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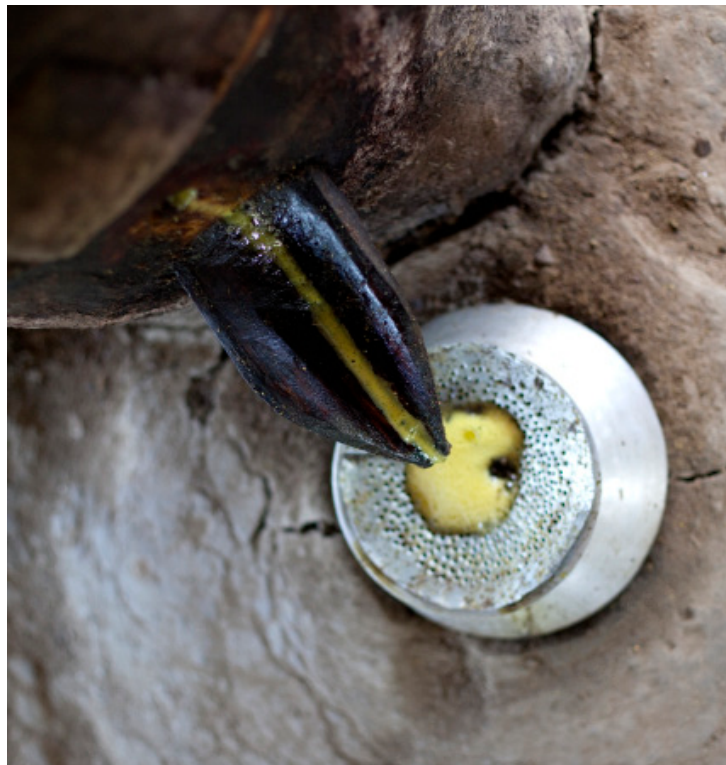
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Building a Just and Sustainable World

EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LITERACY

Images, photos, and pictures stimulate the mind. For the viewer, they offer a chance to connect and question. They also offer potential for play and imagination, and pulling the observer into purposeful messages.

Most often, newspaper and magazine readers quickly glance at photos and their captions. With this YES! lesson plan, you and your students can luxuriate—and pause—to truly understand an image, its message, and why it's interesting (or not).



EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LITERACY

Step One: What do you notice? (before the facts)

Ask your students to make sense of the photograph by trusting their instincts of observation and inference. In doing so, the photograph offers possibilities and interpretations beyond a typical reading where the reader glances at the picture to reinforce their interpretation of the picture's title or caption. Do not introduce any facts, captions, or other written words outside of the image. You may hear: thick yellow liquid, brown cracked basin, coconut-like bowl, silver disk with pockmarks, black beak.

Step Two: What are you wondering? (thinking about the facts)

After you've heard what your students are noticing, you'll probably hear the peppering of questions: (What is this? What is the yellow liquid? Is it a drink? Why are there holes on the bowl? Is that a black beak or mussels?) This is a good time to reveal the photo's caption, accompanying quote, and facts about the actual situation. Watch how the conversation shifts from what they believe to be true to discerning the facts about the photo.

Photo caption:

"Organic mustard seed oil, traditionally pressed using an ox attached to a wooden pressing machine at the UBINIG center in Tangall, Bangladesh." Photo by Suzanna Finley

Photo facts:

This wooden pressing machine is used for the traditional Bangladeshi method of processing mustard seed oil. With each lap, the ox crushes the mustard seeds into oil, which is channeled into a metal vessel. The oil is used and sold locally. It is not exported.

UBINIG is the abbreviation of its Bengali name Unnayan Bikalper Nitinirdharoni Gobeshona. In English it means Policy Research for Development Alternatives.

UBINIG strives to preserve traditional knowledge and practice of local farmers and artisans. It supports the development of sustainable communities, and sees agriculture, not as an industry, but as a local sustainer and viable way of life. UBINIG farmers pledge not to use pesticides or chemicals on their crops nor GMO seeds for planting. One change is reverting tobacco crops into indigenous food crops.

Mustard seed oil has a pungent smell and hot, nutty taste. It is prevalent in traditional Indian cooking. The oil is high in Omega-3 fatty acids and brings protection against heart disease. It is also used in massages.

More resources around the image

EXPLORE: UBINIG

READ: Food in Dry Times

LEARN: Environment and Food in Haiti: Two Crises, One Solution

Step Three: What next? (jumping off the facts)

Learning more about a photo leads to bigger questions and an opportunity to discuss broader issues and perspectives.

1. What are the benefits of reverting back to local, traditional ways of farming? Of keeping locally made goods for local consumption as opposed to export?
2. Genetically modified seeds (GM) have found their way into several countries' agricultural systems, including the U.S., China, and South Africa. Proponents claim GM seeds yield higher agricultural productivity and ensure food security. Others maintain these seeds are unsafe to eat and destroy other seeds and crops. Are GM seeds a beneficial agricultural choice or one that countries can and should avoid?
3. Canola and soybeans are the two most common oil seeds used for biodiesel fuel. There has been extensive research on mustard seed as a possible source. What factors make these seeds viable feedstock for alternative fuel? Why use biodiesel?



Full view of traditional pressing machine. Notice the mustard seed oil dripping into the metal vessel, just like main photo above.