

Photography Timeline Education Resource

Developed for The Gallery of Photography by Brian Cregan

Teacher's Notes

At the Gallery of Photography our goal is to establish the canon of Irish Photography and situate the development of photography in Ireland within broader technical, historical and artistic developments internationally. This interactive digital Timeline brings together for the first time a dazzling array of photos spanning more than 180 years. It features photographs across a broad spectrum of Irish life that give us an insight into the significant role that the medium has played in our lives. We can see the first selfie taken here and think about how it compares to the thousands of them taken on the island each day. We want students to explore the richness of Ireland's photographic heritage and discover amazing photos by the earliest pioneers right up to today's photographic artists. The gallery has an exhibitions archive that can be used also with the timeline to explore photographers' work in depth.

Who is this resource for?

This resource is aimed mostly for secondary school students but may also be suitable for pupils at the primary upper levels of 5th and 6th class. There are suggested timings provided as a general guide based on a 40 minute time period.

How to use this resource

You can begin with a general discussion about photography followed by visual analysis of some photographs on the Timeline. Students can create their own photographs inspired by this and also reflect and research other photographs and the stories behind them. Additional links and resources are included at the end for further research.

Curriculum Connections

Senior Cycle: Art, Sciences, English, History, Geography, SPHE, Design and Communication Graphics, Politics and society.

Junior Cycle: Visual Art, Science, English, History, Geography, SPHE.
It can also be incorporated into some of the JC Short Courses like Digital Media Literacy (DML) and filmmaking.

Class Discussion (5 Minutes)

It can be useful to begin a session with a general discussion around photography and the role it plays in young people's lives. Billions of photographs are shared and uploaded everyday. The timeline takes us back to the earliest photograph from the 1820s and the elaborate process involved in it's making. Something that is instant and taken for granted has a long history of technological and social development. Photography lives in the realm of both art and science and plays a central role in our lives today. It is used for many different purposes including social media, photojournalism, sport, entertainment, advertising and of course our social and family life. The timeline features many photographs found in family albums. For many of us now the family album is on the phone in our pocket!

Introductory questions (5 Minutes)

Give your students time to look at the images on the Timeline before you start discussing them. It can be helpful sometimes to print key photographs so they can observe them at their own pace over a set period of time. They could also be shared if using laptops or Ipads. Digital tools like Padlet, Google Jamboard can also be useful for class interactions. Ask students to discuss their own use of photographs and/or photos from their family albums and the stories behind them.

Who takes photographs ?

What do you like to photograph?

What kind of camera do you use?

Do you have any old cameras at home or have you seen them used online, on TV, film or in books? Describe them if you have.

Would anyone like to bring in their family photographs, albums or old cameras and discuss them with the class?

Reading Photographs from the Timeline and beyond

Exploring photographs and learning to interpret them is a great way for students to learn about techniques used by photographers to express their ideas and their intentions.

This in turn will inspire the students to learn valuable knowledge that will help them improve their own photography. Many different ideas can be explored and investigated relating to historic events, scientific discoveries and also themes like family life and portraiture. It can also be used across the curriculum or as the basis for project based work that might encompass local aspects of history and geography.

Tip

Bring in old photographs and negatives and share them with the class. Let them pass them around and examine them by holding them up to the light. Ask students to bring in their own and present them to the class also and share some of the stories behind them.

You could scan or make copies of these to keep the originals safe.

General Questions (5 Minutes)

What is happening in this photograph?

Can you describe it a little bit more?

What makes you say that?

Formal Aspects and Composition (5 Minutes)

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

Ask your students to think of themselves as detectives trying to find clues in the photograph. Journalists use a technique called the 5Ws and H. These are Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? When looking at photographs we can use this easy to remember technique to help us decode images. Students may interpret photographs in different ways

Ask them to pay close attention to the caption of the photograph and the associated text as this will reveal more details. As students learn to read and appreciate photographs it will have a positive impact on their own picture making.

Where was the photograph taken?

Why was the photograph taken?

How was the photograph taken? (What techniques and choices were made by the photographer?)

Does the caption or text with the photograph give you more information about it?

What is the mood of this photograph?

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.

The Family Portrait

(one or two 40 minute classes)



Quinn family, Waterford celebrating the Eucharistic Congress, 1932.



Luke Gerald Dillon, 4th Baron Clonbrock (1834–1917), and his family in front of the 'Photo House' in Clonbrock, County Galway, Ireland.

Overview

We are used to taking selfies with our Smartphones but what happens when we look on the Timeline at portraits taken by photographers. What can we learn about the identity and appearance of people in the photograph and about the time they are living in? Compare the two family photographs of the Quinn and Clonbrock families from 1870 and 1932 using the guide questions above. Consider also the additional questions below.

Questions for Further Discussion

What are there similarities between the images?

What are the differences?

Make a list of all the differences and similarities.

What do they tell us about those periods of time?

Discuss what kinds of clothes people wore?

How is everyone posed in the photographs?

Do you think the photographs were taken for a special occasion or celebration?

Do you remember anyone taking family portraits? Were they snapshots or in a photography studio?

Do you remember the first photograph you took?

Follow Up

Compare the photographs to Young family, Dublin, July 1985, by Steve Pyke at 1985 on the Timeline. Talk to your local librarian about viewing historical photographs of people in your area. Local history groups and community archives and museums are also a good place to do some research.

Bring in your own family albums or photographs and use a scanner or device to make digital copies. Make a digital story with images, music, and text with the photographs. You can also make your own album of some of the photographs with art room materials.

Write a short report about it and the stories behind your favourite images and present it to the class. You can use the Photo Album of the Irish project by the Gallery of Photography for inspiration

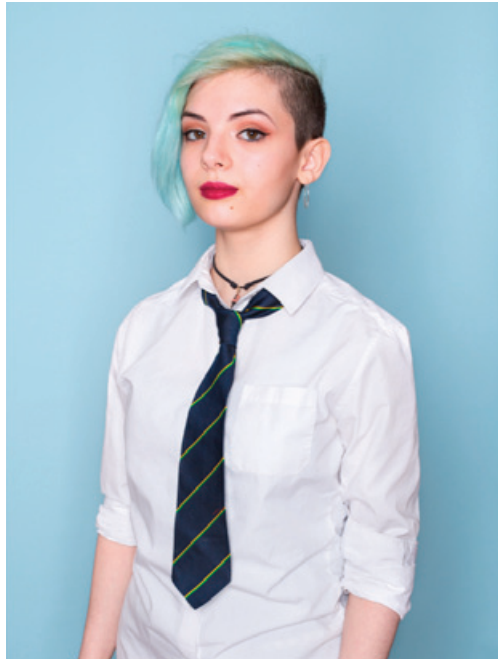
<https://www.photoalbumoftheirish.com/>

Activity

Work in small groups and discuss your experience of photography growing up. See if you can match up the year of your birth with images on the timeline. Find out what historical events and photos were taken that year. The World Press photo archive is a useful resource for this: <https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo-contest> . Look back along the Timeline 50 years from the year of your birth and 100 years from the year of your birth. Describe some of the changes in family life and wider society that have taken place. Write a report on the project and present it to the class.

The Portrait

(one or two 40 minute classes)



Overview

Compare the two portraits on the Timeline of Diane by Mandy O'Neill (2018) and Michael Pakenham Edgeworth (1843) using the guide questions above. Consider also the additional questions below.

Questions for Further Discussion

Are there similarities between the images?

What are the differences?

Make a list of all the differences and similarities.

What do the photographs tell us about those about the time they were taken in?

Discuss the way the two subjects are dressed?

How is everyone posed in the photographs?

Do you think the photographs were taken for a special occasion or celebration?

What kind of lighting techniques did the photographer use?

Follow Up

Look at other portraits on the Timeline and compare them to these two. Pick out your favourites and discuss them. Are there any self portraits featured on the Timeline? What are the differences between these and the selfies we take on our smartphones? How does the evolution of camera technology affect this?

Activity

Work in pairs to create portraits of each other. Brainstorm ideas using notes, sketches, mind maps etc. Try using different lighting techniques, backgrounds and props. Style your portrait in terms of clothes, hair and makeup if you wish. Present your photograph or series to the class outlining the ideas involved and discuss the techniques that you used including: framing, composition, vantage point and lighting.

Resources and Links

Gallery of Photography

<https://www.galleryofphotography.ie/>

Photo Album of the Irish

<https://www.photoalbumoftheirish.com/>

National Library Photography Collections

<https://www.nli.ie/digital-photographs.aspx>

National Library Photography Collections Flickr Stream

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/nlireland/>

National Folklore Collection

<https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbeg>

National Gallery of Ireland

<https://www.nationalgallery.ie/explore-and-learn/schools>

The Library Project

<https://www.thelibraryproject.ie/>

Belfast Exposed

<https://www.belfastexposed.org>

Source Magazine

<https://www.source.ie/index.php>

Life Magazine

<https://www.life.com/photographer/>

Photo Pedagogy

<https://www.photopedagogy.com/>

World Press Photo

<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection>

Practical Activities

How to Make a Camera Obscura and Darkroom

<https://briancreganphotography.com/How-to-make-a-Pinhole-Camera-or-Camera-Obscura>

John Gunne Cameras sell film, develop and scan it.

They also sell some second hand film cameras and reusable film cameras.

<https://www.johngunn.ie/>