Photographer: Alfred Eisenstaedt
Born 1898

Reflections

What are your first impressions of this photo?

What kind of emotions can you see being exhibited in this photograph?

How do you think the way the picture has been framed adds to the impact of the image?

Photograph: VJ Day Kiss
New York, USA
1945

Contextual information

Alfred Eisenstaedt was a German Jewish photographer born in 1898. He moved to Berlin at the age of 8 and from a young age was passionate about photography. He fought for the German army in the First World War and was injured shortly before the end of the war in 1918. Some of his most notable early pictures were of the formative years of the leaders of the Nazi movement. He photographed a meeting between Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini in Italy, and he was also responsible for taking an iconic image of Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels in 1933 at the Carlton Hotel in Geneva for a League of Nations meeting. Goebbels had apparently initially been friendly but then completely changed his attitude when he discovered Eisenstaedt was Jewish.

Eisenstaedt left Germany to escape persecution in 1935 and began working for the newly launched Life magazine in 1936 as one of its four staff photographers. Probably his most famous and long lasting photographs was the one that he took of an anonymous sailor in Time Square in New York on VJ Day in 1945, when the Allies won the war. The shot, of a sailor passionately kissing a woman he had just met reflected the joy and relief at the ending of a war which had such a lifelong and profound impact on everyone it had touched.