

UPPER INTERMEDIATE UNIT 7

1 Work in pairs and discuss.

- 1 Look at the images. Is your impression of them positive or negative? What pieces of news do you think they refer to?
- 2 What images can you remember from news stories? Why do you remember them?
- 3 What images from the media can you recall from this week's news? What was the news story? What does the image say about it?



2 Read the article about the power of image in today's media and answer the questions.

- 1 Why are images particularly powerful in today's digital media?
- 2 What examples of images are presented in the text?
- 3 In what way are images more powerful than texts?

3 Read the article again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false sentences.

- 1 An image can have a more lasting effect than text.
- 2 The author thinks that the group selfie image is as important as the photo of the Syrian boy.
- 3 Mainstream newspapers are beginning to feature sections on images.
- 4 We know intuitively that we respond to images in different ways.
- 5 Sometimes the most powerful images are the ones that are difficult to understand at first.
- 6 The example of the apple shows us that images are very personal.
- 7 The author thinks that Steve Jobs' apple being more famous than the fruit is logical.

The Power of Image

Today's media is image-driven. Never before has it been so easy to access, compose, manipulate and share images. A particularly powerful image can also trigger a news item and deliver a strong emotional message. The image may stay with us longer than the news story itself. Sometimes, an image can be all that it takes to spread the word and via today's digital media this can happen very quickly. Images can sometimes sum up issues more easily than the written word and they can be understood more quickly.

For example, the tragic image of the body of a three-year-old Syrian boy, washed up near the Turkish resort of Bodrum after a boat of migrants capsized, was powerful enough to alert the whole world to the refugee crisis. The image alone symbolised the crisis. On a much more superficial and sensationalist level, a group selfie posted by Oscars show host Ellen DeGeneres on her Twitter account became the most retweeted image of all time (3.5 million times to date).

It's clear then that an image can spark a mental response from the brain faster and with more impact than text. For this reason, even conventional newspapers in their electronic versions now have regular features called 'The Big Picture' where they feature the most striking images of the moment.

But how do images work? It turns out that we respond to images on three different levels, although we are not aware of this. There is the *affective* response – how we feel when we see an image and what mental images are conjured up immediately. Then, there's the *compositional* response – how we take in all the different elements in the image, how the image is framed and what is in the foreground and background. Finally, there is the *critical* response, when we try to work out what message the image is transmitting. Quite a few images can be difficult to understand at first sight. They raise our curiosity, and this makes them more impactful.

Images also have a large number of cultural associations and these change over time. Decades ago, if you'd asked people what connections they could make with the word 'apple', they might have replied Adam and Eve, Snow White, William Tell, New York (the Big Apple) or Apple Records, the Beatles' Record Company.

Nowadays, if you put the word 'apple' into a Google Images search, you get thousands of Apple Computers' logos. It may be that soon Steve Jobs' apple will be more recognisable than the fruit itself ... now that would be crazy!

4A Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the box.


work out conjure up sum up manipulate
respond alert access

- The author _____ his argument very well in the final paragraph.
- Sometimes it's difficult to _____ the meaning when you read a text. An image explains it more quickly.
- It's easy to _____ images these days with filters and programmes and then share them on Instagram.
- We _____ to images differently. At first they make an emotional impact.
- An image can _____ a certain feeling. For example, photos of your childhood can bring back lots of memories.
- A high-impact image can _____ everybody to a particular problem or issue.
- It's so easy to _____ images these days – think of how many people share them on social media.

B Find two more verbs in the article that mean 'conjure up'.

5 Work in pairs or small groups and discuss.

- What kinds of images do you take?
- What device do you use to take photographs?
- Who do you share your images with? Where do you share them?

6  **7.1** Listen to a social media expert, Daniel Carter, talking about what images to upload online. Answer the questions.

- What's Daniel's main criticism of the images people upload to social media?
- What does he think it is important to imagine?
- What other elements does Daniel highlight?

7 Listen again and underline the correct alternative.

- The problem with posting the same kinds of images is that *you only show one side of yourself/ people get bored*.
- The solution to that problem is to *keep your images varied/make the images more personal*.
- Daniel says that you should consider *getting a better camera/taking photos from a different angle*.
- You should avoid taking photos which are *not clear/controversial*.
- Daniel says to include text with the images but to make the text as *interesting/large* as possible.
- He says that a photo of you and your pet is sure to be *popular/superficial*.
- He says he will not give advice about the subject matter of images because that topic is too *personal/complicated*.

8A Match the words from the recording 1–8 with their meanings a)–h).

- close-up
 - angle
 - composition
 - snapshot
 - enhance
 - crop
 - landscape
 - blurred
- difficult to see clearly
 - a photograph taken casually (without the use of professional equipment)
 - to improve something or make it more attractive
 - to cut part of a picture or photo
 - a photo taken from a position very nearby
 - the direction from which you look at something
 - the overall form of a photo or work of art
 - an image in a horizontal format, rather than 'portrait' which is vertical

B Listen and check.

9 Work in pairs or small groups and discuss.

- Do you think the article is right about using images in social media? Why/Why not?
- What kinds of images do you post there? Will you change your mind now? If so, how?
- What other kinds of media do you post to/share on social media? (e.g. video)