

Visuals in the News

Materials Needed: Newspaper, newsmagazine, or a television news story.

To begin with, I encourage the class to notice all of the visual elements contained in the photograph or video. I then ask them consider the ways in which the visual imagery reinforce the textual message or in certain ways contradict the message. I ask the class to consider what possible messages are communicated visually apart from the captions or other written or spoken material.

I also ask the students to consider such visual elements as the angle of the camera, the use of close-up images, what is potentially omitted from the visual image, as well as the size of the images. I also encourage them to consider how the images interact with other images on the same page of a newspaper or news magazine story.

With television news, I encourage them to consider the amount of visual imaging in a single news story from the use of photographs, captions, headlines, video footage, news logos, and background settings for each frame. In addition, I ask them to notice the pace of the images, the different colors that are used by the news editors in the visual images, the role of sound that accompanies the visual images, and the placement of the reporters in the story. After we unpack the individual images and consider the possible implications of them, we consider the ways in which all of the visual images interact throughout the entire broadcast.

The goal is to encourage the students to become more sensitive to the visual elements in a news story and to consider the interplay between the visual elements, aural elements, as well as the written and spoken words. Such sensitized awareness is necessary for students to become more critical consumers of the visual images that are part of their daily lives.