

# Is Seeing Believing: Curriculum

Resources for Teaching Visual Literacy As it Applies to News & Journalism

[PhotoShock: Ethics in Advertising](#) (lesson plan)

**NEW:** [lesson plan](#) incorporating elements of this curriculum

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Click the image on the left to go to a 6 minute video excerpt

from the curriculum *Is Seeing Believing? How Can You Tell What's Real?*

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A [Newseum](#) produced curriculum about the news, with special emphasis on photojournalism for students and teachers, grade 7-12

“This presentation for students visiting the Newseum helps the profession and the work of our association, and provides better understanding among all people of the vital role news images plan in our world today.”

**Charles H. Cooper, Executive Director Emeritus, National Press Photographers Association**

“This curriculum package is an excellent way to introduce students and the public to the tenets of journalism, and shows how the profession serves as an extension of the public.”

**Greg Christopher, Executive Director, Society of Professional Journalists**

**Frank Baker’s review of this curriculum, as published by The Center for Media Literacy:**

#### **NEW TEACHING PACKAGE ON PHOTOGRAPHY TACKLES ISSUES OF DIGITAL MANIPULATION**

Following a recent visit to the Newseum, a wonderful new museum devoted to journalism and news established by the Freedom Forum Foundation in the Washington, DC area (a must-stop on your next visit there), I discovered an outstanding 22-minute video and teaching kit created to help middle and high school students explore the artistic and ethical issues involved in “altering” photographs through digital imaging.

Now “Is Seeing Believing? How Can You Tell What’s Real?” is available to schools across the country through distribution arranged by the Center for Media Literacy in Los Angeles. Teachers who utilize newspapers and/or mainstream news magazines (Time, Newsweek, etc.) in the classroom will be especially interested in using this affordable resource.

The video, a 22-minute excerpt of an hour-long PBS series entitled “Media Matters,” begins by explaining that in the traditional process of news photography over the decades, “the image itself was rarely tinkered with.” But things are now different. “Today’s computer technology makes such alterations not only easy, but also undetectable. And it’s happening a lot...”

Following several recent controversial examples – the head of former Texas Governor Ann Richards placed on the body of another woman sitting astride a motorcycle; TIME magazine’s darkening the cover photo of O.J. Simpson’s mugshot, and National Geographic moving the Egyptian pyramids so that they appeared closer together – we hear from art designers and photographers, news editors and photojournalists exploring whether the manipulation was proper or warranted in each instance. Along the way

students see exactly how a computer can alter a photograph seamlessly and perhaps most importantly, hear how even so-called experts are wrestling with the issues involved.

The large (24×36) full-color poster included in the kit is designed so that students examine different kinds of photos – ads, news, fashion, sports – and apply what they’ve learned about photo manipulation. The 18-page teacher’s guide is excellent and includes black line masters for several follow-up activities about media manipulation through history. I was fascinated to learn, for example, that during the Civil War, some photographers, not able to alter the images they took, instead moved bodies to improve the composition of their photos!

My one criticism of the video is the typical documentary dependence on “expert” voices and the absence of opinion and insight from audiences, particularly young people who are growing up in today’s image culture. Nevertheless I believe it is essential for students to develop critical viewing skills for photography and this new resource is an excellent start.

### Teacher Guide Contents

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT “Is Seeing Believing?”

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BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

HOW TO – USE THE VIDEO



**(NOTE: the video is an excerpt from the PBS series “Media Matters,” the specific segment was called “Moving Pictures” read a transcript of the segment [here](#).)**

INTRODUCING THE POSTER

HOW TO – USE THE POSTER PHOTOS 1-7

MORE PHOTOS TO PUZZLE OVER

TIPS FOR SAVVY NEWS CONSUMERS

STUDENT ACTIVITY ONE—IS IT NEWS?  
IS IT NEWS WORKSHEET  
STUDENT ACTIVITY TWO—IS THIS FOR REAL?  
IS THIS FOR REAL WORKSHEET  
WHERE TO FIND MORE  
AFTER YOUR CLASS VISITS THE NEWSEUM

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Now available: [Ethics In The Age of Digital Photography](#) (DVD: 1 hour)  
produced by the National Press Photographers Association

Description: This 60-minute DVD by John Long offers suggestions for  
dealing with the  
ethical implications of the electronic revolution in photojournalism.  
With some examples  
of digital manipulation and the problems caused by altered images, this  
video touches on  
the principles that support ethical decision-making.

[The People's Choice: Digital Imagery and the Art of Persuasion](#)  
(lesson plans)