

# Tips for Teachers – Planning

## Using Historical Photographs in the Classroom

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### Suggestions for Planning<sup>1</sup>

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Decide on what historical thinking concepts<sup>2</sup> you want to develop:

Our example will be on evidence that is so much a feature of inquiries such as a Heritage Fair project. As content we have chosen the Gold Rush for its historical significance and central place in the curriculum.



Men posed on a flume, William's Creek; T.R. Pattullo standing in centre, ca. 1868. Frederick Dally photograph; BC Archives F-08564.

#### Choose an image with care:

Select an engaging photograph that is relevant to the curriculum and will stimulate thinking about the concept. If possible, it should have some emotional impact, mystery and/or personal connection. In our example, students can play detective about the photographer's purpose.

What is left out of a photograph can also be intriguing. "Men posed on a flume" can help tell a story of male gold miners, "Tunnel entrance to Neversweat Tunnel Co. claim" includes Chinese; however, both omit women and First Nations.

Above all, use large, clear images. (A higher resolution of "Men posed on a flume" can be found [here](#). If projected on a screen or whiteboard, students can walk up to it to identify features. High quality photographs distributed to individual students or pairs, on the other hand, encourage close scrutiny.

#### Research the image:

Knowing the provenance and context of a source will enable you to pose insightful questions and introduce to students the knowledge needed to read the source

<sup>1</sup> These suggestions are adapted from "Cunning Plan for placing visual sources at the heart of historical learning" by Shaun Collins, *Teaching History* 152. The Historical Association, 42–44.

<sup>2</sup> Seixas, P. and Morton, T. (2013) *The Big Six Concepts of Historical Thinking*. Toronto: Nelson.

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carefully. For example, to tell a story using "Men Posed on a Flume" it is necessary to know the impact of this technology on the salmon spawning beds and importance of salmon for First Nations. The complete article in BC Studies of Don Bourdon, "Barkerville's Thomas Robson Pattullo In Life and Death: the Memorial Album as Aide-Mémoire" gives valuable context to explore the personal side of an important historical actor.

## Craft stimulating questions:

These should move from specific to more open-ended inquiry questions that will help students to explore in depth and generate their own questions. You can find sentence prompts for inferencing questions on [the Historical Thinking Concepts](#) template page.