

TEACHER RESPONSES

World Language Class, Percy Julian High School, Chicago

We work in Japanese class by first doing the free-write in English. I ask them to choose one of the photographs to write about. "I want you to write freely but treat it as if the person's family was going to read it." This is part of the theme of our class – international empathy. Instead of focusing only on the dirt, someone will say, "They take pride in their work." "They look poor." Some write that as descriptive, others as a put down.

The power to be rude and nasty to other people is sometimes the only power our students feel they have. I'm more interested in working on something constructive, so seeing the kids eager to use the photos was good.

-- Xian Barrett, Japanese Language teacher

American History Class, Englewood High School, Chicago Public Schools

I shared the Family of Miners photos with my students to introduce a unit on the 1930's Great Depression in my American History classes. We passed the photographs around and talked about individual photographs. I asked them questions like, "What kind of work do these people do? How do the miners seem to feel about that work? What did you notice about their families? About their homes?"

Students talked about the hard work the miners did, the low wages, the dirt, the tools, and the miners' ages, their strength, endurance, and the pride that the photographs conveyed. Students described how the homes were modest or poor, but that the families seemed comfortable and the homes decorated with care.

Then I said, the US stock market crashed in 1929, businesses closed, unemployment skyrocketed and all these people lost their jobs. What happens to them? What are the effects on them and their families? Students looked shocked. Slowly they began to talk about all the consequences they could imagine. That was their introduction to the Depression.

-- Jackson Potter, History teacher

Teaching College Students, Rochester Institute of Technology

I have used Milton Rogovin's photographs from *Portraits in Steel* in a course on photography and writing and his biography *Milton Rogovin: The Making of a Social Documentary Photographer* by Melanie Anne Herzog in a course on oral history and autobiography. I have prefaced discussions of photographs of steelworkers at work and at home with a short in class writing where students are asked to write "snapshot" descriptions of their own parent/s (or family) at work and at home. This is useful in traversing the class differences between Rogovin's subjects and the background of many of my students.

-- Janet Zandy, Department of English