Film and Photography Basics

By Sara Cornthwaite

Students examine photo essay journalism, learn photography fundamentals, create original photo essays about their lives and communities, then exhibit work in classroom displays.

Overview

Throughout this lesson, students will be exposed to examples of photo essay journalism while learning photography basics. They will apply their knowledge by creating an original photo essay that tells a story about an aspect of their lives or communities. To celebrate, their photo essays will be displayed in the classroom as an exhibition and students will spend a class viewing each other's work and discussing the meaning, emotions conveyed, and photography elements used.

Duration

2-3 Hours

Materials

- Create to Learn textbook or use the videos online: http://www.tigurl.org/fpbasics
- Camera (phone or camera)
- "Photo Essay Rubric"
- "Reflection Rubric"

Activate: Photo Essay Examples

Inform students that today they will be learning about the basics of photography. Photography can be a powerful storytelling tool. In fact, photo essay journalism has been around for decades. A photo essay is a series of photos that tell a captivating story.

Show students some examples of famous photo essays. While viewing each essay, have students attempt to describe what is being conveyed through the images. Ask them to try to infer meaning based on the colours, composition and content of each photo essay.

"Dorothea Lange's Moving Photographs of The Depression Era"
- The onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s caused Lange to turn her camera lens from the studio to the street.
- https://artsandculture.google.com/theme/dorothea-lange-s-moving-photographs-of-the-depression-era/UgKSzBM63VVaJw?hl=en

"Signed, X" by Kate Ryan *Sensitive Subject Matter
- Survival looks different for everyone. Life after sexual violence in our words
- https://www.signedxproject.com

"Perception" by KC Adams
- An attempt by Winnipeg artist, KC Adams, to combat the stereotypes some of the public have of First Nation, Inuit and Métis people to illustrate you can't judge a book by its cover.
- http://www.kcadams.net/art/photography/PERCEPTION.html

"Beauty Warriors" by Evija Laivina
- A collection of photographs featuring strange and unusual-looking beauty products.
- https://evijalaivina.com/beauty-warriors

Acquire: "Film and Photography Basics" (Sara Cornthwaite)

Inform the class that they will learn how to take professional looking photographs. Have students read "Film and Photography Basics" by Sara Cornthwaite, found on pages 82-92 of the Create to Learn textbook. Alternatively, they can watch the series here: https://www.createtolearn.ca/tutorial/film-and-photography-basics

To debrief the reading, ask students the following questions:

1. Define the following: rule of thirds, aperture, shutter speed, night exposure, iso, b-roll, transitions, stop motion
2. What are some of the tips and tricks Sara shares?
3. What makes a photo appealing?

Apply: Photo Essay Assignment

Have students demonstrate their learning of photography basics by creating a photo essay. A photo essay is a series of photos that tell a story. While each photo is different, all of them should be unified by colour composition and theme. Teachers may assign all students the same photo essay topic or allow students to choose their topic.

Sample photo essay topics:
- Record your 2020/21 year. Create a 2020 photo essay in order to record, understand and respond to what they've experienced during the pandemic.
- Showcase your community. Create a photo essay in order to record and showcase various aspects of your community.
- Document a local event. Create a photo essay in order to document the preparation and execution of an event happening in your community.

Criteria:
- A minimum of nine captivating images that tell a story (Some images may have captions, while others may not.)
- Photographs should demonstrate understanding of photography basics (rule of thirds, aperture, shutter speed, exposure, night exposure, iso)
- Students will need to write a one paragraph introduction that gives context to your 2020 Photo Essay.
- Students will be graded on the following categories: Creativity, Storytelling, Photography Basics and Introduction/Captions
- Photo essays can be submitted via electronic document

Assess: Photo Essay Exhibition

Set a date where everyone's photo essays will be displayed, and students will spend the class walking around and viewing all the photo essays, just like they would view art at an art gallery. Students should be encouraged to discuss the pieces with the partner as they view them. What emotions are evoked in each piece? What photography elements does the piece utilize? How can we infer meaning based on the colours, composition and content of each photo essay?

See "Photo Essay Rubric".

Finally, have students write a reflection about their peer's photo essays.

Reflection Assignment:
Before writing this reflection, take some time to view your classmates' photo essays. What do you notice about your classmates' photo essays? What emotions were conveyed through their photo essays? Did the stories told through the photo essays vary or were they similar? Why do you think that is? How did others' experiences/stories compare to your own? What conclusions can you make about your classmates based on their photo essays?

Extension:
- Publish the photo essays on a website, social media page, or in a book!

Photo Essay Rubric

CATEGORY	EXCELLENT (5)	GOOD (4)	DEVELOPING (3-2)	MISSING (1-0)
Introduction (/5 marks)	The introduction clearly and concisely gives context to the work and effectively sets the viewer up to understand the work.	The introduction gives context to the work.	The introduction attempts to give context to the work but falls short or includes grammatical errors that interfere with meaning.	The introduction is missing.
Storytelling (/10 marks)	The work evokes emotion, thought and questions clearly and tells a story about a subject.	The work evokes emotion clearly and tells a story.	The work attempts to evoke emotion and/or tell a story.	The work does not evoke emotion or tell a story.
Creativity (/5 marks)	Provides an interesting and unique approach to the topic.	Provides an interesting approach to the topic.	Attempts to provide an interesting approach to the topic.	No attempt was made to provide an interesting approach to the topic.

Photos & Layout (/10 marks)	Photos are of high quality and the layout portrays unique design elements and esthetic, demonstrating mastery of photography basics (rule of thirds, aperture, shutter speed, exposure, night exposure, iso).	Photos are of high quality and demonstrates understanding of photography basics (rule of thirds, aperture, shutter speed, exposure, night exposure, iso).	Photos are not high quality; and/or demonstrates some understanding of photography basics (rule of thirds, aperture, shutter speed, exposure, night exposure, iso).	Photos are missing; and/or does not demonstrate understanding of photography basics (rule of thirds, aperture, shutter speed, exposure, night exposure, iso).

TOTAL = ___ out of 30 marks

Reflection Rubric

CATEGORY	EXCELLENT (5)	GOOD (4)	DEVELOPING (3-2)	MISSING (1-0)
Depth of reflection (/5 marks)	Writing demonstrates an in-depth reflection on topic. Supporting details and/or examples are clearly identified.	Writing demonstrates a general reflection on the topic, including some supporting details and examples.	There are 1-2 spelling or grammatical errors.	Writing is missing reflection on the topic.
Required components (/10 marks)	Writing surpasses the required components of the assignment.	Writing includes the required components of the assignment.	Writing includes a few components of the assignment.	Writing is missing the required components.
Structure & Organization (/3 marks)	Writing is clear, concise, and well organized with the use of excellent sentence/ paragraph structure. Thoughts are expressed in a logical manner.	Writing is mostly clear, concise, and organized with the use of excellent sentence/paragraph structure. Thoughts are expressed in a logical manner.	Writing is unclear, and thoughts are not well organized. Thoughts are not expressed in a logical manner.	Writing is missing structure.
Grammar (/2 marks)	There are no spelling or grammar errors.	There are 1-2 spelling or grammatical errors.	There are 3-5 spelling or grammatical errors.	Grammatical errors interfere with meaning.

TOTAL = ___ out of 30 marks

Curriculum Connections

British Columbia and Yukon

- Composition 10: Access information for diverse purposes and from a variety of sources to inform writing; Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts; Recognize and appreciate how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts enhance and shape meaning and impact; Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts; Respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understanding and extend thinking; Express and support an opinion with evidence; Use the conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation proficiently and as appropriate to the context.
- New Media 10: Access information for diverse purposes and from a variety of sources to inform writing; Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts; Recognize and appreciate how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts enhance and shape meaning and impact; Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts; Respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understanding and extend thinking; Express and support an opinion with evidence; Use the conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation proficiently and as appropriate to the context.

- Composition 11: Apply appropriate strategies in a variety of contexts to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts, to guide inquiry, and to extend thinking; Recognize and understand how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts enhance and shape meaning and impact; Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts; Respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understandings and extend thinking; Express and support an opinion with evidence; Use the conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation proficiently and as appropriate to the context; Transform ideas and information to create original texts, using various genres, forms, structures, and styles; Experiment with genres, forms, or styles of creative and communicative texts.
- New Media 11: Apply appropriate strategies in a variety of contexts to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts, to guide inquiry and to extend thinking; Recognize and appreciate how various forms, formats, structures, and features of texts reflect a variety of purposes, audiences, and messages; Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts; Evaluate how literary elements and new media techniques and devices reflect different purposes and audiences; Respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understandings and extend thinking; Express and support an opinion with evidence; Use the conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation proficiently and as appropriate to the context; Transform ideas and information to create original texts, using various genres, forms, structures, and styles.
- Composition 12: Select and apply appropriate strategies in a variety of contexts to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts, to guide inquiry, and to transform thinking; Understand and appreciate how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts reflect a variety of purposes, audiences, and messages; Evaluate how literary elements, techniques, and devices enhance and shape meaning and impact; Respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understanding and transform thinking; Express and support an opinion with evidence to achieve purpose; Use the conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation proficiently and as appropriate to the context; Transform ideas and information to create original texts, using various genres, forms, structures, and styles.
- English Studies 12: Select and apply appropriate strategies in a variety of contexts to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts, to guide inquiry, and to extend thinking; Understand and appreciate how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts reflect a variety of purposes, audiences, and messages; Evaluate how literary elements, techniques, and devices enhance and shape meaning and impact; Respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understanding and extend thinking; Express and support an opinion with evidence; Use the conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation proficiently and as appropriate to the context; Transform ideas and information to create original texts, using various genres, forms, structures, and styles.
- New Media 12: Select and apply appropriate strategies in a variety of contexts to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts, to guide inquiry, and to transform thinking; Recognize and understand how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts reflect a variety of purposes, audiences, and messages; Evaluate how literary elements as well as specific new media techniques and devices enhance and shape meaning and impact; Respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understanding and transform thinking; Express and support an opinion with evidence to achieve purpose; Use the conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation proficiently and as appropriate to the context; Transform ideas and information to create original texts, using various genres, forms, structures, and styles.

Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut

- English Language Arts 10-1: Generate and experiment with strategies that contribute to forming tentative understandings, interpretations and positions; Experiment with language, image and structure; Identify own ideas, perspectives and interpretations and evaluate them for depth of explanation, evidence or support; and consider the ideas, perspectives and interpretations of others to broaden own understandings when exploring and responding to texts; Recognize the use of elements of effective oral, visual and multimedia presentations and describe their effects; Take ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging; Analyze and describe language and images used in literature and other texts to convey respectful and considerate, or disrespectful and inconsiderate, perspectives and attitudes.
- English Language Arts 20-1: Generate and experiment with strategies that contribute to forming tentative understandings, interpretations and positions; Experiment with language, image and structure; Analyze and assess images in print and nonprint texts in terms of created reality and appropriateness to purpose and audience; Describe the effectiveness of various texts, including media texts, for presenting feelings, ideas and information, and for evoking response; Select a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text; Take ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging; Use language and image to honour own and others' accomplishments.
- English Language Arts 30-1: Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions draw from a repertoire of effective strategies to form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions; Understand the concept of convention; and apply it to oral, print, visual and multimedia text forms when appropriate; Analyze and assess images in print and nonprint texts in terms of created reality and appropriateness to purpose and audience; Select a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text; Take ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging; Use language and image to honour own and others' accomplishments.

Ontario

- English Grade 10, Academic and Applied: Write complete sentences that communicate their meaning clearly and accurately, varying sentence type, structure, and length to suit different purposes and making smooth and logical transitions between ideas; Use punctuation correctly and appropriately to communicate their intended meaning; Use grammar conventions correctly and appropriately to communicate their intended meaning clearly and fluently; Interpret media texts, including increasingly complex texts, identifying and explaining the overt and implied messages they convey; Identify conventions and/or techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they convey meaning and influence their audience; Produce media texts for a variety of purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.
- English Grade 11, University and College Prep: Write complete sentences that communicate their meaning clearly and effectively, skilfully varying sentence type, structure, and length to suit different purposes and making smooth and logical transitions between ideas; Use knowledge of spelling rules and patterns, a variety of resources, and appropriate strategies to recognize and correct their own and others' spelling errors; Use punctuation correctly and effectively to communicate their intended meaning; Use grammar conventions correctly and appropriately to communicate their intended meaning clearly and effectively; Explain how media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, are created to suit particular purposes and audiences; Interpret media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, identifying and explaining the overt and implied messages they convey; Identify conventions and/or techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they convey meaning and influence their audience; Produce media texts, including increasingly complex texts, for a variety of purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.
- English, Grade 12 University and College Prep: Write complete sentences that communicate their meaning clearly and effectively, skilfully varying sentence type, structure, and length to suit different purposes and making smooth and logical transitions between idea; Use knowledge of spelling rules and patterns, a variety of resources, and appropriate strategies to recognize and correct their own and others' spelling errors; Use punctuation correctly and effectively to communicate their intended meaning; Use grammar conventions correctly and appropriately to communicate their intended meaning clearly and effectively; Explain how media texts, including complex and challenging texts, are created to suit particular purposes and audiences; Interpret media texts, including complex or challenging texts, identifying and explaining with increasing insight the overt and implied messages they convey; Identify conventions and/or techniques used in a variety of media forms and demonstrate insight into the way they convey meaning and influence their audience; Produce media texts, including complex texts, for a variety of purposes and audiences, using the most appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.

Grade 9 Technology and Skilled Trades

Strand A: Design Processes and Related Skills

- A1.1 investigate and describe fundamental technological concepts, and explain how they are relevant to developing products and/or services in a variety of broad-based technology areas
- A1.2 apply an understanding of fundamental technological concepts, design considerations, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) concepts as appropriate in developing projects involving the creation of products and/or services
- A1.4 communicate design ideas for various purposes and audiences, using appropriate industry terminology
- A1.7 collect and synthesize information from a variety of sources, including people with diverse perspectives and from various communities, such as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, to inform their projects

Strand B: Technological Development, Impacts, and Careers

- B1.2 analyze how the development and application of technologies are impacted by legal, ethical, social, economic, and environmental considerations
- B1.3 investigate and identify contributions to technological innovations made by Canadians, including women, and members of diverse groups and communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
- B3.1 explore a variety of roles, responsibilities, and opportunities related to current and emerging careers in technological fields, including a variety of broad-based technology areas, and the skilled trades
- B3.3 investigate and describe a variety of pathways leading to careers in technological fields and the skilled trades, including their structure and the educational and financial requirements for them

Grade 10 Technology and Skilled Trades

Strand A: Design Processes and Related Skills

- A1.1 apply an understanding of fundamental technological concepts, and evaluate their significance in developing products and/or services in a variety of broad-based technology areas
- A1.2 apply an understanding of fundamental technological concepts, design considerations, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) concepts as appropriate in developing projects involving the creation of products and/or services
- A1.4 communicate design ideas for various purposes and audiences, using appropriate industry terminology and industry-standard formats and techniques
- A1.7 collect and synthesize information from a variety of sources, including people with diverse perspectives and from various communities, such as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, to inform their projects

Strand B: Technological Development, Impacts, and Careers

- B1.2 analyze how the development and application of technologies are impacted by legal, ethical, social, economic, and environmental considerations

- B1.3 investigate and describe contributions to technological innovations made by Canadians, including women, and members of diverse groups and communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
- B3.1 explore a variety of roles, responsibilities, and opportunities related to current and emerging careers in technological fields, including a variety of broad-based technology areas, and the skilled trades
- B3.3 compare a variety of pathways leading to careers in technological fields and the skilled trades, including their structure and the educational and financial requirements for them