

# Student-Centered Reading of Lewis Hine's Photographs

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ENGAGING IN STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING with primary sources has become a priority in the teaching of history in classrooms throughout the educational spectrum. Engaging children and young adults with photographic images can capture their attention and imagination. Approaching photographic evidence in the history classroom through a contextualized and systematic method of analysis is one way of involving students actively in their own education while at the same time introducing them to using alternative sources in their research and writing. While each photographer must be approached as an individual author, analyzing the work of Lewis Hine can introduce both teachers and students to utilizing photographs as sources of primary historical information.

Photographers are notoriously inarticulate when it comes to writing about their images. One reason for this lack of verbiage is an oft-held belief that the picture tells the story, so words are unnecessary; thus Lewis Hine's famous dictum, "If I could tell this story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera." However, the advent of postmodernist deconstruction rightly proved the photograph unreliable as a source of unmediated historical fact. Many in the historical profession have not pursued photographic interpretation for fear of reading the narrative incorrectly. Thus, too many books and papers use photographs only illustratively; for example, a source about tenements might include a photograph made in a tenement without connecting that specific image to any specific context. With some careful research, teachers and students need not fear approaching the image as

a primary source of what is depicted within its borders. Furthermore, the scholar can incorporate the ideas of the artist into a narrative using a combination of careful methodology and basic research. And, this method can be taught.

Integrating photographs into any level of curriculum yields many benefits, not the least of which is encouraging visualization of expressed ideas. In lower grades, photographs are often useful for stimulating creative thinking or, at very early ages, to accompany storytelling.<sup>1</sup> Upper-grade students and undergraduates should be introduced to the still image as a text from which meaning can be derived. Mining a Lewis Hine image for evidence of material culture could accompany a social studies lesson plan regarding social or cultural history of the early twentieth century. More complex is reading a social documentary photograph in its intellectual, experiential, and political context and searching for its expressed meaning, which requires a background in the relevant history and the sufficiently advanced mental development to understand an explanation of the basic technology involved in the creation of a photograph. Although the scholarship of all historians, whether nascent or accomplished, could benefit from employing the techniques discussed herein, this particular methodology is aimed at the advanced high school student or history undergraduate. Especially given the well-established, long-term benefits of introducing primary resources at the very beginning of an undergraduate's career,<sup>2</sup> this methodology can be used to enhance a teacher's understanding of how to read a Hine image so as not to use photographs merely as illustrations in a text, but to use the image as a primary source. Herein, students and educators can find basic information necessary to interpreting Lewis Hine's images as well as a methodology that can be disconnected from Hine's work and applied to any social documentary photograph. This article is as much pedagogical in nature as it is intended for professional development.

### **Activism and Photography of Lewis Hine**

Lewis Wickes Hine (1874-1940), the father of social documentary photography, was an intellectual activist for social justice. As a public intellectual, he can be understood as a product of his thinking environment. The battles he picked were some of the core causes of the Progressive movement: expanding education; combating nativism; treating urban poverty; creating decent working conditions; abolishing child labor; encouraging equality in work; finding the moral equivalent of war; and, fundamental to all, celebrating the dignity of work itself. Although Hine participated integrally in many of the social movements of his time, the circumstances unique to his life shaped his place in them. Hine emerged

from study with John Dewey at the University of Chicago prepared to enter the teaching profession. Frank Manny convinced Hine to take a position at New York's experimental Ethical Culture School (ECS) in 1901. Hine taught at ECS until 1908, after which he began photographing full-time for the Progressive weekly, *Charities and Commons*. Soon thereafter, Hine became a photographer for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), which was under the direction of Owen Lovejoy. The period of Hine's greatest notoriety, impact, and professional success came when he became the director of photography for the NCLC.<sup>3</sup>

Hine is most well known for his portraits of children laboring in the places of adults and for his pictures of the builders of the Empire State Building. Hine moved from "social" to "interpretive" photography (his terms) when the collapse of Progressivism in the 1920s forced him to restyle his political agitation to fit ruling ideas about labor. Although his photographic style noticeably changed after he returned from photographing World War I refugees for the Red Cross in Europe, his fundamental subject never really did. Before 1920, Hine photographed mostly children and other victims of industrial excess, even going so far as to call the product of such exploitive systems "human junk," but after 1920, Hine shifted to making "work portraits" of adults. His fundamental subject, however, never changed. Hine defended the dignity of work, first by criticizing those who would debase it and then by celebrating those who performed it.

Social documentary photography was conceived in the crucible of industrialization and immigration in the first decade of the twentieth century. Lewis Hine, at the urging of his ECS mentor Frank Manny, voyaged to Ellis Island to have a look around. According to Hine, "Manny conceived [the] idea of visualizing school activities in a camera."<sup>4</sup> As an intelligent person who had a natural gift for observation, lived in New York, and worked at a school with a predominantly Jewish student body, Hine did not fail to notice the enormous social changes wrought by Ellis Island immigration. He headed to the hub with his camera, bringing Manny as an assistant. There, he recorded what he witnessed—one of the greatest voluntary migrations in human history.

The National Child Labor Committee coalesced in 1904, the year Hine made the shift to "sociological photography" (his term), and became interested in recruiting Hine for the organization. Around the same time, Hine met Paul and Arthur Kellogg, publishers of *Charities and the Commons*, what would become *Survey Graphic* in a later incarnation. Paul Kellogg had just secured funding for his Pittsburgh Survey project, arguably the first social science investigation of living conditions in a large industrial center, from the newly formed Russell Sage Foundation.

The Kelloggs hired Hine to make photographs in Pittsburgh (and Joseph Stella to make drawings) in 1909. Hine was present on the leading edge of the social science revolution. Therefore, the scholar is drawn to Hine's Ellis Island portraits and photographs for the National Child Labor Committee and Pittsburgh Survey to see how American reformers went about using visual education as a tool both for social science data collection and political agitation to help improve the status of recent immigrants and expose the hazards of unregulated working conditions. The social documentary photograph was born in the work of Lewis Hine.

Conversely, many turn to Jacob Riis, not Hine, as the stylistic and intellectual father of social documentary photography. However, Riis was wedded to the idea of Social Darwinism and, in essence and because of that doctrine, blamed the poor for their poverty.<sup>5</sup> Like Hine, Riis photographed to accomplish a specific political goal—tenement reform—but his motivation was more akin to Protestant outrage and journalistic exploitation, informed by environmental explanations for continued poverty. The tenement did not provide an environment from which people would be well suited to compete in the great social struggle. Hine, however, viewed his subjects not as victims of an inexorable struggle for the limited resource of wealth, but rather as individual and dignified human beings caught in a social system that de-emphasized the dignity of work and individual worth outside of wealth. Rather than photographing the places where vice was spread and the people to whom it spread, Hine photographed people who retained spirited hope despite the conditions surrounding them.<sup>6</sup>

Hine, through his images and based in his presence at the birth of social science, sought to enter into visual conversations with his subjects. Rather than objectifying those he photographed, as Riis did, Hine found common ground and expressed as much with his considerable photographic skill. It was Hine's understanding of his output as the merger of social science and photography, each equally important, that distinguishes him as the first fully formed social documentary photographer and the author of "the human document."<sup>7</sup>

### **Teaching the Images**

Although this analysis focuses specifically on Lewis Hine, with research, the methodology can be used to incorporate any social documentary photograph into a lesson plan or, more importantly, student paper. Once students learn how to read and write about any image, they can then contextualize other images in their own work. Since Hine was a Progressive-era photographer, the suggestions that follow would be most



**Figure 1:** “Rhodes Mfg. Co. Spinner. A moments [sic] glimpse of the outer world. Said she was 11 years old. Been working over a year. Lincolnton, N.C., 11/11/1908.” National Archives Identifier 523106, <<http://research.archives.gov/description/523106>>.

useful in a history survey class or a course on the Progressive era. In a history survey course, students can compare photographs made at various points in the twentieth century. Also, the specific images discussed herein would enhance courses involving childhood, immigration, dissent, history of social science, intellectual history, and labor history. Since many institutions are emphasizing writing across the disciplines, Hine's images could also be incorporated into a writing seminar or workshop. In short, the methodology is suited for wide application in the teaching of American history in the upper grades of high school or at the undergraduate level.

The concept of photograph-as-text should be approached collectively in class with guidance from the teacher before sending students out to find photographs to use in their own work. Display an image without caption or accompanying text to encourage students to engage the photograph visually. Begin by limiting students to list what they actually see in the photograph. This is a good point to introduce the concept of material culture. Caution students to report only what they are seeing and ask them not to come to hasty conclusions. For example, asking for comments on the image in Figure 1 (which is an unusual Hine image) almost invariably results in students constructing a narrative of what the child saw while she

gazed out of the window. This provides an important teaching moment in analyzing photographs: students need to report what they see in a photograph, not jump to a conclusion about what they think they see.

Shepherd students into picking out the elements displayed in the picture. Start with basics such as light and shadow and then move onto objects: a loom, a little girl with pigtails in a dress holding a cloth, windows, pieces of cotton on a wooden floor. This can be done either informally by having students call out what they see as the teacher lists items on the board or more formally by assigning an in-class writing project. Ask them to describe the space and note the condition of the child's hair and clothes. Next, ask the students to make connections between the size of the loom and the child. Have them characterize the look on the child's face as objectively as they can. Finding the right word to describe an expression is an exercise in careful writing. Finally, have them ponder what is *not* in the image. There is no information that could lead to a narrative of what the child sees outside the window, and there are no other people currently at work on the loom. Also, a piece of the image is missing because the photograph's glass negative was broken—noting this will serve to remind students that they are examining a text rather than unmediated reality. Once these (and other elements) are recorded, reveal the caption and ask students to consider how that changes or reinforces what they perceived before. This is good preparation to remind students that photographs are factual yet limited; they are not unquestionable history, nor do they yield information beyond their borders. Once students have practiced identifying what they see, move into contextualizing images and interrogating them to find the messages intended by their makers. The primary question, in this case, is how and why did Lewis Hine make *this* image to accomplish *that* goal?

### **Interrogating the Images**

#### *Patron and Purpose*

Since the photographer is already identified as Lewis Hine, students should first determine the photographer's patron. Hine's career divides into five categories (although they do overlap one another temporally): Ellis Island, child labor, tenement labor and living conditions, work portraits/interpretive photography (Hine's terms), and the Great Depression. His patron differed in each. Hine, unlike many photographers of his generation, did not pursue photography as a hobby or avocation; photography became his paid profession in 1907 or 1908. Hine did photograph to satisfy his own curiosity—especially at Ellis Island—but his child labor photographs were made for the NCLC; he became the director of information for the

organization circa 1915 and was responsible for constructing exhibition panels to promote its reform agenda. If Hine's photography had not been useful to the NCLC, he would not have kept his job. Notes from annual meetings support this conclusion.<sup>8</sup> Informed by his Chicago-school background and prior deep concern for the welfare of children (remember, his first profession was as a schoolteacher at New York's Ethical Cultural School), Hine's work for the NCLC can give us some clues as to his political intent when composing his "Hineographs." He investigated conditions and reported what he saw, both in written notes and with his camera. Armed with a thesis—child labor harms children and my job is to expose it for the purpose of ending it—Hine traveled extensively on assignment to see the conditions in different types of work. He praised when he saw no exploitation, and he documented where it was rife.

### *Photographer Location*

A second avenue of interrogation deals with physical perspective. For instance, where was the photographer when the image was taken? Often, Hine could not obtain permission to photograph inside factories, so many of his child labor images are of a group of variously aged individuals standing in front of a mill building. When he did get inside, one needs to ask how and why. As Hine became better known, and the NCLC more effective in publicizing the evils of child labor, he often employed subterfuge to gain access (see discussion regarding Figure 3 below). For example, he would claim to be an insurance or postcard photographer and would ask to photograph a machine with its operator (a child) in the frame—supposedly to gauge the size of the machine—in order to capture children at work and to disprove the oft-repeated excuse that children were "just visiting" their parents. In many settings, photographers must gain access; some are pushy, officious, sly, or friendly. Understanding how a photographer approached the people he or she ultimately placed in a composition will help the student comprehend the relationship pictured in the image.

As an example of how this analysis is applicable to other images containing reportage, consider images made by Robert Capa between D-Day (June 6, 1944) and the last days of the Nazi occupation of Paris (September 1944). Form and substance—observation and participation—merge when one considers where the photographer was standing. Perspective is what creates a photograph, pointing a data-recording device at a specific point in space and time. Capa's physical position is integral to understanding both the photographer and image (as was Hine's when considering his Empire State Building photographs in 1930-1931).

Informed by captions of a cluster of photographs made in Paris on August 25, 1944, Capa recorded a sniper attack on a small group of French

**Application:** This is a general methodology that can be used in any course where photographic evidence is available. This particular analysis would be most useful in any course that covers the period 1900 to 1918 in the U.S. This could of course be the general U.S. survey and could include courses on Progressivism, childhood studies, reform and reformers, or social history of art.

**In-class Writing and Homework:** Ask students to write a list of the items in the photograph. Describe what they can see. Have them go through their list and identify and cross out any adjectives or adverbs. At this stage, they want a list of nouns. They should also cross out anything not visually verifiable (i.e., anything that is not actually in the picture).

**A Word Vault:** The notes students keep provide a word vault for writing about an image. Once students have a list of nouns, ask them to add to their word vault by writing down adjectives describing what they are seeing. When relying on only one sense (sight), the perfect adjective can be quite elusive.

**Homework:** Ask the students to conduct some secondary research and compile a short biography of the photographer. Emphasize the importance of determining the photographer's date and the photographer's patron. This information should be collected for any photographer before attempting analysis. Doing so introduces and reinforces basic research skills.

**Homework:** Ask the students to research what kind of camera the photographer used. Make sure they again contextualize the equipment in the time period. Did the photographer use a small or large camera? Did he or she use flash? These details are readily available from websites such as the International Center of Photography ([www.icp.org](http://www.icp.org)), the George Eastman House ([www.eastmanhouse.org](http://www.eastmanhouse.org)), or whichever repository holds the artist's work.

Resistance fighters and members of the French army. In one image, a soldier stares into the camera while his *Maquis* comrades take cover and fire their weapons over their left shoulders. Why is the soldier looking at the photographer rather than in the direction of the attack? Ultimately leading to his death in Indochina in 1952, Capa's motto—"If your picture isn't good enough, you're not close enough"—is an explanation for the soldier's distraction; from this and many other images, it appears that Capa did not seek cover when the gunfire erupted. Rather, his first instinct was to record the reactions of others, despite the threat to his own life. Where Robert Capa was standing is very much an indication of the photographer's intentions in making the image and is one of the reasons for the power of his pictures. In this and other Capa pictures, the photographer is very

**Brainstorming:** Have students look at the image carefully and try to decide if there is something missing, like wedding rings or a parent (as is the case in Hine's child labor photographs). Posit the idea that what is *not* in the picture can be as revealing as what is present.

**Analysis:** Students begin by becoming accustomed to looking and seeing rather than jumping to the point of interpretation. Once they can separate what is actually in the image from what they think the image means or might be happening outside the frame, it is time to start asking questions of the image, to find out *why*. Armed with context and awareness of appropriate technical parameters, students can begin building their own primary interpretations.

**Teaching Moment:** Remind students that photographs are two-dimensional representations of a past event. They're incredibly detailed, so they look "real." Photographs cannot depict emotions, only symbols and signs that we associate with emotions. A grimace might be read as a smile. Close and careful examination, even with a magnifying glass, is essential.

**Technical Note:** The physics of photography require balance; if light is abundant, the photographer must use a quick shutter and a small aperture to expose the image accurately. That Hine used a wide aperture meant that he must have used a very quick shutter to allow in as little light as possible. The basic technique is easily learned. Teaching the basics carries a reminder that the physical sciences are part of the liberal arts.

**Vocabulary:** Photography and photographic criticism have specialized vocabularies. "Normalizing" is one such word. Even at the high school level, teachers can prepare students for life-long learning by encouraging them to expand their vocabularies with specialized terms.

much in harm's way. In the D-Day photo, Capa's back is to the Germans; how else to capture the face of an invading soldier?

Hine photographed both children and adults in a full-frontal position, as subjects in a conversation rather than as objects placed in a tableau. His large camera allowed him to photograph at child height, but he did so even when the child, like Laura Petty in Figure 2, was so extremely small that he had to kneel to focus at eye level. He wanted the viewer to see the children as he did; as individual human beings with sweet, developing personalities in need of protection and not as propaganda objects. It is at this juncture that Hine's ability to infuse his images with his own ideas about society becomes important for the student of history. Identifying Hine's general view of immigration as positive rather than threatening is

important to understanding his Ellis Island and child labor images (as much as it is necessary to know that Capa was anti-fascist during his time in Spain and after—there is no feigned journalistic objectivity here). Hine's political perspective was important throughout his career, and indeed for all his photographs.<sup>9</sup> He became famous because his pictures were forceful tools in a political fight, rather than supposedly candid street or occupational photography. They were so useful because they revealed the humanity of the individuals he photographed.

### *Lighting Conditions*

Physical perspective also involves determining the lighting conditions of the scene photographed. Harold Edgerton invented the strobe flash in 1931. Prior to that date, stop-action (non-blurred) photography required strong natural light, a very long exposure (on a tripod), or artificial light. Hine's forays into the hallways of Ellis Island forced him to become an expert at a very tricky (and attention-getting) lighting technique: the use of magnesium flares. Candid photography was usually not possible inside dim factories or mines (Figure 1 is a rare exception). To consider a photograph's lighting conditions, examine the shadows. If the shadows are harsh and clearly defined and there is no obvious source of bright sunlight, the photographer used artificial light. Since Hine's images are carefully dated (as are most social documentary images; the point was to gather data), the researcher can extrapolate what types of lighting were available. Stop-action is another clue. If people in the images are frozen in mid-movement with wide eyes (or eyes partially shut) when the ambient light is weak, the photographer used a flash, a powerful burst of intense light. Before 1931, that meant substantial preparation either in total darkness (a method used by Jacob Riis and his assistants) or while being watched by those photographed.

### *Inclusions and Exclusions*

Next, and perhaps requiring the most attention and knowledge of the period, is to ask exactly what is in the image, and what has been left out. Except in his exhibition panels, Hine usually printed his images full-frame. He photographed until the Great Depression on glass plates, which were tricky and cumbersome to use. Hine had one shot to get it right. Even after he started using celluloid film, his negatives were still large, single-sheet, and carefully crafted. Again, Hine's images were rarely candid; most of them were posed. Because Hine designed his shots, we may assume that everything in a Hineograph is there because Hine wanted it—and, conversely, everything missing is absent because Hine left it out. One can, and should, draw conclusions about Hine's intent from the inclusion or

exclusion of an adult, a piece of machinery, or a living/working space in a particular image. Noting that his subjects often posed for these images does not call into question his integrity; rather, such knowledge confers certainty that Hine was deliberate about what he included in the frame. Hine's personal ethic emphasized honesty in photography; an honest photograph would accomplish more good for the NCLC's cause, and a carefully composed image could convey a specific message.

Although Hine's pictures of working children depicted a serious situation, the children photographed appear stoical, some even happy. Does this indicate that something has been omitted? The most likely answer goes back to the question of patron and purpose.<sup>10</sup> If the children were already beyond help, then there would have been little incentive for philanthropists and/or Congress to step in to aid them. Hine depicted resilient boys and girls in conditions that, if went unchecked, would eventually destroy their chances for productive and fulfilling lives.

### *Captions and Titles*

Perhaps the thorniest issue in analyzing Hine images is the matter of captioning. Did Hine write a particular title, or did an editor? Since much of Hine's work was done for one or another reform organization, he did not control the reproduction of his images. Yet he did claim his images constituted what we today would call intellectual property, long before photographers routinely received credit in bylines. Most of Hine's extant writings can be found in two archival areas: correspondence and notes on photographs, including original captions. In recent years, the repositories that house Hine images have done an excellent job of uploading Hine's original notes on his images, often written in his hand on the back or in a corresponding list. Most of Hine's published images—except those in *Men at Work*, his only book—carry the caption of an editor, usually from *The Survey*, or art historian and publicist Elizabeth McCausland, who assisted Hine in preparing his 1938 retrospective for the Brooklyn Museum (then the Riverside Museum). A little research can tell you which captions were from Hine's own notes. Armed with the correct caption, the photograph can yield more information about the subject and Hine's original intent in making the image.<sup>11</sup>

## **Reading Laura Petty**

### *Patron and Purpose*

Begin your analysis by viewing Hine's photograph of Laura Petty in Figure 2. Take the image in context with what your knowledge of Progressive Era reform tells you about Hine, and then turn to the image



**Figure 2:** “Laura Petty, a 6 year old berry picker on Jenkins Farm. ‘I’m just beginnin’. Licked two boxes yesterday.’ Gets 2 [cents] a box. Rock Creek, Md., 06/07/1909.” National Archives Identifier 523206, <<http://research.archives.gov/description/523206>>.

itself. Try to come to the image without too many preconceived notions, as an undergraduate might. Although one’s historical and political background will color how the image is first received, try to put aside personal biases. An excellent starting point is to ask, “What is the first thing that attracts the eye in Hine’s photograph of Laura Petty?” That “there is something wrong with this picture” is really a secondary conclusion. The teacher can help students infer much about Hine’s political allegiances and his personal sense of duty from this picture without researching thousands of child labor images. As with many of the images Hine made for the NCLC, his patron for this project, its political message is a matter of context. Hine cherished children, and he opposed in general the debasement of work as a cultural value and the perversion of the ethic of work through the misuse of those who performed it. When first approached, many jump to what is actually an implied conclusion—that there is something drastically wrong in the world where a child labors. But, is that truly a forgone conclusion? We only know the image depicts a social wrong because Hine has told us it does. If that child had been out picking berries on a family picnic, we would read the image in an entirely different way.

The first thing this viewer registers is Laura's smile and body language. Vicki Goldberg wrote in the introduction to her *Lewis Hine: Children at Work* (1999) of Laura's smile and stance, "A six-year-old berry picker flirts outrageously with the man who will immortalize her." Contrasting Laura's natural childlike pose to her stained dress and bare feet creates a sense of dislocation, made even more uncomfortable by her carefully tied but wilted bow. This is a happy picture transformed through context into an indictment, the immediate context being that Hine made the image in the employ of the NCLC. The viewer knows this is an image of a child at work rather than at play. Hine's presence stole moments away from a child's labor, and he was usually repaid with a demure smile, a stoical look, or even a mask of fierce pride. It is by connecting with these children in this manner that Hine's work can and should be read as artistic and intentional social documentary and not photojournalism or candid photography.

The process of employing migrants from East Coast cities (Baltimore in Laura's case) to pick at harvest time was fairly well ingrained in the collective mind of a then still-agricultural nation; many saw nothing wrong with seasonal farm work. The on-again, off-again nature of agricultural labor combined with the enduring myth of the beneficence of farm work for children meant Hine's agricultural labor pictures were less effective than those he made of children in mines and factories. With this picture and others like it, Hine was undertaking a Sisyphean task. Nonetheless, this has become an important child labor image. When we accept it as that, we also accept Hine's argument for the necessity for national regulation of hours and universal education for all children, be they farm, industrial, or mine workers. The conditions of tiny miners and spinners that Hine documented had greater impact on the Progressive mind, but the same arguments against child labor can be read into Laura Petty's situation.

### *Photographer Location*

Having addressed patron and purpose, continue the analysis with photographer location. Where is the photographer standing? In this case, he was not standing. Hine (then in his early forties) knelt on the ground with his cumbersome camera to photograph this diminutive berry picker. Hine's career-long stylistic and intellectual choice to engage those he photographed physically and culturally on their own level is evident. Quite literally, Hine did not look down on people, especially children. His philosophical perspective led to a visual choice: he was on his knees and eye-to-eye, even with the littlest.

Hine needed time to arrange himself on the ground to make the image. As an exercise, procure a box roughly the same size and weight as Hine's camera. Ask students to kneel with the box while keeping in mind that

the instrument is fragile. Knowing that the NCLC photographer was not usually welcomed by many who owned or managed the land where he stood, the fact that Hine had time to set up and engage Laura indicates that this particular employer either had no qualms about Hine making pictures, believed a piece of subterfuge that Hine had offered to gain access, or was simply absent. In contrast to his photography at factories, Hine did not have to gain entry to a building under the gaze of a supervisor to take a picture of berry pickers.

### *Lighting Conditions*

The next step is to analyze the lighting. Hine made this image in the very strong natural light of the Maryland late summer (when raspberries ripen) and thus would have had enough light to shoot the image with both a stop-action shutter speed (faster than 1/60<sup>th</sup> of a second) and a narrow aperture (f16 or smaller) to capture as much depth of field as possible. Hine, who was an excellent technician, accomplished the narrow depth of field by using a wide-open aperture and a very fast shutter speed. Using his knowledge of his craft, Hine framed Laura and the bushes around her as the dominant elements of the image and thereby drew the eye of the viewer to the child and her immediate surroundings. Hine intended both composition and execution; he had only one glass frame to expose. The background recedes immediately and indistinguishably into blurred focus, isolating Laura in the forefront of the image.

### *Inclusions and Exclusions*

Remind students that in addition to exploring what is included in the picture, they should also be concerned with what is excluded. Laura is clearly central to the photograph, but neither Laura's parents nor coworkers are in the image, giving a more intimate feel to the interaction with the photographer. Yet there is a small, uncomfortable sense of abandonment. Laura is alone in the berry fields; the ghosts of other pickers are barely visible on the horizon.

Turn to the incongruities in the image. Laura's overall bearing stands in stark contrast to the conditions in which your students will find her. The magical innocence of childhood has not been extinguished. To Hine's audience, Laura would still have the opportunity to have a healthy childhood and productive adulthood, if only those with power to do so acted to end her exploitation. She is outrageous as only those untainted by the crushing realities of poverty can be. Laura, however, is very visibly stained—perhaps tainted—by her life as an underpaid, exploited child laborer. She appears unscarred in this image, but Hine offers very tangible evidence of how her optimism conflicts with her circumstances, and he

relied on viewers to see what he wanted them to. Laura's carefully tied ribbon and combed hair wilts in the heat of exertion. We surmise that she works in her pretty dress because it is likely the only item of clothing she owns, despite the fact that a parent who dressed her would have known the condition it would be in after days of picking raspberries.

Perhaps the most shocking mismatch between the child and surrounding working conditions is one that Hine did not overtly emphasize (as he sometimes did in other child labor images). Laura stands barefoot amongst the bushes. Laura's long sleeves and carefully buttoned cuffs would have protected her arms, but her legs and feet are exposed. Hine probably assumed that his audience would have been well aware of the barbs and thorns that make raspberry picking so treacherous. Yet little Laura does it in bare legs and feet.

It is important to identify students' cultural experiences and background knowledge. I taught this image and method to students in the desert Middle East. Because of their unique cultural background, it was necessary to explain the nature of a raspberry bush and why picking raspberries was a mixture of pain and pleasure. Hine's American, mostly East Coast audience would have experienced raspberry thorns, so he could rely on his audience understanding the depicted experience. Conversely, raspberries are a favorite of my students in Kyrgyzstan, most of whom have a close relationship to the natural world. They had difficulty in finding fault with a child picking raspberries because most of them have done the same as children, helping their parents and older siblings. In a moment of spontaneous debate, students argued about Laura's attire, finally reaching the conclusion that the stain on her dress was to be expected, that her arms were well protected, but that shoes—or at least home-woven socks—would have afforded her more protection. Thorny interactions with rural life are normalized in Kyrgyzstan. The challenge was conveying the relevance of the small amount of money she made (as children, in Kyrgyzstan's Soviet times, most food items were almost free) and the intense humidity of a Maryland summer.

### *Captions and Titles*

Finally, in the caption, Hine reinforced for the viewer the substance of the ideas communicated in the image. He drew no conclusion, but rather simply stated facts he had gathered (which is so much different from how editors treated his images). He relied on the visual evidence, carefully composed and presented, to communicate what was to him the obvious evil of child labor. As the first social documentarian, Hine recorded what he saw and simultaneously testified to its veracity. His captions are largely a presentation of facts gathered near the time when he made the image.

Hine again indicated his concern for the human being he photographed, adding yet more poignancy to the composition by quoting little Laura in the caption (rather than making an editorial comment). Laura enthusiastically reports her productivity. Like many children, her aspiration was to be grown-up, if only so she could work harder and contribute more to her family's income, a sweet sentiment that evokes a sense of the tragic. Hine crafted a fine argument by allowing the child to speak, thus emphasizing this selfless innocence. In the face of Social Darwinist apathy (or enmity), Hine sought to entice viewers into a feeling of parental protection.

Again, he faced a tough crowd; the wealthy industrialist, so fond of apocryphal rags-to-riches stories, would probably have patted Laura on the head, praised her industry, and sent her back into the fields to keep trying. In the absence of federal regulation, states ruled independently on child labor and rarely enforced their own statutes. The dominant argument condemned any interference with industry as an interference with "natural" right to accumulate wealth. Nonetheless, Hine succeeded in changing minds with his photographs of children in new industrial situations (like the textile mills) and in presenting visual evidence of the damage inflicted on America's youth by mining, the energy source of the second industrial revolution. Farm labor is still mostly unregulated, one hundred years on. Students today would probably agree that child farm labor (no matter how strenuous) is not an inherent social evil.

### *Further Activities*

Having indicated how to read a photograph and determine what is social documentary, the students then consider images that have more relevance for the specific social situation they wish to investigate. Industrial conditions in the early twentieth-century U.S. are startlingly familiar. That Hine's photographs of the street trades, tenement homework, mills, and mines are easily compared with current conditions is a sober reminder of the gulf between Europe-America and the developing world. That such conditions continue around the world makes this analysis relevant to other disciplines, such as foreign affairs, human rights, and all social disciplines and contemporary media studies. Furthermore, these themes are teachable around the globe, thus reinforcing the exportability of American history as a discipline.

### **Illustrating "White Lung" and "Human Junk"**

Textile mills sprouted from the industrial revolution. Following the Civil War, textile manufacturing moved south to take advantage of proximity to cotton production and the increasingly concentrated populations in

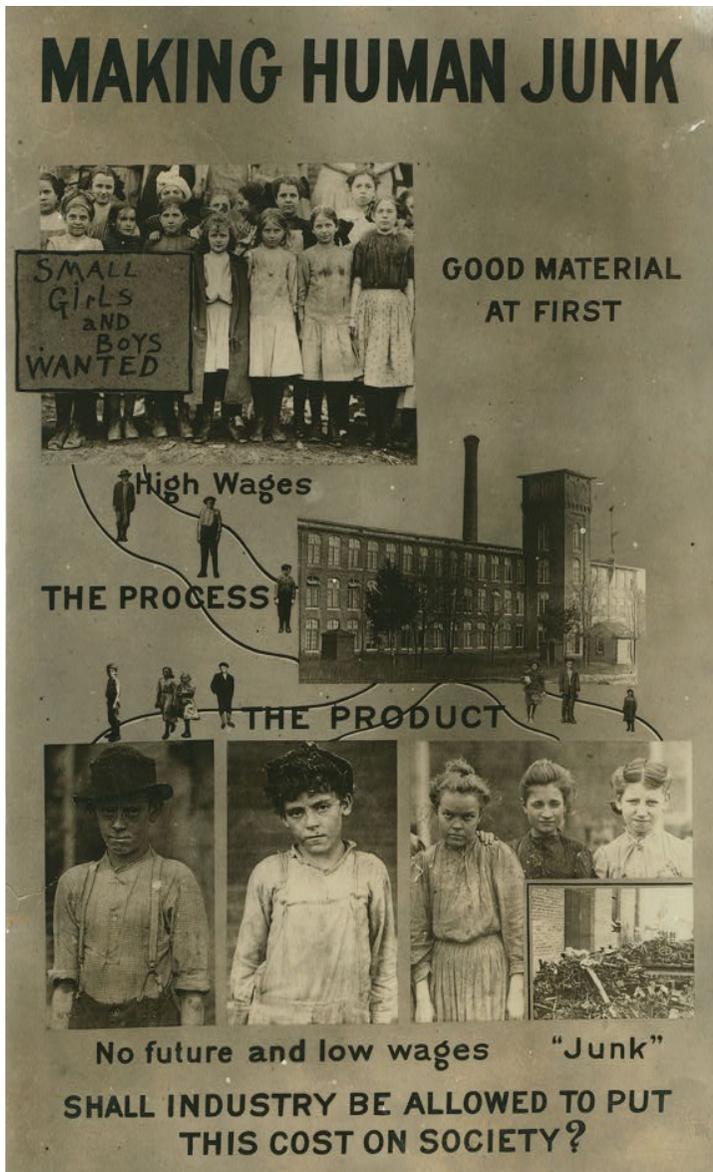
Southern towns following creeping enclosures.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the demographic that staffed the Southern textile mills consisted, in overwhelming numbers, of poor whites drawn from Piedmont farms. Impoverished conditions in the uplands tended to expose the truth behind the myth of self-sufficiency farming—that it was more productive of debt servitude than republican virtue. White sharecroppers and their families left the fields in droves to labor in the new Southern textile industry. And, as before, everyone in the family worked. Notwithstanding developments prior to the Civil War (and indeed the central place of cotton in that conflict), textile millwork took on the same character as other industrial labor in the post-bellum era. Rather than resembling guild-dominated craftwork, textile mills involved both large-scale manufacture (in New England and then in the South) and take-home piece work (in city tenements stuffed with immigrants); as a cog, the textile worker's life became one of unskilled or semi-skilled drudgery. The work was repetitive, often rapid, always poorly paid. Working conditions, while less obviously dangerous than in the mines, posed their own hazards. One unseen danger came from the minute fibers the workers inhaled. Like coal dust, these fibers do not break down. Instead, they accumulate until they coat the lungs and lead to “white lung” disease, a fibrotic respiratory disorder similar to asbestosis. Most often, women and children bore the physical brunt of these poor conditions and low wages. Once the day of the Lowell Mill Girl passed—that is, once New England textile mill owners turned to Irish, French Canadian, and other immigrant sources of labor in the decades before the Civil War—women and children made up the bulk of the labor force in the industry. Thus, female and child textile labor became normalized; owners believed it was women's work, so textile work was reserved for women and “their” children.

Unlike with his pictures of young miners and street trades-children, Hine did not have to worry about destabilizing normalized conditions in the eyes of his viewers; newsies were everywhere underfoot. Instead, he went to the mills to gather evidence that children were working, often in contravention of state laws, and to document their widely varying working conditions in support of the NCLC's campaign for a national child labor law. NCLC pressure led to the Keating-Owen Child Labor Law, passed by Congress in 1916 and found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Hammer v. Dagenhart* (1918).<sup>13</sup> Even though Southerner Alexander McElway directed the NCLC's cotton mill campaign, his fellow white Southerners grew sensitive to the very public criticism of what the NCLC often presented as a “Southern” problem. Responding in a way similar to how their ancestors had answered the abolitionists' condemnations of slavery, Southern governors, legislators, and mayors alternated between excusing child labor as a family decision and defending it as a positive good

that would instill a sense of industry into poor white children. The author is not aware of any single Hine photograph of an African American mill child, which reflects in large part the rampant segregation characteristic of these non-unionized shops as implemented by bosses and legislators and the caste control aspect of peonage in African American sharecropping.

Georgia's one African American legislator said in 1906, "Our children are not employed in the cotton factories....I for one am in favor of doing something for the protection of the little white children of Georgia."<sup>14</sup> Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor and other labor unions reinforced the racial homogeneity of the mills when they chose to avoid alienating Southern lawmakers with demands they would never even consider. The unions realized that campaigns to eliminate segregation in the workplace would go nowhere, even though their calls for child labor reform in the mills applied only to white children, which made it less threatening.<sup>15</sup> But the entrenched poverty in the post-bellum South, combined with the disdain for "white trash" by gentlemen legislators slowed even the modest reforms introduced by labor—child labor proved an effective way to control their social inferiors.

In comparison, the NCLC campaign was fairly radical. As noted earlier, Hine's true ire rarely showed in public, but by just training his camera in his conversational, non-sentimental, and non-condescending way, he overcame the hesitancy of organized labor and the class bias of Southern legislators, transforming "white trash" children into fully human subjects. Although Hine also visited New England mills, the vast majority of his mill photographs are from Georgia and the Carolinas (including those whose owners resided in Massachusetts). Visually, textile mills seemed to lack the obvious danger and exploitation of coal mines and the closed quarters of tenement piece work; thus, textile mills represented a visual challenge to the activist reformer. Hine would not be able to rely on faces obscured with soot or whole families bent over a table in low light to get his message across. And, since the mills were not unionized, there were either no limits on the hours and ages of the workers or such regulations were simply ignored by the mill boss. No union meant no agitation, no vigilance. Families needed to send their children to work because of the low wages the parents and older siblings could earn, and the younger children sacrificed their childhoods by working twelve-hour days. Both boys and girls worked in the mills. Boys generally had jobs that required a lot of energy for short periods. Between doing their jobs, like sweeping the floor, changing spools (doffing), and cleaning clogged machines, they rested and waited to be called for work. Girls and women toiled at lighter industry, mostly spinning raw cotton into thread and loading it on spools, but their tasks were continuous and gave no intermediate respite from the



**Figure 3:** Exhibit Panel: "Making Human Junk," c. 1913-1914. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-nclc-04928, <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004002773/PP/>>. Hine also pioneered the use of political montage. He removed his images from their context and reassembled them to create an unavoidable narrative. From these exhibition panels, one can glean Hine's opinions on child labor. This creates intellectual context for the pictures with factual, non-editorialized captions.

work. They stood all day long, breathing white fibers that filled the air, performing the same, monotonous work, day in and day out. Hine often found adolescents whom he occasionally called “human junk” because their childhoods were stolen by the mills (Figure 3). As Dave McCarn sang in 1926:

No use to colic, everyday at noon,  
 The kids get to crying in a different tune.  
 I'm a-gonna starve, and everybody will,  
 'Cause you can't make a living at a cotton mill.<sup>16</sup>

Having migrated from an agricultural setting, these families put children to work in an industrial situation just as they would have back on the farm. Employers encouraged the practice because women and children were always paid less than men.

### Unravelling the Cotton Mill Spinners

Because of the publicity the NCLC campaign generated, Hine had difficulty getting into cotton mills. Yet in the case of Figure 4, Hine was inside the factory, facing his subject directly. With no other people in the picture, either the shift had finished or the other mill workers were on a break. As such, Hine did not interfere with the child's productivity. The very fact that he was able to photograph in such close proximity is a clue toward more information embedded in the existence of the image. Hine had to resort to subterfuge and invent devices to help him gather data to accompany his pictures. Generally, I discourage students from beginning their picture analysis with the caption, but in this case, Hine's language in his caption of the girl in Figure 4 stands out as a bit odd. Encourage students to focus on what is odd rather than dismissing it as anomalous. Why did Hine start with the fact that she was “51 inches high”? Such little details can yield interesting history, and in this case, can tell the viewer something about how Hine operated.<sup>17</sup>

The record does not reveal how Hine gained entrance to this particular mill while carrying a very large camera. One can deduce, however, that he did not identify himself as a representative of the NCLC by investigating Hine's caption—specifically, the notation “51 inches high.” Hine used a unique system to determine age through measuring height. He kept a piece of paper in his pocket on which to make notes. He stood next to the child he was photographing and noted which button on his jacket corresponded to the child's height. He had pre-measured his buttons so as to know how far each was from the floor. As he faced the girl, he counted buttons; thus, he could calculate the child's height. Fifty-one inches meant the girl was 4'3". Given the visual proof collected, it is obvious that the little worker



**Figure 4:** “One of the spinners in Whitnel Cotton Mill. She was 51 inches high. Has been in the mill one year. Sometimes works at night. Runs 4 sides - 48 [cents] a day. When asked how old she was, she hesitated, then said, ‘I don’t remember,’ then confidentially, ‘I’m not old enough to work, but do just the same.’ Out of 50 employees, ten children about her size. Whitnel, N.C., 12/22/1908.” National Archives Identifier 523145, <<http://research.archives.gov/description/523145>>.

was no adult. Had Hine been free to photograph at will, he would not have had to resort to ruses and code.

One must look at the date and location of each of the photographs in Figures 1 and 4 to be sure they are not pictures of the same child. Despite the similar settings, Figure 1’s spinner was in Lincolnton, North Carolina, while Figure 4’s spinner was in Whitnel, North Carolina. Hine’s photographs of mill children in the New South are often framed similarly, with a small child in front of a machine that, in effect, looms over the undersized subject of the photograph. Taken together, the uniformity of framing reflects monotony on the job. Stretching through planes of focus, the loom itself is the instrument of torture, and Hine placed it in the picture not only to gauge the height of the children he photographed, but also to represent the children in the context of their imprisonment. Yet, the machines are not the subjects; they are the context, the important background (both literally and figuratively) that the viewer needs to understand the message Hine sends.

Hine's message is more blunt in other mill child photographs, and because of his consistency, we can read these images keeping his overall mission in mind. Neither child in Figures 1 or 4 are at imminent risk of turning into so much "human junk." Hine made both images in natural light coming from behind where each girl stood, so we can conclude that they were made in the daytime. The girls' clothes are wilted, their hair is loose, and their hands are dirty. The children were not at the beginning of a shift, so Hine probably made the images during a lunch break.

Turning to Figure 4, while the pretty clothes seem very much out of place in a spinning mill, the child was a worker. Hine did not have to depict her actually at work on the spinning machine to invite the viewer to see something amiss here. Her hands are strong and her bearing is stolid. At 4'3" with a thick frame, she must have been on the edge of puberty. Although Hine's captions reveal that many children prevaricated when asked about their ages or work status—"She's just bringing my dinner," said one mother disingenuously—this little girl is a textile worker. Even though her frilly dress was most definitely a work hazard—clothes and body parts quite often got caught in the workings of a machine and injured the child—she and most female workers in Hine's child labor images wore their modest and feminine best. Mill families did not bend to the practicality of trousers and simple shirts for women until the Depression and World War II. Hair pulled away from the face was no doubt safer for the children, but there seems to have been an effort to secure the braid over her left shoulder. Taken with the thick coating of cotton lint on her right hand, perhaps spinners had to lean in toward the machine with their dominant hand. Nonetheless, her careful braid had begun to unravel. She had probably been working since before dawn (as Hine made the photograph in December with the sun fairly high in the sky so as to cast shadows at a slightly downward angle, left to right across his subject). If the dress had been pressed before she began work, hours of toil in a humid factory had taken its creases out.

The child's bearing is a bit disconcerting. Like almost all of Hine's portraits, she faces him directly, engaged with the photographer. Hine was small of stature, probably no taller than 5'5". Nonetheless, he would have had to be crouching to photograph the child eye-to-eye. There is no child occupational portrait here (or anywhere) in Hine's images. This picture is intimate because of proximity, yet there is a distance enforced by the subject through her phlegmatic expression. Gone is the outrageous flirting and carefree boasting, and the interaction instead appears obligatory. Although Hine photographed adult workers later, his "work portraits" have a disturbing precursor in this portrait of the little spinner. The child, this wee girl, who, by her own admission, was not old enough to work, *had been* working long enough to acquire the bearing of an experienced

spinner. Her sleeves pushed up, resting her hands in equipoise (so not leaning or otherwise seeking support), she could be a heroine of Hine's interwar years when he often photographed women at work in textile factories—but as a matter of celebration, not protest. To see a small child with such impassive stature is in and of itself a criticism.

Although her face is set in the mask of the determined, momentarily asked to move away from her work (or postpone her break), she still has bright and indeed intelligent eyes. Yet her lips are pursed and shoulders set in a way that easily can be read as a presentation of competence, not suffering. Different from the shy glances and childlike flirts that Hine often evoked, she evinces instead the work ethic that fueled the South's Progressive-era industrialism. She seems miles from the "white trash" accusations of the investors who would treat her and her family as disposable people, fit only to have their labor extricated for the least possible sum and then their futures discarded as so much industrial waste. The shame here, and Hine recorded it, lies in the fact that she would not reach *actual* working age with the same level of skill, confidence, and conspiratorial trust indicated by her premature working-class deportment. Such maturity and pride in one so young is more than evidence of regulatory need, it is a wholesale criticism of the philosophies of a civilization that would allow it.

Although the settings are similar, Lincolnton, North Carolina is larger than Whitnel, North Carolina and lies one county away. The girl in Figure 4, however similar in appearance to the girl in Figure 1, is in a completely different world. Whitnel's caption carries the information needed for the NCLC to compile statistics and to expose the mill owners for intentionally employing children too young to work under state regulations. Juxtaposed with Whitnel, Lincolnton's daughter stands as an exception in Hine's repertoire. She does not face the camera; there is no one near her to indicate that she had been recently working with others on the line; and with the exception of the soiled rag in her tiny hands and her proximity to the loom, she cannot be objectively observed to have been working. Hine tells us in his caption that she had been working, and for far too long—at age eleven for "over a year." Perhaps these atypicalities are the reason that this tiny spinner has not become one of the mass-produced Hine iconographs. Perhaps the depth of field is too shallow or the glass plate negative too broken. So far as technique is concerned, the image is not a great one. It seems likely, however, that Hine had wanted to make a stop-action picture; he had to use a fast shutter speed and a wide aperture—thus the shallow depth of field. Rather than a conversation, Hine photographed hastily and perhaps without his subject's knowledge.

What is so remarkable about Figure 1 is what it reveals about the photographer as well as the subject. The child is neither a political tool nor

an idealized image of childhood. She is fragile, and the political needs of the day demanded that Hine photograph children who were still capable of rescue. To have used her as a political tool seems wrong. Although this child appears that she is still very much a little girl and not a tiny grown-up worker, the picture could have been overwrought in anyone else's hands, emotionally manipulative, and easily dismissed as over-sentimental. But Hine did not photograph her that way. His technique was atypically bad, which indicates that the image is more candid than posed. He did not have in his tool kit fast film and a super high shutter speed (the most expensive Nikon digital cameras can record an image in 1/20,000 of a second). She caught a glimpse of something, and Hine photographed her displaying an unguarded, purely childlike expression of wonder. In a sense, Hine caught a hint of the child within. She saw the outer world; Hine saw the inner. It is a magnificent moment, comparable to the best of later geniuses such as Henri Cartier-Bresson and Alfred Eisenstadt, who roamed pre- and post-World War II Europe with their 35mm Leicas and abundant Kodak film speed. Hine accomplished this on a glass plate, on a winter's afternoon, inside a dreary cotton mill, seventeen years before Oscar Barnack at Leica invented the 35mm camera. Extraordinary.

Again, when showing Figure 1 to students, they invariably try to construct a narrative of what was happening outside the window, to fill in the gaping visual blank. They also want to read an emotion on her face, one that reflects what they feel when they look at the picture. Neither is objectively defined and cannot be confidently assumed. She sought a subject all her own. The scholar is concerned with Hine's subject—childhood threatened—and how he intended to represent that subject to inspire social and political change. The delicate, shy curiosity of children that would have been so familiar to middle-class parents was being wasted in favor of a few more dollars in the pocket.

Hine must have seen the potential power of this image, but it remains a rather obscure example of his work. Perhaps there was too much intimacy; this little girl trusted the older man who watched her to the extent that she could turn away and be honestly kid-like for a moment. Sometimes we see such vulnerability in Hine's pictures of the very littlest ones selling papers, but rarely in girl nearing her teens; by introducing such heart-wrenching pathos, he could have opened himself to a charge of exploitation. There is a sweetness, an innocence—bottom lip tucked under, posture straight, but head tilted slightly forward, totally engaged by the spectacle that caught her eye—that would have been threatened by literally making her a poster child for labor reform. Here, childhood was still triumphant as a human universal. It becomes a photograph not of a child working, but rather of a moment in the natural course of life that eventually extinguishes pure

awe in favor of the wonder-less sophistication of reason. That she could still manifest this complete absorption born of curiosity is unbelievably touching. That Hine caught it is a testament to his skill and sensitivity as an artist, and it shows us how truly carefully he composed his other images. Furthermore, Hine is revealed here as an independent thinker. He was on assignment and had probably prevaricated his way into the mill, yet he burned his one loaded plate on a photograph that would achieve neither his mandate nor his goal. As an aberration, this image defines the rest. Hine wanted the viewer to see exactly what he put in the frame. The student can rely on that when analyzing his images.

### **Conclusion**

Lewis Hine's unwavering and clearly documented philosophical commitment to dignity in labor and his stylistic consistency make his images superbly situated to introduce students to reading photographs as primary sources. In order to use these same techniques with images made by other photographers, scholars and teachers must first become acquainted with the stylistic practices and ideological commitments of each photographer, for the art cannot be credibly divorced from the artist. Once contextualized, students can be led through examining the image as a primary source of not only the subject, but also of the intent of the photographer.

Photographs used without historical context are more misleading than they are useful. Guiding students in a careful, historically contextualized reading of historical images will help advance the goals of student-centered teaching and can help excite interest in a rigorous study of history that goes well beyond pursuit of a grade or completing core requirements for a degree. Beginning with the work of one photographer whose output spanned four decades of the twentieth century, students can gain skills not only in expanding their understanding of the content of their coursework, but can also use those skills to read their media-rich environments with a critical eye. Whether or not students continue with a study of history, cautious scrutiny developed by looking, researching, analyzing, and integrating knowledge obtained will encourage students to think and write critically about the subtext of any image; otherwise media artifacts can be presented with a pre-packaged conclusion. In a world constructed of pictures, such a skill will serve students well throughout and beyond the borders of their education.

## Notes

1. Maurice Galton, "Creative Practitioners in Schools and Classrooms: Final Report of the Project 'The Pedagogy of Creative Practitioners in Schools,'" Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge (2008), ix and 11, <[http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/galton/Creative\\_Partnershipfinalrept.pdf](http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/galton/Creative_Partnershipfinalrept.pdf)>.
2. Mick Healey and Alan Jenkins, "Developing Undergraduate Research and Inquiry," (York, United Kingdom: The Higher Education Academy, 2009), <[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/resources/publications/developingundergraduate\\_final.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/resources/publications/developingundergraduate_final.pdf)>.
3. For basic biographical background, see Daile Kaplan, "Introduction," in *Photo Story: Selected Letters and Photographs of Lewis W. Hine* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), xvii–xxxvi; Alan Trachtenberg, "Ever—The Human Document," in *America and Lewis Hine: Photographs 1904-1940* (New York: Aperture, 1977); and Kate Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009).
4. Kaplan.
5. See Jacob Riis, "The Survival of the Unfittest," in *The Battle With The Slum* (New York: MacMillan, 1902), 25. The work is available in its entirety at <<http://www.bartleby.com/175/>>. Riis expressly blames environment for unsocial behavior.
6. See Sampsell-Willmann, ch. 2, "Social Testimony: Lewis Hine's Expertise."
7. Trachtenberg.
8. National Child Labor Committee Collection, Library of Congress, <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/>>.
9. Kate Sampsell-Willmann, "Lewis Hine, Ellis Island and Pragmatism: Photographs as Lived Experience," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 2 (April 2008).
10. Hine's emphasis of good cheer in the face of children is part of his career long philosophy, not a result of the NCLC program. Hine saw humanity and the virtue of work being debased. Because of the similar way he treated pre-NCLC Ellis Island immigrants and post-NCLC war refugees in Europe, Hine's emphasis was always on the positive in any situation. What made him so successful was that element that he brought to the images. His optimism created his worth to the NCLC and defined the style, not the other way around. See Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic*.
11. Maren Stange raises the issue of Hine's captioning in *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989). However, the question of Hine's captions can be easily resolved by turning to his original prints and print lists. See Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic*.
12. For an excellent analysis of postbellum enclosure, see Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).
13. Both the finding of the court's majority and the dissent make for interesting reading in light of continuing battles over states' rights. The Court's opinion is available at <<http://supreme.justia.com/us/247/251/case.html>>.
14. Quoted in Walter I. Trattner's classic *Crusade for the Children: A History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in America* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 86-87. See also Hugh Hindman, *Child Labor: An American History* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002); Juliet H. Mofford, *Child Labor in America* (New York: History Compass, 1970); Russell Freedman, *Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the*

*Crusade Against Child Labor*, photographs by Lewis Hine (New York: Sandpiper, 1998). There is a dearth of analysis on Hine's contribution to child labor reform.

15. See Shelley Sallee, *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 50-57.

16. For Dan McCarn, see Patrick Huber, *Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); William F. Danaher and Vincent J. Roscigno, "Cultural Production, Media, and Meaning: Hillbilly Music and the Southern Textile Mills," *Poetics* 32, no. 1 (February 2004): The Embeddedness of Cultural Industries: 51-71.

17. Many of the details in this section come from Sallee, *The Whiteness of Child Labor*; and Rev. A. E. Seddon, A. H. Ulm, and Lewis W. Hine Under the Direction of the Southern Office of the National Child Labor Committee, *Child Labor in the Carolinas: [A]ccount of Investigations Made in the Cotton Mills of North and South Carolina* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1909).

## Appendix A: Online Resources for Lewis W. Hine

National Child Labor Committee Collection at the Library of Congress, in the Library's description, "consists of more than 5,100 photographic prints and 355 glass negatives, given to the Library of Congress, along with the NCLC records, in 1954 by Mrs. Gertrude Folks Zimand, acting for the NCLC in her capacity as chief executive."

<<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/>>

The "Bringing an NCLC Photo into Focus" page uses a sequence of images that Hine shot of Phoebe Thomas, an eight-year-old cannery worker in Maine, who accidentally cut herself with the butcher knife she used at work. The Library of Congress made the images available in high resolution TIFF as well as lower resolution JPEG formats. This permits the historian to examine the images in much greater detail. The Library comments: "The availability of high resolution scans of the NCLC photos and searchable NCLC captions affords viewers a fresh look at the collection. They help bring into focus the information the photographer intended text and words, together, to convey. And they bring to light the stories NCLC staff used as a tool to persuade."

<<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/photo.html>>

The National Archives collection, National Child Labor Committee Photographs taken by Lewis Hine, compiled ca. 1908-ca. 1912, documenting the period 1908-1912, ARC Identifier 523064 / Local Identifier 102-LH; Series from Record Group 102: Records of the Children's Bureau, 1908-2003, contains 483 images, from which those reproduced here were selected.

<<http://research.archives.gov/description/523064>>

The National Archives has also created a "Teaching With Documents: Photographs of Lewis Hine: Documentation of Child Labor" page that includes lesson resources, a selection of photographs, and a link to its Document Analysis Worksheet.

<<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hine-photos/>>

The Hine Collection at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County contains 4,735 photographs organized by state.

<<http://contentdm.ad.umbc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/hinecoll>>

“Let the Children Be Children,” an exhibit at the George Eastman House, contains 54 images.

<[http://www.geh.org/ar/letchild/letchil\\_sum00001.html](http://www.geh.org/ar/letchild/letchil_sum00001.html)>

The Lewis Wickes Hine: Documentary Photographs, 1905-1938, a Digital Gallery created by the New York Public Library contains “more than 500 silver gelatin photographic prints depicting American social conditions and labor, including immigrants at Ellis Island and construction of the Empire State Building, Hine’s principal subjects.”

<[http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col\\_id=175](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=175)>

“Child Labor in America, 1908-1912: Photographs of Lewis W. Hine” at the History Place contains more than 60 images and includes Hine’s own captions/titles.

<<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/index.html>>

“Making Sense of Photos” at History Matters is a guide to using photographs as evidence.

<<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/photos/intro.html>>

## Appendix B: Photograph Workshop: Lewis Hine and Laura Petty

*This framework can be used for any social documentary photograph.*

1. Schedule a writing workshop when discussing the Progressive Era, before discussing child labor as a Progressive-era reform. This worked well in two eighty-minute sessions in a day-long writing workshop.
2. Project Figure 2 (Laura Petty). Ask the class to scrutinize the photograph. Do not reveal the photographer, caption, date, or location. Have the students arrive at a disconnected image.
3. Ask students to call out what they see in the image. Correct if they make conclusions rather than listing items. Write items on the board. Ask students to copy the items on the board into their notebooks.
4. Show a photograph of Hine’s Camera. (See <<http://academic.uprm.edu/laviles/3bfc8fe0.jpg>> or <<http://www.filmsnotdead.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/197810590021.0001-800x608.jpg>>)
5. Ask for student volunteers. Ask one volunteer to play the part of Laura Petty and the other to be Lewis Hine. Intentionally cross genders. Use a telephone camera

or small digital camera; instruct "Hine" to photograph "Petty." Ask "Hine" to make "Petty" feel at ease being photographed. "Hine" should try to capture "Petty's" smile. Exchange pairs of students. In a sufficiently small class, each can take a turn (time depending on size of class).

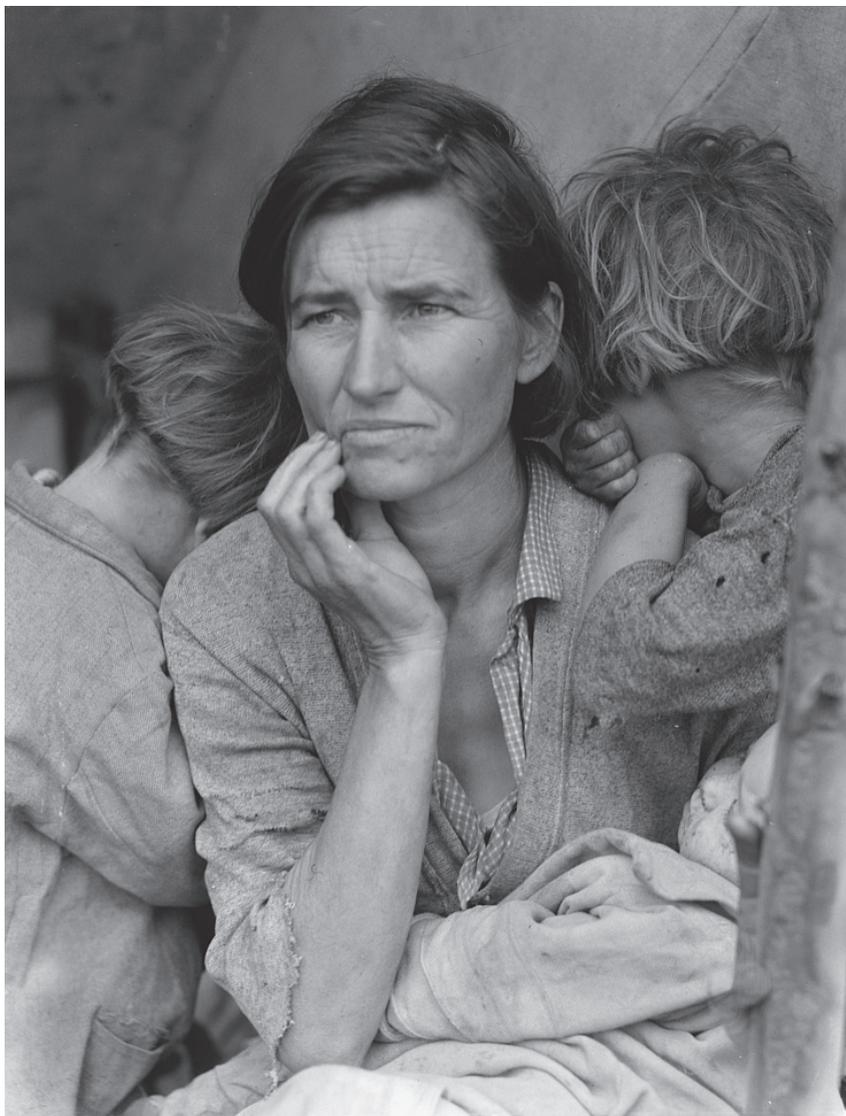
6. Designate a team ("editors") to collect all of the student-created images and prepare them for projected display (either for a homework assignment or during class). Assign each student to write a short essay about the experience as Hine, Petty, editor, or observer (in-class writing or homework).
7. Project each student picture next to the original. Ask the class to vote on their favorite three. Ask the students to write in their notebooks an explanation why a particular image is a favorite. Give prompts like "accurate," "creative," "interpretative," "challenging," "interactive," etc.
8. Engage in class discussion on the entire process. Return to the original image and ask what the exercise revealed about both photographer and subject.
9. Finish the analysis of the image, including what is missing—with specific emphasis on parents and shoes. Reveal that the substance on Petty's dress is the residue of raspberries. [In Qatar, I had to explain the experience of picking raspberries and the reasons one does not do it in bare feet and a skirt; in Kyrgyzstan, where students live much closer to nature, the students knew ways to avoid being scratched by thorns, but they still agreed that wearing shoes is better.] Discuss the incongruity in the picture, and explain that Hine exposed a glass negative, so he had only one chance to make his picture the way he wanted it.
10. Use the lesson to introduce the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916 and subsequent Supreme Court case *Hammer v. Dagenhart* (1918), in which the Act was found unconstitutional. Current U.S. law allowing employment of children in agriculture can be found at the Department of Labor.
11. If you have a class website or other dedicated display place, post the students' three favorite photographs and some of the explanations as captions.

## Appendix C: Photograph Workshop: Dorothea Lange and Florence Thompson

*This framework can be used for any social documentary photograph.*

1. Project Figure 5 (Florence Thompson). Begin by asking students to study the photograph carefully, writing down a list of everything they see in the image. Caution them about coming to conclusions. For example, it is unclear if the children are male or female; Florence Thompson has wrinkles, but the conclusion that she is aged is incorrect. Present both versions: the print that was altered in the darkroom to remove the thumb holding open the tent, and the new print from the original negative.
2. Ask students to reason what is missing. Ask where the photographer must have been standing to take the photograph. Reveal that the patron for the image was the Department of Agriculture. Also, even though by today's standards, Thompson is not overly thin, she was very thin if considered in context with pre-World War II body image choices.
3. Connect the image to *The Grapes of Wrath*, either John Steinbeck's 1939 book or John Ford's 1940 film. Connect the image to Woody Guthrie's Dust Bowl ballads.
4. Ask the other students to take turns recreating the pose of the woman, three children, and even whoever was holding open the tent. Have other students take turns photographing the scene. Break into groups so everyone has a chance to perform the part of Florence Thompson and Dorothea Lange. The performative work will help students to identify with both subject and photographer.
5. Project all of the student-created images and ask students to vote for their favorite. If possible, ask the students to articulate or write why they liked or did not like any particular image. Writing about their choice will help students begin to use their new vocabularies and find ways to discuss intangibles. See Figure 6 for a sample student image.
6. Wrap up by telling Florence Thompson's story.

Note: For analysis of a similar intent in the photographs of Dorothea Lange, see the sociological partnership between Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor as described by Linda Gordon, *A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: Norton, 2009). Although I disagree with Jan Goggans's characterization of Paul Taylor as the origin of social documentary ideas, see her *California on the Breadlines: Dorothea Lange, Paul Taylor, and the Making of a New Deal Narrative* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010). For using Lange's pictures in the classroom, see Linda Gordon, "Dorothea Lange: The Photographer as Agricultural Sociologist," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 3 (December 2006): 698-727; and the *Journal of American History's* Teaching the *JAH* project at <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/teaching/>.



**Figure 5:** “Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California.” Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-fsa-8b29516, <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998021539/PP/>>.



**Figure 6:** A student prepared this montage of the original photograph and class favorite. The class picked the image because they believed that the student posing as Florence Thompson captured the pensive essence of her expression. Interestingly, he was not a very pensive student, which indicates the limits of reading expressions as indications of actions before or after the image was exposed. He used a water bottle to represent the baby. Picture used with permission of author.

### Online Resources for Florence Thompson

Library of Congress, “Dorothea Lange’s ‘Migrant Mother’ Photographs in the Farm Security Administration Collection: An Overview”, <[http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128\\_migm.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html)>.

Joe Santa, “Florence Thompson and The Missing Thumb, Corbis.com, <<http://blog.corbis.com/2011/florence-thompson-missing-thumb/>>.

Michael Stones, “The Other Migrant Mother,” Open Photography Forums, <[http://www.openphotographyforums.com/art\\_MICHAEL\\_STONES\\_001.php](http://www.openphotographyforums.com/art_MICHAEL_STONES_001.php)>.

## Appendix D: Reading an Image

### Photo Analysis: Observation and Interpretation

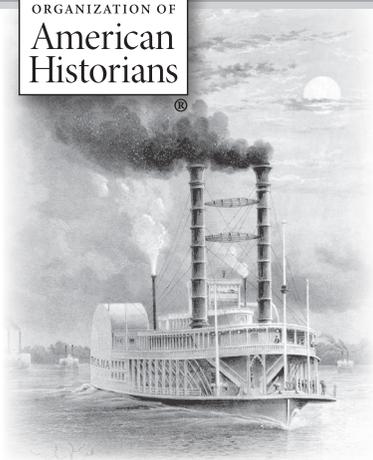
1. Carefully study the entire photograph.
2. Divide the photograph into four parts and study each section. Look for details.
3. Use the chart below to list people, objects, buildings, landscape, activities, and lighting source.

People
Objects
Buildings
Landscape/Place
Activities
Lighting/Time of Day

4. What is the subject of the photograph?
5. Is there anything odd in the image? Any visual tension or contradictions?
6. Is anything missing from the photograph?
7. Are there any implied subtexts or relationships in the photograph?
8. Imagine yourself as the photographer. Describe where you are standing.
9. Ask two questions of the photograph (then hypothesize where could you find the answers).
10. Caption the photograph.



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