



“What Do You See?”

They say a good picture is worth a thousand words.

Issues addressed

- The perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudice through the media.
- The use and misuse of images to provide information and to evoke emotive responses.

Aims

- To explore how pictures are used in the press.
- To develop skills of critical analysis.

Time: 45 minutes

Group size: 6+

Preparation

- Collect 5 or 6 pictures from magazines and newspapers and mount each one on a separate large sheet of paper.
- Strips of paper, pens, glue.
- Pins or tape to attach pictures to the walls.

Instructions

- Pin or tape the pictures on a wall.
- Give participants strips of plain paper and ask them to look at each picture in turn and then to write two alternative headlines, one positive and one negative, on separate slips of paper.
- When everyone is ready stick the headlines under the pictures.
- Compare the headlines.

Debriefing and evaluation

Talk about what happened in the activity and what people learned.

- How many different interpretations were there of each picture?
- Did different people see different things in the same picture?
- When you read the papers or magazines, which do you look at first the captions or pictures?
- To what extent do pictures show the truth of what happened in a situation?
- How do editors use pictures to convey information, arouse emotions, provoke sympathy etc?

Tips for the facilitator

Try to find pictures that can be interpreted in different ways. For example, a picture of a traveller's site with 10 pitches. One person may only 'see' the rubbish left behind on two pitches while another person may 'see' 8 clean ones.

Suggestions for follow up

Be more aware of how pictures are used in papers, in advertising and in charity appeals. Set the group a challenge to see who can find the picture which has been used in the most positive way and another which has been used in the most misleading way.

Having looked at pictures used in the press you may like to explore how journalists report the news by trying it out for yourself in 'Making the news' (page 120).