

✓ Question [2]

What is the image's date, title, & creator? 1905, *The close of a career in New York*, Joseph Byron.

What type of person might have created this image, and for what purpose? Joseph Byron emigrated from England to NYC and gained fame by photographing Broadway actors and actresses for American magazines [6]. He developed an early "flash" (illumination by controlled magnesium flare) and used it to capture the slums of NYC's Lower East Side at night [3]. Those photographs helped make known the squalor and plight of the poor and caused mass public outrage when it was published in 1905. It helped motivate concerned people to better protect of the children and promote public health.

Was it personal or published, candid or posed, amateur or professional? Joseph, his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and his son were all professional photographers. Joseph founded the "Byron Company" photography studio in NYC. He also worked for the *New York Times* and was therefore a professional who published his photographs. Also, the children, while not strictly posed, are looking at the camera (one child is pointing at the photographer).

There are several kids (males?) within in a few feet of a dead horse: they seem to be playing in a deep gutters and puddles of (presumably) sewage. The kids seem disinterested in the dead horse, perhaps because they have already thoroughly investigated it. Most of the kids are looking at the photographer and one is pointing at the camera. The kids' clothes look simple: shorts, light jackets, and all but one seem to be wearing shoes. Two kids are wearing hats. The small child to the right of the street lamp seems to be wandering alone.

This seems to be an ordinary day in the lives of these citizens (not noticeably a holiday or parade event). No one is paying special attention to the dead horse, they don't seem even slightly out-of-sorts, this is apparently routine. The kids are playing in a street gutter, where sewage and waste would be flowing out of the city. No adult seems to be watching after the kids. The adults in the background are busily attending to their own business affairs. The automobiles in the street could be versions of Ford's Model C, or perhaps a Buick.

In about one sentence state the image's overall message. Without intervention the poor, particularly the children, will be left to suffer and die in filthy conditions... the "land of opportunity" who called for the world's "tired, poor, huddled masses" (Statue of Liberty; Emma Lazarus' poem *The New Colossus*) must do more to protect and provide for those poor and needy.

The smaller boy standing on the left is holding a stick and has a box to his left. Big puddles of something (?) exist in the middle of the cobblestone road although it doesn't look rainy. There are badly dilapidated wooden walls behind the kids. This could be lower socio-economic area of town. There is a gas street lamp that appear to be off. Perhaps the lamp is electric; electric lamps were introduced around this time .

✓ Observe



McDermott-Bunger is painted on the building in the center of the photograph. As of 1903, it was a dairy company located at 527 West 125th Street [5] and there was a stable of delivery horses nearby from which this horse probably originated. Byron may be advocating for these children specifically (and the less-fortunate in general) as a sort of "muckraking" reformer [3]. The focus here is on the neglected children who are among the most vulnerable in society. Perhaps these children are immigrants who's parents are working and that is why they are left alone. NYC in this era was transformed by immigration and urbanization: as were San Francisco and Chicago [4].

✓ Reflect

How does this image compare with other evidence? *Close of a Career* (CC) relates to both *Hull House Nursery* (HHN) "*Shorpy*" Higginbotham (SH) in that they all feature children in very desperate situations. They all call for citizen action; to support Progressives and social reforms. HHN and SH both have kids being "overseen" by an adult, but CC has kids completely unattended. Both SH and CC display problems of society, while HHN displays an attempted remedy.

Why might other evidence (messages and data) agree or disagree with this image? While their messages slightly differ, all three attempts to make the case that humane remedies for inhumane conditions are not only needed they actually work – if good citizens support them! Again, they are all calls to support the progressive movement *What does this photo suggest about the topic specific question:* Byron (and Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis to a greater degree) are partly responsible for bringing these conditions to mass public attention, including politicians who felt compelled (genuinely and from public pressure) to make substantive improvements to help the poor and needy.

What else do you need or want to know about this image? Is this squalor and filth indicative of the immigrant experience in the inner-city? Is this ordinary or exceptional? What is happening outside the mega-cities of NYC, Chicago and mining regions? Also, why are there no African-American children in the picture? Did their experiences tend to be similar to these kids'? To what degree are these kids experiencing poverty?

Joseph Byron. (1905). *The close of a career in New York*. [1]



Citations →

Citations: [#] throughout the primer

1. Joseph Byron. (1905). *The close of a career in New York*. Detroit Publishing Company photograph collection (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA): <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/det1994000613/PP/>
2. Informed by the Library of Congress's "Teacher's Guides and Analysis Tools" webpage found: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html> and Wineburg, S. (1991). Historical problem solving: A study of the cognitive processes used in the evaluation of documentary and pictorial evidence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 73-87.
3. Simmons, P. (1999) *Gotham Comes of Age: New York Through the Lens of the Byron Company, 1892-1942*. Pomegranate: San Francisco; Byron, J. & Lancaster, C. (1976). *Photographs of New York Interiors at the Turn of the Century: From the Byron Collection of the Museum of the City of New York*. Courier Dover Publications: Mineola, New York.
4. Johnson, P. (1999). *A History of the American People*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial
5. http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/env_review/manhattanville/08.pdf (p. 25)
6. <http://broadway.cas.sc.edu/content/joseph-byron>