

## How to do an Image Analysis

An image is worth a thousand words. Students who study a great historical moment or the countless details of earlier everyday life often find images as invaluable sources: acting as windows into the past and today students study the content and the meaning of visual images to better understand a particular topic, time, or event. The first step in using an image as a historical source is to identify the subject and content of the image, soon followed by reviewing contextual information that may not be in the image. For example, who the producer the image, when it was made and who was intended to view it are all important elements, often not referenced in the image itself, which can radically change our interpretation. Together, the image and the context provide us with the opportunity to better understand history.

### Images as part of History

Most history textbooks and many academic histories use images to illustrate the history that they tell. However, when we are given these books in our classes, we rarely spend time exploring the images in them, focusing our attention instead on the written content. We do so because of the way that images are presented in many historical texts and also because of the way we are trained to view images—as supplemental to written history rather than sources of history themselves.

### The Accessibility of the Image

Using images to teach history often seems more accessible to students than the written record. The learners who arrive in my classroom are not only immersed in technology, but also in visual ways of learning. They appreciate the immediacy of the image, which often conveys information more quickly than a primary document written in unfamiliar, or even a foreign, language. This immediacy also works well in discussion sections, where the shared experience of viewing a picture can provide a focus for lively group discussion. Students are often already sophisticated readers of visual media and, with guidance and support, many enjoy the process of viewing and analyzing historical representations.

To strengthen your skills in analyzing images and any visual media, you should be aware of the composition of the image, its historical context, and theoretical issues related to representation. Many questions about the form of the image have been explored most thoroughly in the history of art. In terms of historical context, students are encouraged not only to pay close attention to an image's production and circulation, but also to the responses of the image's audience. In most cases, this information cannot be learned from the image itself, but only from the description the instructor has written to accompany the image.

1. View the images and jot down your initial response to each.
2. Read the description paragraph and question.
3. Circle and identify the keys Persons and Objects in the image.
4. Respond to the Question and include the key Persons and Objects in the response.
5. You should be able to complete this assignment in no more than **thirty** minutes.
6. **Again remember, the great thing about history is that there is no one right answer. But there certainly are better answers than others and those that are accurate, specific and strive to tell me “why” you interpreted an image in a particular way: especially if you incorporate persons and objects you identified in step 3. Those responses that are inaccurate, vague, repetitive in their information and unable to explain their interpretation will receive the score they have earned.**

The following rubric describes levels of competence in completing an identification item on a history exam or homework assignment.

Levels correspond roughly to letter grades (4 = A, 1 = F) and appropriate points that will be awarded for each.

Level	Criteria
4	All relevant components of the question are clearly and fully addressed. The response demonstrates detailed knowledge of the most important features of the image, as well as relation of image to larger historical periods, trends, and concepts. Response has no grammatical or punctual errors and is entirely written by the student.
3	Most relevant components of the question are adequately addressed. The response demonstrates general knowledge of the image, as well as some relation of the image to larger historical periods, trends, and concepts.
2	Most relevant components of the question are adequately addressed, with no more than one significant element missing. The response demonstrates some knowledge of the image. Relation of image to larger historical periods, trends, and concepts vague or unclear.
1	Several relevant components of the question response are missing or incorrect. The response does not distinguish the image from other image. Relation of image to larger historical periods, trends, and concepts missing or incorrect. Student quotes other sources instead of independently writing the information. Information is plagiarized.

# The United States & World War II

## History through Image Interpretation

In the following pages are several images from World War II divided into three sections. **Select one section** and respond to the question prompts posed. Each question response should be 4 to 6 sentences long.

### Section 1: Images from the American Home front

A) At the start of World War II the American public was divided over whether the United States should enter the conflict. Yet On Dec. 7th 1941, the Japanese Empire attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii hoping to cripple American forces in the Pacific. After conquering much of Asia, the Japanese hoped they could wear down America's will to fight. Judging from this poster, why is the flag mangled and what unintended effect did the Pearl Harbor attack have on the American public? (Bonus: During the Spanish-American War, the United States had a similar battle cry: "Remember the ..." what?)



B) During World War II widespread male enlistment left gaping holes in the industrial labor force. As the result, the US government implemented a massive publicity campaign to encourage women to fill these positions and between 1940 and 1945 the female percentage of the U.S. workforce increased from 27% to 37%. The icon associated with this campaign is known as "Rosie the Riveter." In this poster, how is Rosie portrayed as both a worker and woman?





C) The success of the U.S. military effort in both Europe and Asia depended on the economic mobilization at home. This effort ultimately brought the Great Depression to an end and revived the nation's economy. Yet the United States was not the only country transformed by the conflict. Canada, a member of the Allies as well, used propaganda posters to communicate with her domestic population. Who is the target audience of this poster what purpose did the artist hope to achieve?



## Section 2: Images of American Soldiers

A) While each American soldier fights for different reasons, they also often share a common purpose. This poster shows WWII soldiers marching past soldiers of the Continental Army from the Revolutionary War. Then how, according to the poster, is the American past connected to the present? Is the poster correct?



B) All wars have casualties. During WWII TIME Magazine published a photo (below) of US Marines who died fighting in the Pacific. It was the first time that any photograph depicting dead American troops had appeared in an American publication. Why did some Americans believe the photo should be published while others believe the photo should have been censored?



C) In the Pacific, the United States used a island-hopping strategy against Japan: avoiding strongly-defended islands and capturing only those the US needed to advance. Near the end of the war one island Iwo Jima, close to the Japanese Home Islands, proved an exceptionally difficult to capture. A photograph of US troops raising the flag atop Mount Suribachi came to characterize the battle and the whole Pacific conflict. The photo won the Pulitzer Prize is one of the most reproduced in history. Why did this photo prove so popular with the American public in 1945?





## Section 3: America through the Eyes of the Enemy

A) During World War II, propaganda was employed not only by the United States but by Nazi Germany and Japan. This "enemy" propaganda was often directed at the German or Japanese people and portrayed Americans in a negative light. In this German poster, the United States is depicted as amalgamation or combination with many different attributes. Identify three, explain their importance, and why they are negative.





B) German and Japanese propaganda targeted not only their own populations but also American soldiers. During the battle for the Pacific, Japanese planes dropped leaflets on American troops. What was the purpose of these leaflets and what do they hope to inspire American soldiers to do?

**HERE'S ALL YOU DO !**

- 1) Come towards our lines waving a white flag !
- 2) Strap your gun over your left shoulder, muzzle down and pointed behind you.
- 3) Show this ticket to the sentry.
- 4) Any number of you may surrender with this one ticket.

**JAPANESE ARMY HEADQUARTERS**

通 行 證

本票持參者ハ投降者ニ付保護ヲ加フベシ

大日本軍司令官

*This a surrendering ticket.*

**TICKET TO MEET  
Your Wife & Kid**

**Top!**

As sprinters — and as fighters —  
On Olympic cinder paths, you are  
the streaking champion —  
In the ring, you are the best boxer —  
You're good, man — You're good —  
But every time a dirty job turns up —  
every time they need  
more cannon fodder — every time  
the going gets tough —  
**YOU're** up in front, while "whitey"  
stays behind where he won't get  
hurt —  
I'd get mad, one of these days,  
if I were **YOU!**



C) During World War II the United States built one of the largest air forces in the world. As the war progressed, American bombers dropped millions of tons of bombs on Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy (the Axis). These bombing campaigns often targeted cities and killed hundreds of thousands civilians. How does this Italian poster characterize American pilots?

