



Using the *TimeLinks Image Archive* Classroom Exercise #1 Lesson Planner

Overview:

The TimeLinks Image archive is the largest online repository of visual archival materials depicting Manitoba History. In addition to complementing the textual portions of the TimeLinks site, the images stand on their own as a valuable resource for understanding turn-of-the-century Manitoba; how it functioned and how it imagined itself.

As we view photographs and other images, we must think of them as documents that were created at a certain place at a certain time, and with a specific purpose. We have to remember that photographs are made, not simply taken. They reflect a conscious purpose on the part of the photographer, and sometimes the subject.

Sometimes we have direct information about the purpose of an image, such as those that we find on immigration brochures. At other times, we have to infer the purpose by examining the content and context of the image. Sometimes, the strongest message that we get from a photograph is the one that the original photographer or subject intended. At other times, we gain insights that were not intended or imagined at the time that the image was created.

The intention of this exercise is to encourage students to begin to think of the images in the TimeLinks collection not just as pictures or accurate representations of life in early twentieth century Manitoba, but as documents with their own imbedded value statements. In many senses, interpreting a photograph is no different than interpreting a textual document.

Using the Image Archive:

Several different approaches to using the TimeLinks image archive in the classroom can be imagined. Students can be assigned to work on individual or group projects where they examine either one image or a series of images. They can be asked to describe the image and its content and to try to decode the intention of the photographer or subject in creating the image.

Students in the senior years could be asked to do further research into the subject depicted and to integrate their interpretation into a more detailed analysis of a broader historical context.

If you have the resources, specifically the capacity to project the images, photo interpretation can make an interesting group exercise as a whole classroom might get together and attempt to understand an image. With this in mind, we have created a page featuring a small selection of images that might serve as an introductory exercise in document interpretation. We also would encourage teachers to create their own pages.

Lesson Plan

The following descriptions are intended to assist the teachers in using the page titled “Classroom Exercise #1” and located at www.timelinks.mb.ca/resource/exercise1.html

Grade Level

Senior Years (can be adapted for younger students)

Materials:

A classroom equipped with an overhead LCD projector and an computer with an Internet connection

or

A classroom equipped with a standard overhead and prepared transparencies of the image selection.

Time Requirement:

A seventy-five minute class period is preferred.

Follow-up Activities:

This exercise can be followed up with an individual or group project that requires students to use their research skills to develop an analysis of one or more images of their own choosing from the TimeLinks Image Archive. This activity can take the form of a written exercise, an oral presentation, or the creation of an HTML document incorporating images and text.

Using the Sample Image Selecton

This selection of images was originally created for a seminar for teachers at the Manitoba Association of Social Science Teachers SAG Conference in the fall of 1997. It has since been used at a variety of venues.

The images have been used as the basis for a classroom discussion about the nature of photographic images in several Senior III classes. This exercise works best in a seventy-five minute instruction period and where there is an overhead projector available by means of which the images can be projected for group viewing.

1. The lesson has usually begun with an oral exploration of the nature of historical evidence. Students have worked together to create a definition of what constitutes historical “evidence.” Students have then collectively developed a working definition of what can be considered an historical “document.” The central contention is that photographic images must be seen as documents that communicate specific historical information.
2. With this definition in hand, the exploration has turned to evolving a list of what types of information can be obtained by analyzing a photograph. Students have created a list of the possible types of information that can be garnered from looking at historic photographs. As the lesson proceeds, the instructor might wish to add to this list.
3. Equipped with their working definition of a document and a list of the types of evidence that they can look for, the students have engaged in a facilitated discussion of each image in turn. As the images are displayed, the instructor fills in the necessary background information about the context, subject or photographer that will aid in the interpretation.
4. The lesson can be reinforced with an individual or group writing assignment or presentation that uses image interpretation. A sample lesson plan is provided under the title “Image Interpretation Exercise #1.”

The Images

The following descriptions are intended to provide the briefest possible overview and a few sample questions for teachers leading a classroom discussion or designing an assignment that uses this selection of images. They are intended only as a rough guide to using these images, and teachers are encouraged to augment this overview with their own research and impressions and to develop their own lesson plans.

Title Image - “Foote Hoisted on a Derrick”

Lewis Foote (1873 - 1957) was arguably Manitoba’s best known and most prolific commercial photographer. Foote’s entire collection resides in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and in an era before newspapers regularly employed photographers, his collection represents the largest and broadest collection of photographs depicting early twentieth century Manitoba, and Winnipeg in particular.

Foote’s subject were varied. He lived in the age of Manitoba’s great reform movement when women won the vote, when Canada went to war, when liquor was prohibited, and when labour rose up. His work documents the tremendous social change of the era - the crushing of the strike, the shots of the North End slums he took for J.S. Woodsworth’s books, and the construction of an

industrial metropolis on the prairie with its own local elite. Foote's photographs also provide a starting point for understanding the value statements inherent in any photographic images. In the words of one author:

Foote is the recorder of orthodoxy and Angloconformity; if he can be said to have a predominant subject for his photos, that subject would be private property. The voice that we hear from so many of his pictures is that of the person writing the cheque for the print. He, and it is most certainly he, is saying, "I am a man of substance. I own this house, this is my wife, and these are my children; this is my factory, these are my workers. I can have my photograph taken. I am respectable, God-fearing and hard working."¹

Image 1 - "Girl with Eggs"

This image was taken by Gladstone photographer Cyril Jessop. It is one of a series of photographs of southwestern Manitoba that Jessop produced for the Federal Department of the Interior. The images were to be used on immigration pamphlets and displays that were intended to attract immigrants to Canada from the United States. Many of these images took care to photograph cars, telephone lines and other hallmarks of "civilization" so as to give the impression that Manitoba was not a backwater but a place of prosperity and progress.

Students should note the costume of the girl pictured gathering eggs. Would this costume be typical of a farm girl doing her daily chores? Does the photo appear posed or contrived? Why?

Image 2 - "Hartney Agricultural Society"

This is an example of a formal, commissioned portrait. Why did these men choose to have a portrait done? What message are they trying to communicate by their pose and their costume? What does this tell us about them? About the self-image of the town of Hartney?

Image 3 - "Chief and Councillors Elect, Fort Churchill"

This image depicts the chief and councillors of a local band that have come to Fort Churchill for their "Treaty", the annual allowance of money and goods promised to each member of a band in the treaty document. The medals around their neck are "treaty medals" that were typically awarded to the chief and councillors of a band when they signed-on to the treaty, and they were similar in appearance to the medals worn by the colonial governors and other representatives of the Crown.

What is signified by the costume of the council, the medals and the flag? Are they symbols of aboriginal society, British society, or both? For what purpose might this picture have been taken? What kind of incidental information is contained in the photograph? Students might wish to consider such things as costume, building construction and topography.

Image 4 - "Miss Curtis, Cattle Judge"

This image depicts a woman judging a bull at an agricultural fair.

What is the subject of this photograph? Is it Miss Curtis, or is it the bull? The title chosen by

¹Doug Smith and Michael Olito. *The Best Possible Face: L.B. Foote's Winnipeg*. (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1985), 5.

the photographer might help to provide the answer. What does this image suggest about the role of women in prairie agricultural society?

What kind of incidental information is visible in the photograph? Students might wish to comment on costume in answering this question.

Image 5 - “Picking Garlic - East Kildonan”

This image might be selected to show contrast with the image of Miss Curtis above. It depicts five Ukrainian women and one man in a garlic or onion field in what is now residential east Kildonan. We know that these women were wage labourers at a commercial garden.

Students should be encouraged to look for evidence that this is a carefully posed image, and should attempt to decode the relationships between the male and female employees of the farm. What kind of hierarchy is represented? What is the sexual division of labour? What reasons (economic or cultural) might explain this division of labour?

What kind of incidental information is available in the photograph? Students might want to comment on costume and on the information that the photograph provides about the local economy.

Image 6 - “Ravenscourt - J. S. Tupper Home, West Gate”

This image is a hand tinted photograph that was reproduced onto a commercial post card. The caption reads “A Winnipeg Residence.” It was located in the prestigious Armstrong’s Point development, and was arguably Winnipeg’s most extravagant house at the time it was built.

Knowing that this was a post card, what can we discern about how its creator wanted to portray Winnipeg to the rest of the world? Why did the photographer choose to depict one of Winnipeg’s largest mansions and not a more typical or more modest residence?

Incidentally, this house later served as the home of Ravenscourt School and Westgate Mennonite Collegiate.

Image 7 - “Tenement Home, Grove Street, Point Douglas”

This image provides a stark contrast to “Ravenscourt” above. This image was taken by Lewis Foote for one of J.S. Woodsworth’s books about city planning.

What does this image depict? What might have been intended by the choice of subject? What does the existence of this house and Ravenscourt tell us about Winnipeg society in the early twentieth century? Why was this image not made into a post card?

Image 8 - “Henri Billard, St. Claude”

This is an example of a formal portrait. It was probably taken by the same person and on the same day as the portrait of Jean Marais Lebrun below. What does the portrait tell us about Mr. Billard and the image that he would like to project? What does it tell us about our relationship with technology? Is this same pose used today with updated technology? Is there any incidental information that we can gather from the image, like the specific technology of the motorcycle, for example?

Image 9 - “Jean Maris Lebrun”

This images drawn form the same collection as “Henri Billard” above, and was probably taken on the same day by the same person. Again it is a formal portrait showing an individual’s relationship to technology, in this instance a collection of muskets and rifles.

Students might wish to comment on the costume worn by the man and the props that he has brought to the photographer’s studio. What do the costume and guns tell us about Mr. Lebrun and how he perceived himself or would like to be perceived? What other, incidental information can we garner from this photograph about technology, costume and perhaps economy?

Image 10 - “Elder Matias Son on Leave”

This image has two subjects, the eldest son of a family and a small steam-driven tractor. The photograph was taken sometime during the First World War, and the son is in uniform and reported in the image title to be home on leave.

This is clearly a posed photograph. Students might wish to speculate on why these two subjects have been united, or more specifically why the family might have chosen to have the portrait of their oldest son taken in front of their tractor instead of in a less complicated arrangement.

What does this say about the role of agricultural technology? ..about the place occupied by each of the oldest son and the tractor in the farm family? ..about the imagined role that the young man will fill? What about the military uniform? What might be inferred about this family’s attitude towards the War?

What incidental information can be gathered from this image?

Image 11 - “Sacking Wheat by the Side of a Great Modern Thresher”

Like the image above, this image depicts agricultural technology. The picture itself is one half of a stereogram, a pair of images that when viewed together in a special viewer appear to form a three dimensional image. It depict harvest activities and technology. The machine is a thresher, or a separating machine.

Students might wish to try and figure out how the separator works. For more information see the entry in the TimeLinks Reference.

Students might also wish to speculate on why such an image would be of sufficient interest to be sold as a part of a photo set. Why would people be interested in paying money for such an image? What does this tell us about the role of agriculture? About the importance of technology?

Image 12 - “East Kildonan Little Mothers’ League”

This image depicts a Little Mothers’ League Class in an East Kildonan School. The Little Mothers Leagues were formed to teach domestic skills to young women, and it was particularly aimed at the children of recent immigrants. It was felt that through specific instruction in domestic skills, immigrant women might abandon traditional methods of child rearing and housekeeping. Classes consisted of practical instruction in household management, cooking and child rearing, and

theoretical instruction in nutrition and hygiene. It was also hoped that mothers would be influenced by their daughters to adopt a more “Canadian” way of keeping house.

This image invites speculation on the role that young women were being prepared for in school. What does the image say about gender roles in early twentieth century Manitoba?

The image also invites further research into the social reform movements of the period. Was the Little Mothers league primarily about education and public health, or was it a tool of assimilation? Would “better” household practices have improved the situation for immigrants, or was the problem not ignorance, but rather poverty?

Image 13 - “Minstrel Show - Votes for Women”

This image depicts a fundraiser for the Political Equality League, the foremost voice of the middle class reform movement in the second decade of the century. The performers are all wearing “blackface” makeup. Blackface was not uncommon in this era. The then exotic Jazz music, with its close associations with the music of the black communities of the American South, was becoming very popular in the cities of Northern North America. It became very trendy for musicians of European extraction to affect the dress and speech of black people when they played “Negro Music,” and African people were often lampooned in comedy acts and stage plays. In one sense, the appearance of blackface signifies that the members of the Political Equality League considered themselves just as sophisticated and urbane as their counterparts in the big cities to the south, but what else does it signify?

This image might lead to a lively classroom debate. Is there a contradiction between advocating for the rights of women and appearing in blackface? Why was blackface seemingly acceptable among this well educated and progressive group within Winnipeg society? Is it racist? Why or why not?

Image 14 - “Great War Veterans’ Association Parade, Winnipeg, 4 June 1919.”

The days of the Winnipeg General Strike were marked by also daily parades by competing factions. Unemployed Veterans of the Great War, many still sporting their uniforms, appeared on both sides. This parade depicts a parade of veterans opposed to the strike, promising to uphold constitutional authority.

Students might wish to comment on the variety and the mix of messages represented on the banner. What was the connection, for example, between the high cost of living and the “Alien Enemy?” Are there any contradictory messages in the banner? Why or why not? Some of these answers may require further research in to the events of the Winnipeg General Strike.