



Published by
Positive Futures Network
P.O. Box 10818
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-0818
206/842-0216
www.yesmagazine.org

FAX: 206/842-5208
subscriptions: 800/937-4451
email: yes@yesmagazine.org

Building a Just and Sustainable World

EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LEARNING

Images, photos, and pictures stimulate the mind. For the viewer, they offer a chance to connect and question. They also offer potential for play and imagination, and pulling the observer into purposeful messages.

Most often, newspaper and magazine readers quickly glance at photos and their captions. With this YES! lesson plan, you and your students can luxuriate—and pause—to truly understand an image, its message, and why it's interesting (or not).



EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LEARNING

Step One: What do you notice? (before the facts)

Ask your students to make sense of the photograph by trusting their instincts of observation and inference. In doing so, the photograph offers possibilities and interpretations beyond a typical reading where the reader glances at the picture to reinforce their interpretation of the picture's title or caption. Do not introduce any facts, captions, or other written words outside of the image. You may hear: bear, girl in bikini, backyard, cyclone fence, swimming pool, house.

Step Two: What are you wondering? (thinking about the facts)

After you've heard what your students are noticing, you'll probably hear the peppering of questions: Is that a black bear? Where did the bear come from? What is the girl thinking? Is she scared? Is the bear going to attack the girl? This is a good time to reveal the photo's caption, accompanying quote, and facts about the actual situation. Watch how the conversation shifts from what they believe to be true to discerning the facts about the photo.

Photo caption:

"It was the hottest day of the summer and I was learning to do flips off of the diving board. As the day was ending, I saw him staring at me next to the fence. My mom always said to stay still if I saw a bear." Photo by Amy Stein

Photo facts:

In her "Domesticated" series, New York photographer and teacher Amy Stein explores encounters between humans and animals in the wild. The images are re-creations of real stories from local newspapers of animal encounters in Matamoras, Pennsylvania, using taxidermy animals.

The real story behind this photo is that bears had been swimming in a family's pool located on the edge of town. Next door, another bear had been hibernating under the house. Eventually, a fence was put up to keep the bears out.

There are three species of bears in North America: the American black bear, the grizzly or brown bear, and the polar bear. The total black bear population is estimated around 900,000. According to the Center for Wildlife, if you encounter a bear in an urban area, remain calm. Give the bear plenty of space and an escape route. If it's a black bear, make a lot of noise and encourage it to leave. If it's a grizzly bear, remain calm and slowly walk away.

More resources around the image

PHOTO ESSAY :: Domesticated

EXPLORE :: North American Bear Center

VISIT :: Amy Stein Photography

Step Three: What next? (jumping off the facts)

Learning more about a photo leads to bigger questions and an opportunity to discuss broader issues and perspectives.

1. What is your relationship with the natural world? Do you isolate yourself from the wild or do you want to connect with it?
2. What kind of encounters have you had with wild animals—locally and in other environments?
3. What kind of accommodation or protection should wild animals and natural environments be given when development encroaches?
4. The wild can bring feelings of comfort and fear, and submission and dominance. The same may be said of the unknown. Think about how you deal with new situations or different-from-you kinds of people. Which of these feelings surface?
5. What are traits of something or someone who is dominant? Discuss an example or situation where an individual or group dominated or overpowered another. Was it inevitable? Was it fair?