

Photography in Context

Shout Freedom! **Educator Resource** **Grades 9-12**

Contexts are the events, social and/or political situations, physical location, or place in time in which something happened or exists. For example, the socio-political context of a photograph refers to what was happening in politics and society at the time it was taken. **How might the situation or place of a work of art affect its meaning or your understanding of it?**

1. With your students watch the *Exploring New York* video on this website. This is a short video showing interviews of various Photo League artists. These artists are discussing their explorations of New York City and some of the scenes they choose to document. Instruct your students to consider these discussions as explore the context of the photographs they are viewing.
2. Students will work in groups to select a photograph from the *Shout Freedom* exhibition to explore. Students will then work together to research and discuss the context of each photograph.
3. Here is a list of questions the students might use to situate their photograph within a context:
 - What was the physical context of the photo? Where was it taken? Where was it displayed?
 - What was going on in the city, neighborhood, or country at the time the photograph was taken? What is the social or political context of the photograph?
 - Does this photograph still hold relevance today? Why or how is it important in a modern context?

Note to students: You might not be able to find information about this specific photo. However, use the date and the visual clues to help you research the context of the photograph. For example, if the photo was taken in 1944 and depicts a coal miner, research what was happening in the coal mining industry in 1944.

Extension Activity

Students can choose to write a 3-5 page essay, present a 15-20 minute mini-lecture on their photograph using a Powerpoint or website (they designed), or produce a video or podcast about their photograph in a context relevant to today.

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