



Taking Photos — Telling Stories

An Educational Program Guide by Lisa Friedman



**THE JEWISH
EDUCATION PROJECT**

Developed in partnership with The Jewish Education Project

Overview

In this three-session educational course, learners use photographs to tell stories. The target age group is upper-elementary and middle-school students, grades 5–8. The first two sessions are for in-class use. They can be used independently or as preparation for the third session — an intergenerational family program.

Session 1: The Purpose of Photographs

Enduring Understanding

Photography is a tool that can help us tell stories and preserve memories. Photographs can also help us understand different perspectives, can recall events, and can convey messages.

Goals

- Identify various purposes for taking photographs.
- Learn the differences between objective and subjective observations.
- Understand a photographer's intent and how that may differ from a viewer's perspective.

Materials

- Variety of printed photographs, including Jewish images
- Whiteboard/dry erase markers or chart paper/markers
- Paper and pencils/pens
- Screen/projector (optional)

Timing (80 minutes)

Set induction	15 minutes
Types of photographs	15 minutes
Objective versus subjective	15 minutes
Objective versus subjective practice	20 minutes
Wrap-up	15 minutes

Learning Sequence

0:00–0:15 Set induction

Teacher/facilitator asks: When have you taken photos? Why do you take photos?

List responses on chart paper/whiteboard. Name different types of photographs one might see — for example, artistic photographs, news photographs, and photographs whose purpose is to persuade people, such as advertising or propaganda.

0:15–0:30 Types of photographs

Share different types of photographs, identifying each type. If possible, post them on a chart or whiteboard, and write the type of photo. Share additional photographs and ask students if they can identify each type.

0:30–0:45 Objective versus subjective

Explain that an objective observation is something that doesn't change from person to person. It is a statement of fact that usually does not leave room for debate or disagreement — for example, "There are X number of people in this photo," or "This photograph is in black-and-white," or "This photograph shows American flags." Objective observations may also refer to shapes, textures, or colors that can be seen in the photo.

A subjective observation, on the other hand, is an opinion, a feeling, or an interpretation based on what someone sees, such as "I think that person might be their father," or "It reminds me of the time I did X," or "I think they look tired," or "It looks like the Fourth of July." Different people looking at the same photograph can have different subjective observations.

0:45–1:05 Objective versus subjective practice

Project a photograph on a screen and/or give participants/groups a color copy. Give students a sheet of paper and ask them to write objective observations on one side and subjective observations on the other. Give students 5 minutes to do this on their own. Ask students to share their objective observations. Clarify the difference between objective and subjective as students share. Make sure all students have a turn if they so choose. Then ask students to make subjective observations, again ensuring that all who would like a turn get one.

Divide students into *chevruta* (study pairs). Give each pair a different photograph, and ask them to make lists of objective and subjective observations. Invite pairs to share observations with the group, if time allows.

1:05–1:20 Wrap-up

Ask the following questions to open up discussion:

- Why do you think it is important for us, as viewers, to understand the difference between objective and subjective photographs? (*possible answers: to seek to understand the purpose of the photograph; to recognize there are different points of view; to seek to understand others' points of view*)
- Return to the following question from the set induction: Why do you take pictures? Ask if any students now want to add other reasons. Plant the idea that a purpose of taking pictures can be to tell a story.

Session 2: Photographs Tell Stories

Enduring Understanding

Sharing stories links us to the generations that came before us, to the generations to come, and to our collective Jewish narrative. Photography is one way of telling stories.

Goals

- Understand that storytelling is a powerful tool for connection.
- Recognize that Judaism has a long tradition of storytelling.
- Learn that photographs can tell a story.

Materials

- Whiteboard/dry erase markers or chart paper/markers
- Variety of printed photographs, mainly Jewish images (different from session 1)
- Copy of Jewish text for each student
- Copy of [Taking Photos — Telling Stories](#) from JGN for each student
- Screen/projector (optional)
- Paper and pencils/pens