

ANALYZING VISUAL ARGUMENTS

Compositional Features of Photographs

Adapted from chapter 9, *Analyzing Arguments*
Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings (9th edition)

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs are
powerful tools in a
visual argument!

Photographs are
almost always
composed.

Assume everything you see in an image has been deliberately designed or placed in order to evoke some kind of response from the audience.

Analyzing photographic
images involves
understanding the
elements of composition.

Distance from subject

Point of view

Orientation of the image and camera angle

Use of color

Compositional special effects

Juxtaposition of images

Juxtaposition of images

Characters, roles, actions

Settings, furnishings, props

Presentation of images

Manipulation of images

In this presentation, we'll concentrate on three of these compositional features:

- Distance from Subject
- Camera Angle
- Characters, Roles, and Action

As we proceed, think about how these strategies influence the message being conveyed in the images we examine.

Refer to the Compositional Features for Analyzing Photographs (pages 185-186) as you analyze each image.

DISTANCE FROM A SUBJECT

Shots taken **from a distance** may indicate scale or provide contrast.

Close-up shots tend to increase the intensity of the image and suggest the importance of the subject.

LONG SHOT



What compositional features do you observe being used in this image?

What is the message being conveyed in this image?

CLOSE-UP



What compositional features do you observe being used in this image?

What is the message being conveyed in this image?

CAMERA ANGLE AND PERSPECTIVE

Shots taken from different angles can communicate something particular about the subject.



What is the message being conveyed in this image?



What about this image?

How does camera angle influence the message being communicated in these images?



CHARACTERS, ROLES, ACTIONS

Look at the facial expressions, gestures, or poses of the subject in the following pictures.

Also pay attention to setting, furnishings, and props.

What message is being conveyed?



What message is conveyed in this image?



What about this image?



In both images, the subject is smiling.
However, each image says something different about the subject.



What message is conveyed in this image?

What about this image?



In both images, the subject's hand is part of the message. However, each image says something different about the subject.

Let's look at a few more examples of how public figures have been portrayed in the media.

As we examine these images, write down your first impression about the person in the picture.

Then write what you think the photographer is trying to convey about the candidate in each image.



Senator Marco Rubio, 2012



GOP Presidential Candidate Michelle Bachmann, 2012



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly,
September 2012



Vice Presidential Candidate Sarah Palin, 2008

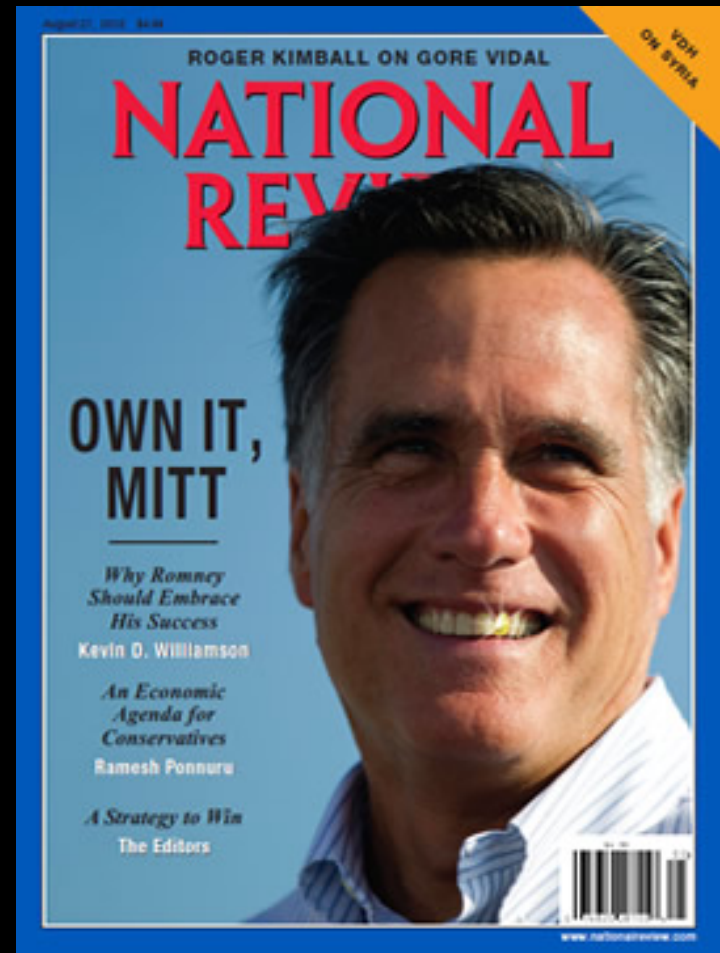
IMAGES AND MEDIA BIAS?

When photographs and text combine, it's not hard to detect a publication's political bias, worldview, or angle of vision.

Left-Leaning Publication



Right-Leaning Publication



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