How does the camera angle affect our understanding of the subject? Is the shot a close-up or is the subject shot from above (which implies diminishment) or from power (which implies power)? Are there any extreme or awkward angles?

Composition – What aspects of the photograph are in the frame and which are only partially in the frame? What is in the foreground and what is in the background? How do subjects in the frame relate to each other? What is implied is most important based on the composition?

Space – Does the photograph imply a deep or shallow space? Is there any negative space or is the space filled or cramped? What does the use of space imply about the subject?

Technological Issues – Were any of the elements in the photograph altered or manipulated? Did the photograph use any filters or effects? What kind of exposure is used (over exposed, under exposed)?

* Some of these elements and questions have been adapted from Frank Serafini's book *Reading the Visual*, from the chapter on *Exploring News Reports*