

Questioning Images: Teacher Guide

Please Note: Questions marked with the share symbol () only apply to social media images.

1. Describe the Situation:

- Before analyzing an image for meaning, ask students to simply describe what they see. Give students time to examine the image closely. Without interpreting the image, answer the 5 Ws (Who? What? Where? When? Why?)
- Ask students to describe how the image makes them feel. If the image provokes strong emotions (positive or negative), this is a sign that it requires further investigation.

2. Identify the Source

- Establish a set of core facts about the image. Identify the type of image (Is it a tweet? An Instagram post? An image from a print publication?), as well as the source of the image. Can you determine who created the image?
- Search Google and Wikipedia to learn more about the source and its reputation.

If the image is from social media ():

- Consider whether the image originated on social media or if it originated elsewhere (such as on a news website, on a television broadcast, etc.)
- When identifying and evaluating the source of an image from social media, it will be helpful to review the strategies in "[Fact-Checking Tools — Video 3: Evaluating Social Media Accounts](http://www.newswise.ca/videos)" available at www.newswise.ca/videos. Ask students to consider both where the image came from (if a news source is listed) and the reliability of the person who posted or shared it.
- Ask students to perform a **reverse image search** on the image (see NewsWise video "[Fact-Checking Tools: Verifying Images and Video](#)") in order to trace the image's history and see if it may have been manipulated or modified in any way.

3. Interpret the Meaning

- Now that students have established the basic facts of the image, they can begin interpreting it. Ask students to think carefully about how the image is framed by accompanying text or other contextual information.
- You may want to use this step as an opportunity to discuss what we mean when we say a message is "accurate." Some of the images are completely fabricated while others may try to express a real concern (climate change, for instance) through misleading images.

If the image is from social media ():

- For clues about how others interpreted the image, students may want to see if others have commented on the image on social media.
- **Note:** Because comments on social media are not always appropriate, you may want to review comments in advance or select a representative sample to show students.

4. Analyze the Purpose?

- This final step asks students to think about the image within a broader social and cultural context. After interpreting the image, consider what the image intends to do. Does it intend to harm, mislead, influence, or entertain?
- Ask students to consider other possible interpretations of the image.

If the image is from social media ():

- Ask students to imagine why different people or groups might share the image. What might people be trying to communicate about themselves or their beliefs by sharing it?
- Discuss any possible ethical concerns that may arise from this image being shared on social media. Consider some of the effects the image could have by circulating widely online.