

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).



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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: *mask, pink cheeks, finger over dollar bill, braids, fingerless glove, dark pink fleece.*

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 theater mask? Is this person in a play? Why is this person wearing a mask? Why is he holding a dollar bill with his finger?* 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:

"A demonstrator at Occupy Wall Street shows how corporations talk. Their "speech," Lisa Graves says, has left us believing a lot of things that aren't true." Photo by Stephen O'Byrne

Photo facts:

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was initiated by Canadian activist group Adbusters and sprung to life on September 17, 2011 in Zuccotti Park in Manhattan's Financial District. There are Occupy movements in more than 100 U.S. cities, and there have been over 1,500 Occupy events internationally.

The movement protests social and economic inequality—that "Wall Street banks, big corporations, and others among the 1% are claiming the world's wealth for themselves at the expense of the 99% and having their way with our governments. "

86 percent of Americans say that Wall Street and its lobbyists have too much influence in Washington, D.C.

The mask in the photo is a Guy Fawkes mask. Guy Fawkes is the most notorious member of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot against King James I and Parliament. The mask originated when the anarchist activist "V" was depicted wearing a caricature mask of Guy Fawkes in the popular comic book series, and film adaptation, *V For Vendetta*. The mask soon became a common symbol for anti-establishment protests. Ironic note: The Guy Fawkes-mask is the top selling mask on Amazon, with profits going to

Time Warner, one of the largest media corporations.

Additional resources around the image:

WEAR:: [Print out your own Guy Fawkes Mask](#)

INVESTIGATE:: [Center for Media and Democracy](#)

LEARN:: [Americans Who Tell The Truth](#)

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

1. Many people argue that corporations and the governments lie to the public for profit. Do you believe this is true? Who are some "whistleblowers"—some would call them heroes—who have uncovered lies and sought justice?
2. A mask hides the identity of a person. On what occasions might a person wear a mask? What powers or illusions does a mask bring to the wearer? How might a mask be perceived by the seer?
3. Corporations (and politicians running for office) invest millions of dollars in public relations (PR) campaigns to promote their commercial and political interests. Brainstorm for examples, such as current presidential campaigns, Susan G. Komen Foundation, or McDonald's. What makes a public relations or marketing campaign successful? When have you been influenced by these campaigns? Have you ever felt "fooled"?
4. You may have heard of the sayings "money talks" or "hush money." Discuss your interpretation of these sayings and examples of how we are controlled by money.