Thinking through images (key stages 3 and 4)

What these photos say
These three images, all from the ‘Producers and consumers’ family, illustrate quite different aspects of the theme. The photo of winter wheat ready for harvesting was taken at Stolberg, Saxony-Anhalt, near Harz National Park, Germany, in April 2008. The traffic jam was taken in November 2006 in Siam Square, Bangkok, but gridlocked traffic occurs in many other places in this congested city. The concrete structure above the road supports the Bangkok skytrain: a much more civilised way of getting about! The monster burger was specially created by the chef at Cubley Hall Hotel and Restaurant, Penistone, for photographer Bryan Ledgard. (He managed to eat about a third of it.)

How you could use these photos
These images encourage skills of interrogation and deeper thinking. What is going on outside the image? Behind the photographer?

You could use these images to increase students’ synoptic awareness – essentially, using concept mapping as a technique to help them think beyond units of study. For example, see 09.50 minutes in on this video: www.teachers.tv/video/3473.

They would also be useful to provoke discussion at Y9 option time, or as a stimulus for curriculum planning within the department.

Suggested activities
These are presented roughly in order of increasing challenge.

1 Ask students to identify and describe their own lived experience of these images: when and where have they seen similar images in their own experience?

2 Introduce the images as stills from a film – what would the film be about? What’s the story of this image – its past and future?
3 The classic five ‘W’s – Who, Why, What, Where, When ... and the sneaky ‘H’ – How?

4 Ask students to complete a ‘Do know/Don’t know’ activity (http://www.slideshare.net/kingler/sichuan-earthquake-what-i-dont-know-and-what-i-do-know for an example). This could form the basis of an assessment activity, with students completing the same task at the start and end of a unit of work. How have their responses to/questions asked of the images changed? Does this demonstrate student progress?

5 Ask students how they could represent the content of the images in a different way:

6 Ask students to think about how images are used. Who would be most likely to use the images – why and how would they use it? Who would be least likely to use it, and why?

7 Use the image as the basis for a literacy activity: students create a wordscape of the adjectives they use to describe the image.

8 Using a technique familiar to our history colleagues when dealing with anachronisms. For instance, what would you definitely not find in this image of a cornfield?

9 Devise captions for each image that express the geographical essence of the image succinctly, as illustrated here: http://www.ocr.org.uk/Data/publications/promotional_materials/GCSE_Geography_A_B_PM_Poster.pdf

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