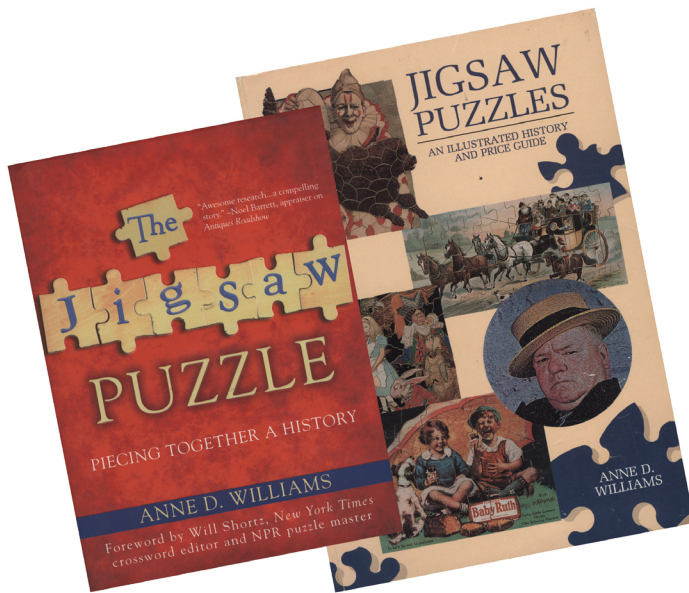


## Derrick Grose



A leading authority on jigsaw puzzles, Anne D. Williams has written two extremely useful reference works on the topic: *Jigsaw Puzzles – An Illustrated History and Price Guide* (ISBN 0870695371) and *The Jigsaw Puzzle – Piecing Together a History* (ISBN 0425198200).

then send in their own photographs to be made into hand-painted puzzles. *Eaton's Fall and Winter Catalogue* for 1935 offered shoppers clearance prices on 300 piece jigsaw puzzles at two for 15 cents. Subjects included “Shore Birds,” “Dutch Scene,” “Cardinal’s Portrait,” “Lions at Sunset,” “Seigniori Club,” and “Quebec Citadel.”

The makers of jigsaw puzzles have not always thought “inside the box” in terms of distributing their products. Early in the twentieth century, Raphael Tuck and Sons, an English manufacturer of postcards and puzzles, combined its products to produce postcard puzzles that could be sent through the mail. When the jigsaw puzzle fad was approaching its peak, newspapers and magazines started running cut-out jigsaw puzzles in their games sections. Sometimes the assembled puzzles could be mailed in for the reader to receive a premium from an advertiser. The jigsaw puzzle has also evolved into an electronic game that can be played on a computer, tablet or cellphone.

For many people the appeal of jigsaw puzzles may be

connected to nostalgic feelings about rainy days at the cottage in less “connected” times when assembling a puzzle would reveal an image of a part of the world or an aspect of life that one might otherwise never have seen except in a book. Maps were a rare and valuable commodity when John Spilsbury started producing his jigsaw puzzles. Do jigsaw puzzles continue to have educational value when students are already immersed in images?

The answer may be yes. When a jigsaw puzzle is being used as an introductory activity, the process of assembling the puzzle is as important as the image that emerges at the end. To effectively collaborate on assembling a puzzle students must communicate about strategy while also describing pieces. They formulate and test hypotheses about the individual pieces and the context in which they belong. They may notice details that would have been ignored if the students had been faced with “the big picture” at the beginning and not approached it as a jigsaw puzzle. It would be interesting to see how the questions generated by students about a particular photograph would compare with the questions that they would generate after having assembled that same photograph in the form of a jigsaw puzzle.

Whether or not students are approaching the images via a jigsaw puzzle, they should receive instruction on interpreting images in advance of the activity. Roland Case of the Critical Thinking Consortium offers some useful suggestions in his article “The questions pictures can answer” in the Winter 2010 issue of *School Libraries in Canada*. Having assembled the jigsaw puzzle students can then use Case’s strategies for analyzing an image:

Explain an image: ... explain the action in an image by asking the 5W’s questions (Who? What? Where? When? and Why?)...

Explore daily life: examine an image ... for clues about the life style, practices and conditions of historical and contemporary people and places.

Unpack the sensorial experience: ... explore an image from the sensory perspective of someone in the time and place...