

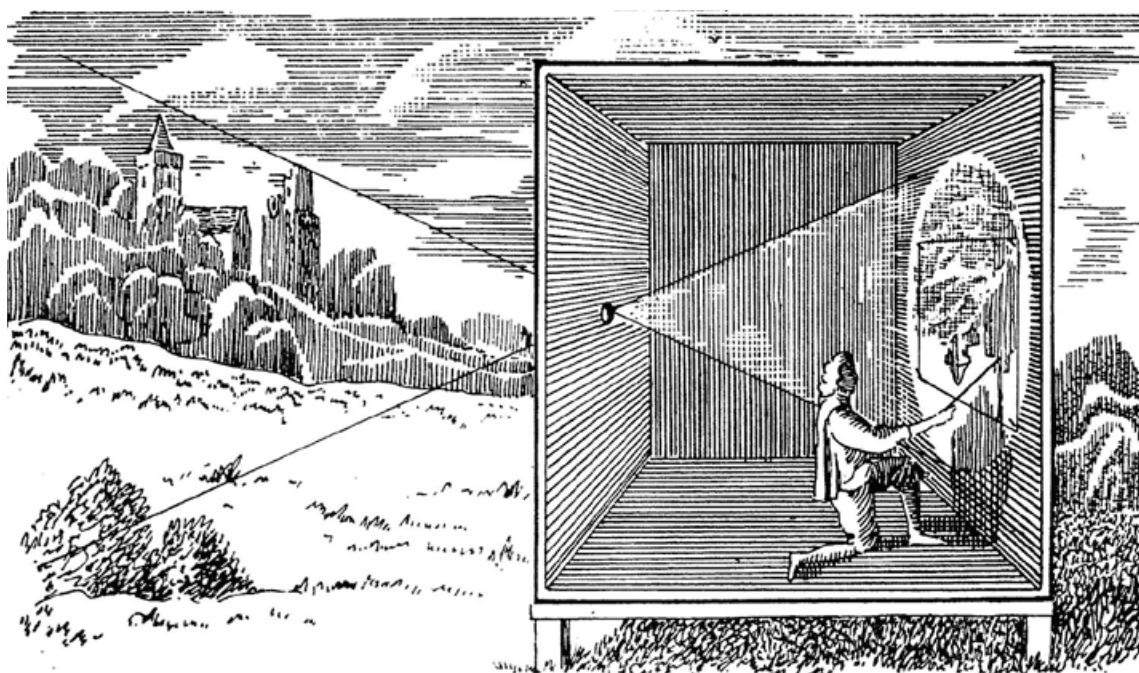
Photography Timeline Education Resource

Developed for The Gallery of Photography by Brian Cregan

Student Worksheets

History of Photography

Before the invention of photography, painting, drawing and illustration were used to record human life and the natural world. The first cameras designed in the 1820s onwards were based on the idea of the **Camera Obscura** (Fig. 1) that used a lens to project an image onto paper or metal plate coated in special chemicals that reacted to light. The human eye works in very much the same way projecting an image that is upside down and reversed. Our brain flips around this upside down view of the world.



(Fig. 1)
Camera
Obscura



(Fig. 2) 1846 The Reading Establishment – Henry Fox Talbot – the first photographic printing firm

See also on the **Timeline** (2002) how Richard Torchia transformed the Gallery of Photography into a giant, walk-in camera. In the early days cameras were quite large and had to be put on a tripod. (See Fig. 1 below). Only one photograph could be taken at a time and the sitter had to stay still for a long time – over a minute while the photograph was recorded. This is why we don't see people smiling in very old photographs! It was also very expensive and involved using hazardous chemicals. Later around 1900 hand held, **roll film** cameras like the **Box Brownie** (See Fig. 3 below) invented by Kodak made it more affordable and photography spread all over the world. **Digital photography** became popular in the 1990s using microchips instead of film to record the image. These devices formed the basis for the Smartphone and other devices that we use today.

Visual Literacy – How to Read a Photograph

General Questions

What is happening in this photograph?
Can you describe it a little bit more?
What makes you say that?

Formal Aspects and Composition

What do you think of the framing of the photograph? What decisions has the photographer made in terms of deciding what to leave in and out of the image?
Where do you think the photographer was standing? Are they looking up or looking down on the subject or at eye level?
What kind of artistic choices did the photographer make in terms of composition and lighting?
Describe the photograph in terms of: Colour, Shape and Line, Pattern and Texture, Light and Dark (Tone)
Movement (Is there a sense of anything moving in the photograph?)
Focus (What areas are sharp and clear and what areas are blurry?)
What is the main subject of the photograph?
Balance (Do you think all the elements work well together in the frame?)

Context and Meaning of the Photograph

Where was the photograph taken?
Why was the photograph taken?
How was the photograph taken? (What techniques did the photographer use?)
Does the caption or text with the photograph give you more information about it?
What is the mood of this photograph?
If there are people in the photograph are they expressing emotion?
How does the photograph make you feel?
Do you like the photograph? If you do, say why. If you don't, say why also.
Write down 10 details about the photograph.

Tip

Do you have any old cameras belonging to parents, grandparents or other family members? Or you could put a call out on the school social media pages to see if you can find any that way.

Research the maker's name and model number to find out how it works. Many old cameras will have manuals or instructions on how to use them online. You might need to buy a roll of film that can be sent away for development and printing or you could set up your own darkroom or photography club.



(Fig. 3)
Photo by Hello
I'm Nik on
Unsplash