

Picturing the past

Photographs (and other images) can carry different meanings depending on a range of factors such as who took the photo, why it was taken, when it was taken, how it was framed and how it was used. Different contexts and captions can bring even more meanings and perspectives.

Nelson Mandela: The Official Exhibition includes a range of images, often including challenging or sensitive subject matter. You could use the photographs below to help prepare students to get the most from these and other artefacts, accounts and pieces of film they will encounter during their visit.

They can also use the [Interviewing an image questions](#) during their visit to prompt and focus their thinking.

Back at school they could:

- Revisit *Image 2*. Have their ideas about it changed further?
- Annotate a printed version of an image showing their knowledge about what it represents
- Create different captions from different points of view to change its meaning
- Use it as the basis for a newspaper report from the time
- Use *Image 2* as a backdrop and present a report for a news item. They could use a simple Green Screen app to import the image and report 'live from where it happened'. Students could consider who the report is for – a South African TV channel? A UK channel? Who is reporting and why?

Using the images

Show students *Image 1*. Give them no information about it.

Help them 'interview' the image by asking questions such as:

- What and who can you see in the photograph?
- How would you describe the expression on the woman's face?
- What do you think she's doing?
- What is she wearing? What do her clothes tell you about her?
- Is she holding anything?
- How old do you think she is?
- Where might she be from?
- Can you make a guess about which decade you think this photo was taken in?
- What do you think might be happening in the picture?
- If you could step inside the picture what do you think you might hear, smell, feel, taste?
- What might have happened just before the scene in this picture? What might have happened afterwards?

Now show them *Image 2*:

- When we pull back a little further, and view the image from a different perspective, what new information can we see?
- What does this tell us? Does this change your thoughts about the previous version of the photo?
- Now what do you think is happening in the picture?
- Who do you think took the photo?
- What might a Black African photographer be trying to say with this photo?
- What might an official South African government photographer be trying to say with this photo?
- What might a photograph like this represent/be trying to say if it had been taken in 1995?

Once they have fully interrogated the images, tell the students about them:

This woman sat in a train carriage reserved for White people as part of a demonstration against apartheid in South Africa, in 1952.

What if you could move the perspective even further away? What else might you be able to see?

Image 1



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Image 2



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Interviewing images

Some of the images in the Nelson Mandela exhibition include challenging and sensitive subject matter. You can use these questions in the exhibition to prompt and focus your thinking when you are looking at them.

What is happening in the picture?

Are there any people?

- What are they wearing?
- What do their clothes tell you about them?
- Can you see the expressions on their faces?
- Are they holding anything?

If you could step inside the picture what do you think you might hear, smell, feel, taste?

What might have happened just before the scene in this picture?

What might have happened afterwards?

Who is the artist or photographer?

Why do you think the artist or photographer made this picture or took this photograph?

Who commissioned the image?

- What message did they hope to deliver with the image?
- How might this affect an artist's or photographer's choices?

Who was the intended audience of the image?

- Was it widely circulated or could just a few people have access to it?
- What impact would the image have had?

What choices might have been made in framing an image?

- What was included?
- What might have been left out?