

Photos That Make History

Millions of photos are taken every day. Most of them get quickly forgotten, but some remain familiar and admired for decades after they were taken. Iconic images are often very recognisable and emotive (= causing strong feelings). Sometimes they capture turning points in history or address serious issues, and thanks to their power and emotional impact they might help draw attention to those issues. Sometimes they just convey (= express) a sense of atmosphere or beauty.

Paul Farrington-Douglas (UK)
Zuzana Pernicová (CZ)

1 A Victorious Kiss

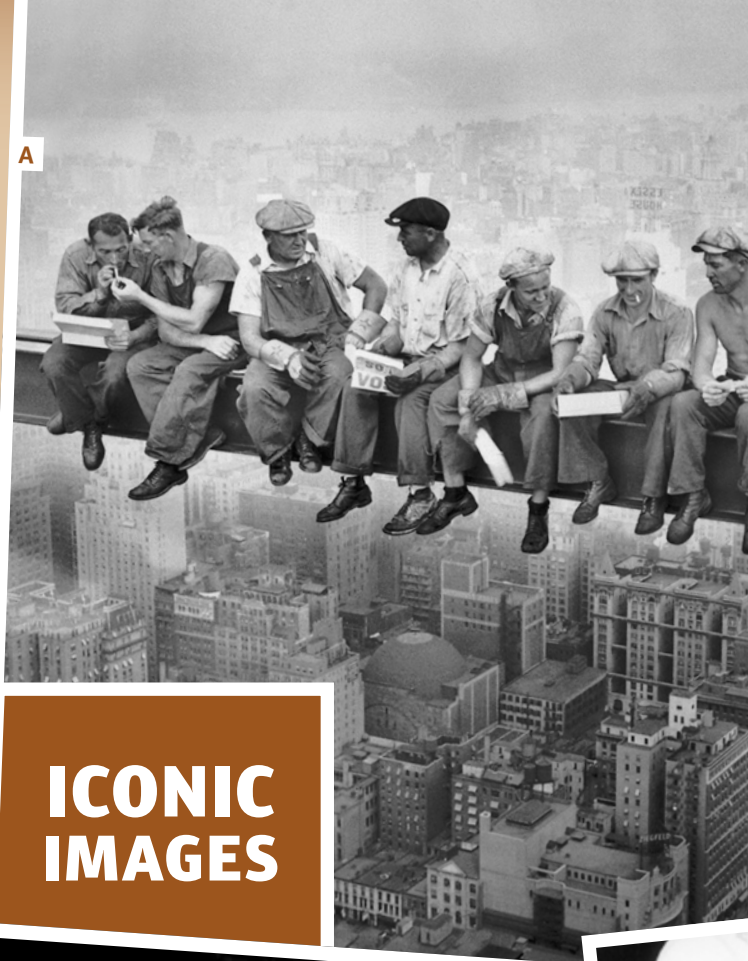
The Second World War ended with the defeat of Japan on August 14th 1945. Alfred Eisenstaedt took to the streets of New York City to photograph the celebrations. In Times Square, he happened to notice a sailor reaching for a nurse and kissing her, and was quick enough to capture the moment. "If this girl hadn't been a nurse, if she'd been dressed in dark clothes, I wouldn't have had a picture," he later said. "The contrast between her white dress and the sailor's dark uniform gives the photograph its extra impact (= strong effect)." The image communicates the joy and relief of the day, and the hope of a better future.

Nevertheless, it has faced criticism in the 21st century, with critics claiming that it doesn't show a lovely romantic moment but a sexual assault (= attack). The woman in the photo later said, "It wasn't my choice to be kissed... That man was very strong. I wasn't kissing him. He was kissing me."

2 Quiet Strength

This photo of 16-year-old Lucie Myslíková from Brno spread all over the world last year, appearing on the BBC and CNN, in the New York Times, and in other major media. The image of a young girl scout calmly facing down an angry skinhead carried the universal message of opposing violence with peace and not being afraid to stand for what you believe is right. It was taken by the amateur Slovak photographer Vladimír Čičmanec on May Day, when a lot of people, including a group of scouts, met to oppose a neo-Nazi demonstration. "I wasn't afraid," Lucie told the BBC. "To me it makes sense to try and change the world around me. I think young people should get involved in such things. They should be aware of what's going on."

S Solutions in TF and next month on the Bridge website



ICONIC IMAGES

TASK
Match the texts to the pictures.





3 The Most Dangerous Lunchbreak?

This 1932 photo of a group of construction workers sitting 69 floors up in the air, without any safety ropes, has never stopped fascinating people – and perhaps making them dizzy. But did the men really lunch like this? Well, they were real workers who helped to build the Rockefeller Center, a famous skyscraper complex in New York City. But the scene is far from spontaneous (= natural, unplanned): it was arranged by the Rockefeller Center to promote their new skyscraper. The photo has become a symbol of New York City, showing it as a place that is not afraid of daring (= brave) projects. It is one of the most reproduced images of all time and has appeared on posters, T-shirts and even the TV show *The Simpsons*.

6 One Man Stands Against Tanks

In the spring of 1989, huge protests broke out in China. For weeks, people gathered in Tiananmen Square in Beijing to demand freedom of speech, a free press and other rights. Eventually, the Communist government sent in the army to stop the demonstrations. It was a massacre: hundreds or even thousands of people died.

A day later, American photographer Jeff Widener was standing at his hotel window, watching tanks leaving the square. Suddenly, a man holding shopping bags stepped in front of the tanks and blocked their way. The tanks tried to avoid him, but he kept stepping in their way again and again until soldiers dragged him away. Both his identity and his fate remain unknown, but the photo of his brave non-violent protest has become a universal symbol of resistance to (= opposing) oppressive regimes.

4 Fighting for Freedom

This photo of a very young policeman arresting an equally young woman has become a symbol of the Velvet Revolution of 1989, which helped to end the totalitarian Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. What makes the picture stand out is the contrast between the man who is rigidly (= strictly) obeying orders and the woman who is looking proud and defiant (= refusing to obey). The man behind the camera, photographer Herbert Slavik, said that the image looks “almost gentle, a girl and a boy who could go on a date together in different circumstances”.

Funnily enough, although the image is strongly associated with the Velvet Revolution, it was actually taken a few weeks earlier at a demonstration in Wenceslas Square. Because this was before the regime fell, it could not be published at the time. It was first printed on the front page of a newspaper one year after the Velvet Revolution, where it immediately caught the people’s imagination.

5 The Art of the Ordinary

Not all iconic photographs show important historic moments. French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004) was a pioneer of street photography – unplanned images of ordinary life. The key thing for him was capturing what he called “the decisive moment” – the exact moment when an ordinary event contains something special that makes it art. “Once you miss it,” he said, “it is gone forever.”

“Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare”, taken in 1932, is perhaps his most famous photo of this kind. He pointed his camera through a fence behind a Paris train station, and took a picture of a man jumping over a puddle. The man is captured in the perfect moment when neither of his feet is touching the ground and when his whole body is reflected in the water. His posture echoes (= is similar to) the dancers on a poster behind him, and the pieces of metal lying on the ground resemble the ripples (= small waves) in the puddle.