


The Characteristics of Memorable Images

One of the first steps toward creating powerful visual messages is to examine images created by others. In this activity, students are asked to use the criteria outlined in *Made to Stick* (Heath & Heath, 2007) to evaluate two separate images designed to provoke thinking around the issue of global poverty.

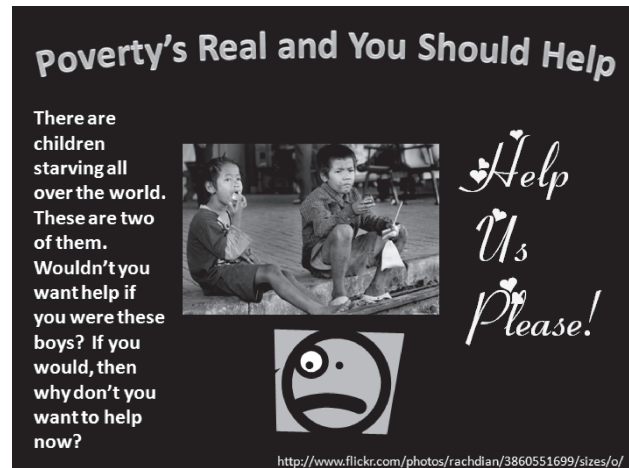
Image One



Adapted from "Homeless in Sugamo 1" by james-fischer. Creative Commons 2006. 

(A larger, color version of image one can be found online by visiting <http://snipurl.com/image1>)

Image Two



Adapted from "Save Our Children" by rachdian. Creative Commons 2009. 

(A larger, color version of image two can be found online by visiting <http://snipurl.com/image2>)

Questions for Consideration

1. Like any content, both of these images have strengths and weaknesses. Begin by listing everything that you like about image one. What is most impressive to you? Least impressive? What are your initial reactions to image one? If you were to change anything about image one, what would it be?

Then, answer the same questions about image two.

2. The most influential messages are simple. They are stripped down, sharing only core principles and key ideas with audiences. Which of these images does a better job at sharing a small handful of core principles with viewers? How are those core principles

communicated with the audience? What would you do to make the more complicated image simpler?

3. The most influential messages are unexpected, either communicating with audiences in a nontraditional way or sharing ideas that are startling. Is there anything surprising about either of these images? What impact does that have on you as a viewer? How does that surprise impact the message that the creator is trying to communicate?
4. The most influential messages are concrete. Instead of sharing complicated language, they appeal to the basic senses of the audience. Which of these two images does a better job appealing to your senses? What senses—touch, taste, sight, sound, smell—does the author tap into? How? Does this change the way you feel about the message they are trying to share? How?
5. The most influential messages are credible. The ideas shared must be believable to viewers. Something about the message has to resonate with an audience's experiences. Which of these two images can you relate to better? Which seems more believable? Why?
6. The most influential messages are emotional, making viewers feel instead of simply think. Influential people know that when they can tap into powerful emotions like joy, anger, hilarity, shame, fear, or pain, their ideas are more likely to be remembered. Which of these images does a better job of making you feel instead of just think? What emotions does it evoke? Why?
7. When crafting visual messages, the layout, size, and color of all fonts and images are incredibly important. The best visual images appear balanced and clean to viewers, rather than distracting. How do you think the authors of these two slides did at creating balanced, clean images? Are there any glaring mistakes that either author made that could be easily fixed? What do you like the best about the layouts and font selections in these two slides?
8. Which of these two images looks the most similar to the visuals you've been creating during your school career? Which looks the most similar to the visuals created by your teachers? Is this something that you can be proud of? Why?

9. What changes do you plan to make to the visuals you create in the future? Why do these changes make sense? Do you think that your viewers will be surprised by your decisions? Is that good?

Resource

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*. New York: Random House.