



# Photography

Photography began around 1830, but most people weren't able to instantly capture the world around them until after 1900. It's been said 'the camera never lies'. Keep this in mind as you look at some photographs and consider the following questions.

## Photographic style

- What is the main subject of the image?
- How would you describe the style of the photograph? Documentary, abstract, still life, portrait, landscape, nature, fashion, architecture, scientific, fine art, photojournalism, social documentary, snapshot, historical, commercial, conceptual, vernacular, surreal?

## Composition

- Can you see an underlying structure for how things have been arranged? Is the composition balanced? Is it simple or complex?
- Has the photographer used the rule of thirds to arrange features within the image? Imagine dividing the image into a grid of nine equal sections. Has the photographer placed key elements along these lines or within these sections?
- Has a sense of depth or perspective been created? Are there leading lines or diagonals? Is scale a key feature?
- Describe the way the composition leads your eye through the image.

## Light

- How would you describe the light in the image? Is it natural or artificial? Has the photographer used studio lighting or a flash?
- Is the light directional, creating shadows and depth? If so, where is it coming from? Are there single or multiple light sources? Has the light source been diffused or reflected? Has backlighting been used?
- Does the light create contrast in the image? Is there a full tonal range?
- How would you describe the quality of the light? Hard or soft edged, warm or cool, strong, bright, subtle?
- What impact does the lighting have on the atmosphere of the image?

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## Camera angle

- What angle has the photo been taken from?  
Is the main focal point in the middle, to one side, above or below the mid-point of the image?
- Has a bird's or worm's eye view been used?
- Is it a close up, mid-range, long shot or panoramic image?
- Has the photographer included a foreground, middle ground and/or background? Which is most prominent?
- What effect does the camera angle have on the way you view the subject?

## Focus

- Describe the way the photographer has focused the image. Is it sharply in focus or is some or all of it blurred? If only some parts are in focus, would you describe it as having a shallow depth of field? If it is blurred, has a long exposure time, motion, or a double exposure been used to create the blur, or could it have been achieved by editing?
- What type of lens might the photographer have used? Can you see evidence of a zoom, wide-angle, telescopic, microscopic or fish-eye lens?

## Editing and image manipulation

- Do you think the image has been manipulated after it was taken? How? Might the photographer have cropped it or enhanced its colour by using hue separation, brightness controls, or colour saturation? Have they altered the contrast or tonal range?
- Have they applied collage, montage, layering, filters, framing, or cropping techniques to alter the image?
- Describe the impact of any editing or image manipulation techniques.

## The message

- What do you think the photo is about? Has the photographer used metaphor, iconography, symbolism, or narrative to construct a meaning or message?
- Do you think the subject has been arranged or not?
- Describe the atmosphere of the image.
- Do you like/dislike it? Why?