

Unit: Photo Ethics

This unit introduces students to the power of photography and the principles that guide photojournalists in capturing images of the news as it happens. It includes pre- and post-visit activities designed to bracket the Photo Ethics NewseumED class, plus a class-specific gallery guide. Through these experiences, students will become more critical consumers of visual information as they come to understand why ethical photojournalism is important; how photojournalists attempt to be accurate, fair and clear; and what happens when they fail to live up to these standards.

Note: You can also find additional activities, worksheets and handouts related to Photo Ethics by searching EDTools on NewseumED.

OBJECTIVE: Students understand why ethical photojournalism is important and can apply the guiding principles of the photojournalists' code of ethics.

TARGET AUDIENCE: Middle and high school

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is photojournalism, and why is it important?
- What are ethics? What ethical principles guide photojournalists as they work?
- What do photojournalistic fairness, accuracy and clarity look like?
- Why do photojournalists sometimes fail to produce ethical work? What are the effects when this happens?

KEY TOPICS AND SKILLS

- Media literacy
- The role of the free press in our daily lives
- Photojournalism ethics
- Ethical debate and decision-making

UNIT CONTENTS

1. Before Your Visit
 - **Photojournalism Vocabulary:** This activity explores common words that apply to photographs or photographic standards.
2. During Your Visit
 - **NewseumED Class – Photo Ethics:** This lesson covers the power of photographs and the responsibilities of a photojournalist to be accurate, fair and clear. Real-life case studies help students tackle the decision-making process in deciding what's the right thing to do.
 - **Photo Ethics Gallery Guide:** Students visit the Pulitzer Prize Gallery in the Newseum and evaluate an image for subject clarity, historical significance and adherence to ethical standards.
3. After Your Visit
 - **Photojournalists' Code of Ethics:** Students apply the standards of ethical photojournalism to evaluate examples from current news reports.

Before Your Visit: Photojournalism Vocabulary

This activity explores common words that apply to photographs or photographic standards.

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and high school

TIME: Under 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Photojournalism Vocabulary worksheet (download), newspapers, magazines or access to online news websites

PREPARE

Print copies of the worksheet for each student or small group.

DO

1. Distribute the worksheets. Have each student or small group select three terms from the worksheet to research. They should find out what these terms mean in relation to photojournalism.
2. Students should then create their own definitions for the three terms.
3. Have students find examples of these terms (photographs that illustrate the term or the different standards and codes) in newspapers, magazines or on Internet news sites.

DISCUSS

Have each student or small group share their definitions and examples.

During Your Visit: Gallery Guide

Students visit the Pulitzer Prize Gallery in the Newseum and evaluate an image for subject clarity, historical significance and adherence to ethical standards.

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and high school

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Pulitzer Prize Photographs Gallery Guide ([download](#))

After Your Visit: Photojournalists' Code of Ethics

Students apply the standards of ethical photojournalism to evaluate examples from current news reports.

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and high school

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: National Press Photographers Association Code of Ethics handout (download); Photojournalists' Code of Ethics worksheet; newspapers, magazines or online access to news websites

PREPARE

Print copies of the handout and worksheet for each student or small group.

DO

1. Individually or as a class, read the National Press Photographers Association Code of Ethics.
2. Have each student or small group find five examples of photographs that do or do not comply with the ethical standards. Look for examples in newspapers, magazines and online.
3. Have each student write a brief paragraph explaining why each photo shows the standard being implemented or shows a lack of the standard. Remind students to attach the examples to their writing.

DISCUSS

Have students share their findings and look for similarities.

- Did most photographs follow the code of ethics?
- Was it difficult to find examples that violated the standards?
- Which standards, if any, were violated most often? Why do you think that is?
- Why is it important for photojournalists to maintain standards?