Is Seeing Believing?

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**Abstract:**

Digital manipulation has become increasingly easy. What we see and hear through media messages cannot be taken at face value. Photography has lost its air of certitude. Audio and video files can be recorded, edited, and played back as reality with little or no recognition of the alteration. With the right tools and technical skills, professionals, and now amateurs, challenge us to be more critical about the source and the message of what we see and hear. This unit will help students take an inquiry stance into understanding the evolution of photography and the pros and cons of digital manipulation as they ask the essential question, “How do we know what is true in this digital age?”

This three-week curriculum is designed for fifth grade students and will build upon their experiences using digital cameras. Beyond “point and shoot,” these students know who to use digital camera tools, upload pictures, and perform some basic photo editing. The unit will incorporate social studies, language arts, and technology in learning about media in this digital age. This three-week unit will examine the history of photography and the ramifications of photographic manipulation. For this unit, students will look at photographs from various times in history and in varied contexts. They will keep in mind that digital manipulation can be used to distort and falsify as well as to edit and enhance images.