

Photography in India
by
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Suggested Grade Level: High School

- Possible Middle School or Elementary School level lesson plan if article and video omitted. Instead focus on Hands-On Activity and Guest Presentation

Suggested Curriculum Areas: Social Studies, World History, Art/Art History, World Geography, Literature and Language Arts, World Cultures

General Themes

- ◆ Visual analysis of images: How to "read" or analyze a photograph
- ◆ History and technology of early photography in India
- ◆ Photography as part of the imperial project in India

Goals

- ◆ To allow students to develop analytical skills using primary sources
- ◆ To provide an introduction to the history of photography in India
- ◆ To include the study of images as a way for students to understand history, geography and society of India
- ◆ To encourage a discussion of colonialism in India and how images were used as part of the imperial project.

Lesson Outline:

Preliminary Activities (to be conducted at least a day prior to Lecture)

- ◆ **Introductory Discussion:** General Photography
 - Ask students to think about or reflect on what they already know about photographs
 - Where do we find photographs in our daily life? What kinds of images are these?
 - Ask students to describe the types of images they see everyday: what/who, where, why, etc.
- ◆ **In-Class Assignment / Hands-On Activity:** Time permitting, ask students to bring in a photograph that is familiar to them: a photograph clipping from a newspaper or magazine, a photograph from home, a photograph from a book, etc.
 - Ask each student to describe the photograph they have brought to class
 - Description could include people, object and activities in the photograph
 - Ask each student to explain where this photograph came from and why they chose to bring it to class
 - Questions for students to think about:
 - Why do you think this photograph was in the newspaper/magazine/book/your home?

- What meaning do you ascribe to this photograph, particularly thinking about where you found the photograph?
 - Do you know who the photographer of the photograph is?
 - Does knowing the photographer change your understanding of the meaning of the photograph?
 - Place each student's photograph collectively in a central part of the room (a table or desk, leaning up against the chalk board, etc)
 - Ask students to look at all of the images together and discuss any similarities or differences in the group of photographs
 - Questions for students to think about:
 - Do any of the photographs share themes or subjects? (pictures of people, pictures of nature, pictures of buildings, pictures with text, pictures with animals, etc.)
 - Do any of the photographs share elements of composition? (figures grouped in a similar way, figures holding similar objects, arrangement of objects, presence of landscape or bodies of water, etc.)
 - Do any of the photographs share elements of light or color? (black/white photographs vs. color photographs, photographs taken during the daytime vs. images taken at night, etc.)
 - Have students physically group pictures into different categories based on a their observations.
- ◆ **Suggested Readings:** For lecture preparation or as homework/assigned reading for advanced students:
 - *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* by Bernard S. Cohn
 - "Discovering India: Travel, History and Identity in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century India" by Kumkum Chatterjee in *Invoking the past: the uses of history in South Asia* (edited by Daud Ali)
 - Introduction (by Maria Antonella Pelizzari) to *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900*
 - For Cohn book, organize students into groups and ask each group to read one chapter and prepare a presentation for the rest of the class.
 - For all texts, students could come up with three questions and bring them to class for discussion.
- ◆ **Suggested Video:** *Photo Wallahs: An Encounter with Photography*
 - Following video, ask students to write a short response paper (as possible homework assignment) about video
 - Possible questions / themes for discussion:
 - What are some of the different kinds of photographic images that the video presents? (printed posters, moving pictures / films, black and white portraits, etc.)
 - What are some of the differences between the photo studios presented in the video?

- How do costumes change a person's portrait?
 - Do you consider these photographs to be "real" or "fake"?

Lecture

- Photography in India: what is behind an image?
 - Background: Photography in India in the 19th century
 - Photography and the imperial project in India
 - Case Study: Photograph of Maharaja Jaswant Singh in Crichton's Album
- Group Project (in-class): Ask students to closely examine photographs from/of India for the way they present history, culture, people, and space in India
 - OPTION 1: Students break into groups, each group has one photograph from India. Students are asked to analyze the image based on Photo Analysis Worksheet, and then present their image to the class.
 - OPTION 2: Same as above except that each group has two photographs: a contemporary photograph of India and a 19th century photograph of India. Students are asked to compare and contrast their two photographs (again using Photo Analysis Worksheet) and present their analysis to the class.
 - In both options, the class can engage in a discussion on similarities or differences between the groups of images and how these images present people, places, and ideas of India

Time Frame

- ◆ The amount of time for this lesson varies from 1-4 class periods (forty-five minute sessions), depending on which activities are chosen.
 - For a shorter lesson plan, choose one preliminary activity (hands-on activity, article, video) followed by lecture. For younger students or shorter lesson plan choose only one activity.
 - For a longer lesson plan, spend time with students on each preliminary activity, allowing for 2 – 5 class periods for discussion of article/book, 1-2 class periods for discussion of video, and 1 day for hands-on activity. If time permits, Guest Presentation could similarly incorporate 2 class periods (one class period for presentation of photography in India and a second period for analysis of photographs)

Resources (all available in the lending library of South Asia Institute, University of Texas at Austin)

- ◆ READINGS:
 - *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* by Bernard S. Cohn
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 - Introduction (by Maria Antonella Pelizzari) to *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900*
- ◆ VIDEO: *Photo Wallahs: An Encounter with Photography*
- ◆ Copies of photographs (19th century and contemporary) for Group Project / photo analysis (19th century photographs can be found in *Traces of India*)

◆ Photo Analysis Worksheets

Suggested Outline for Lecture:

- Photography in India: what is behind an image?
 - Background: Photography in India in the 19th century
 - Ask students: does anyone know when the camera was invented?
 - Basic description of daggeurotypes, etc.
 - Ask students: who has a camera? how big is your camera?
 - Images of early 19th century cameras
 - Basic description of early processes – time and materials
 - Photography and the imperial project in India
 - Following 1857, photography used for colonial documentation, curiosity, archive
 - Technology
 - People, Occupations
 - Travel
 - Landscape
 - Photography studios set up in India – both European and Indian photographers
 - Some British officers compiled photograph albums while stationed in India
 - Case Study: Photograph of Maharaja Jaswant Singh in Crichton's Album
 - Ask students to describe this photograph: people, objects, activities, clothing/accessories, surroundings, color + light...
 - Basic description of Maharaja Jaswant Singh as ruler
 - Where his kingdom was located (map of India)
 - Background of Rajputs
 - Basic description of Crichton as an officer
 - Where he was stationed (map) and 10th Hussars
 - Description of his album
 - Ask students: does anyone keep a photo album? If so, what is in your photo album and why? If not, why do you think Crichton might have kept a photo album of his trip to India? Why do you think he included this image of MJS?
 - Does it change our notion of the photograph and the album when we think about British colonial project in India?
 - Discuss colonial desire to model rule after Mughals (images of British *darbars*)
 - Other images of darbars: from paintings
 - How do these images present a ruler? Ideas of power, control, fame?
 - How is the ruler presented in comparison to other figures in the painting/photograph?

- Discuss colonial desire to project an image of power and control back home (to people and government in England), especially following Mutiny of 1857)
 - Album documents Crichton's time in India
 - Does our understanding of the photograph change if we consider that Crichton did not actually visit all of the places he has photographs of in his album?
 - Show other images in album
 - Why might Crichton include these images in his album if he did not actually visit them?
- How is power being conveyed in the MJS photograph?
 - MJS' power?
 - British power?
 - Discuss who took this photograph: British photographers
- Does our understanding of the photograph change if we know that it is staged?
 - For example Mutiny photograph in which skulls replaced on the battle field, after the fact, for the photograph
 - Reality vs. Representation
- Hands-on activity: Ask students to closely examine photographs from/of India for the way they present history, culture, people, and space in India
 - OPTION 1: Students break into groups, each group has one photograph from India. Students are asked to analyze the image based on Photo Analysis Worksheet, and then present their image to the class.
 - OPTION 2: Same as above except that each group has two photographs: a contemporary photograph of India and a 19th century photograph of India. Students are asked to compare and contrast their two photographs (again using Photo Analysis Worksheet) and present their analysis to the class.

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Part One. **Observation**

1. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Write a general description of the photograph. Describe *everything* you see in the photograph. Think about the following characteristics:

People (gender, age, clothing, facial expressions, posture, etc.)

Place (indoor/outdoor, urban/rural, time of day, time of year, background, architecture, landscape, plants, etc.)

Action (What activity / event is shown? If there are people in your photograph, what are those people doing?

How are people or objects positioned in relation to each other?)

Other Clues (What other details do you see in the photo? Think about: objects, animals, tools, vehicles, signs)

Is there a title? What information does it give you?

Is there a caption? What information does it give you?

Part Two. Inference

1. What year do you think this photo was taken?
2. Who or what do you think is the subject of this photograph?
3. Where might you expect to find this photograph?
4. Based on what you have observed (people, place, action, other clues), list three things you might infer from this photograph. In particular, think about what kinds of ideas about India are presented in this photograph.

Part Three. Questions

1. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?
2. Where could you find answers to them?

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Photo Analysis Worksheet: Comparison

Part One. Observation

1. Study the two photographs for 2 minutes each. Write a general description of each photograph. Describe *everything* you see in the photograph. Think about the following characteristics:

People (gender, age, clothing, facial expressions, posture, etc.)

Place (indoor/outdoor, urban/rural, time of day, time of year, background, architecture, landscape, plants, etc.)

Action (What activity / event is shown? If there are people in your photograph, what are those people doing?

How are people or objects positioned in relation to each other?)

Other Clues (What other details do you see in the photo? Think about: objects, animals, tools, vehicles, signs)

Photograph #1	Photograph #2

Is there a title for either of the photographs? What information does it give you?

Is there a caption for either of the photographs? What information does it give you?

Part Two. **Inference**

1. What year do you think each photograph was taken?
2. Who or what do you think is the subject of each photograph?
3. Where might you expect to find each photograph?
4. Based on what you have observed (people, place, action, other clues), what kinds of ideas about India are presented in each of these photographs. Compare and contrast the different ways India is depicted in each image.

Part Three. **Questions**

1. What questions do these photographs raise in your mind?
2. Where could you find answers to them?