



A PICTURE IS WORTH 1000 WORDS:
HOW TO TAKE A GREAT PHOTO
BY JUDY CHINITZ

There are PHOTOGRAPHS that are INDELIBLY (permanently) imprinted in your mind's eye once you have seen them. Perhaps you have seen the raising of the American flag over IWO JIMA, during World War II, or the firefighters doing the same over the rubble of the fallen World Trade Center on 9/11/2001. There's movie star, MARILYN MONROE's, skirts BILLOWING up, as she stands on a New York City subway grate, or baseball LEGEND, LOU GEHRIG, weeping as he says his goodbyes to the game he loved. What makes these photos so ICONIC? What is it that makes a great photo a great photo? Today we'll look at this question and then –it will be up to you to ENVISION, and then take, your own photo for the ages.

SPELL: PHOTOGRAPHS SPELL: LEGEND SPELL:
BILLOWING

What word in this paragraph means permanently? INDELIBLY

Whose skirts billowed up as she stood on the subway grate?

MARILYN MONROE

Who wept as he said goodbye to the game of baseball? LOU

GEHRIG

Over what two places were American flags raised? IWO JIMA,

WORLD TRADE CENTER

In what city was the World Trade Center? NEW YORK CITY

Iwo Jima is a part of what country? JAPAN

On what baseball team did Lou Gehrig play? NEW YORK YANKEES

What was Lou Gehrig's nickname? THE IRON HORSE

Name or describe a photograph you particularly love. (It does not have to be a famous one.)

ALL SPELL: In just a few words, tell us what your theory is as to what makes a good photograph.

The fact is, anyone can take a picture: just point and shoot, right? But the blurry photo of your Aunt Agnus shoving CHOCOLATE pudding down her throat, or the selfie your parents force you to take in front of the ROCKEFELLER Plaza Christmas tree, or even the adorable photo of your dog looking at you BESEECHINGLY [longingly], hoping for a cookie, are not going down in the annals of history as MONUMENTAL works of art, MERITING a permanent place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, are they? The fact is that just like learning to play an instrument, learning to paint, learning to sing – taking a truly great photograph is a question of knowledge of the basics, combined with talent, and a COLOSSAL amount of practice.

SPELL: CHOCOLATE SPELL: ROCKEFELLER SPELL: MONUMENTAL

Who can take a photo? ANYONE

What kind of pudding did Aunt Agnus show down her throat? CHOCOLATE

What word in this paragraph means to ask for something desperately or earnestly? BESEECHINGLY

You're in front of what when your parents force you to take a selfie? CHRISTMAS TREE, ROCKEFELLER PLAZA CHRISTMAS TREE

Taking a great photograph can be compared to what other artistic endeavor? LEARNING TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT, PAINTING, SINGING

SAY/MEAN/MATTER: There is skill and knowledge required for becoming a great photographer. What do you believe this paragraph says is incredibly important in terms of the background of the photo? What does this mean and why does it matter?

ALL SPELL: In just a few words, describe an element of, or something you think makes, a really bad photo.

So let's start with learning those FUNDAMENTALS. First of all, there is STRUCTURE. Without structure, a photo is just another boring photo. According to photographer, KEN ROCKWELL, "Every image needs strong underlying COMPOSITIONAL order so that it grabs the eye from a hundred feet away. He goes on to say that, "If it can't

grab the eye from a distance, it will *never* be an INTERESTING photo, REGARDLESS of how many fine details it might have. Details don't matter if there's no story behind it." Let's study his 1966 award winning photograph, "RUIN."

SPELL: FUNDAMENTALS SPELL: REGARDLESS SPELL: INTERESTING

What is the first important fundamental of a great photo?

STRUCTURE

What photographer is quoted in the above passage? KEN ROCKWELL

What does a photo need to grab from a distance? EYE

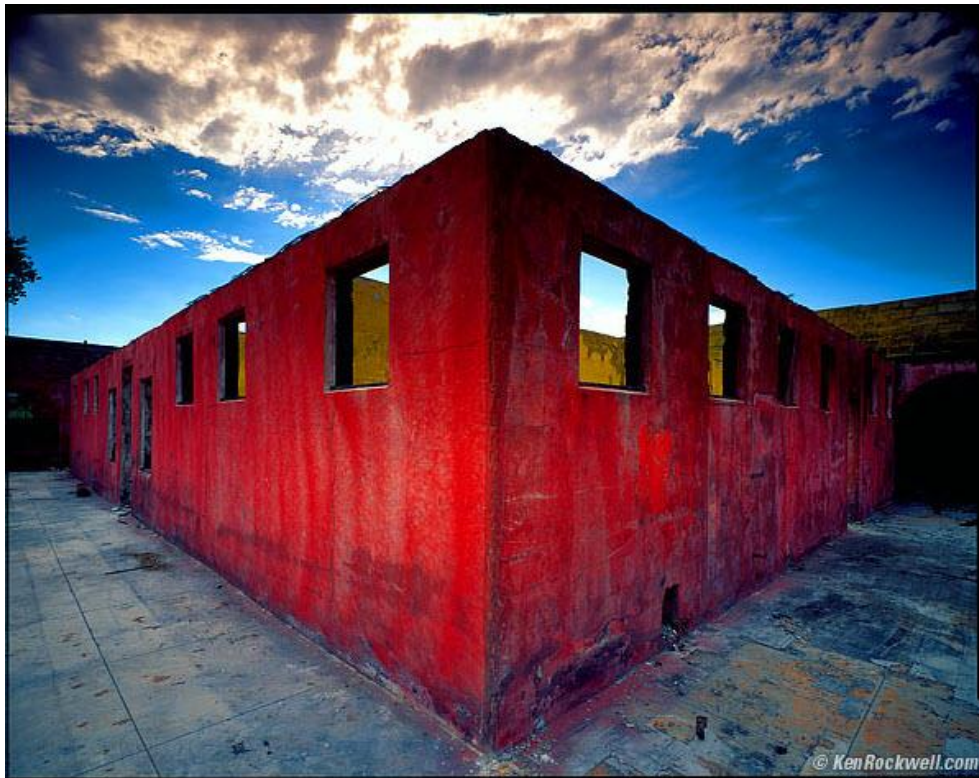
What is the name of Ken Rockwell's award winning photo? RUIN

Every image needs what kind of order? COMPOSITIONAL

Without structure, a photo is described as what? BORING PHOTOGRAPH, BORING

In what year was Ruin taken? 1966

RAPID FIRE: Each of you look at "Ruin" and share one word that comes to mind, evoked by the photo.



"RUIN" – BY KEN ROCKWELL

Mr. Rockwell points to this as an example of a photo with EXEMPLARY structure, which he defines as "...broad underlying colors, shapes and contrasts between light and dark." For example, here you have the big red DIAMOND in the middle, surrounded by a MUTED blue-gray (which is called "NEGATIVE SPACE"). The negative space makes the red really jump out at you. A great photo – even a black and white photo – has contrast, balance, and a subject that somehow catches your eye and refuses to let it go. A great photo, ASSERTS, Mr. Rockwell, is not so much about the subject of the photo – after all, what is so INHERENTLY interesting about a crumbling red ruin of a building? – but about the compositional structure. A well-structured photo can make anything visually interesting.

SPELL: EXEMPLARY SPELL: INHERENTLY SPELL: ASSERTS

What shape catches your eye in the middle of Ruin? DIAMOND

What is the muted blue-gray around the red diamond called? NEGATIVE SPACE

How is the blue-gray negative space characterized? MUTED

Name some of the attributes that catch your eye in a great photo?

CONTRAST, BALANCE, EYE-CATCHING SUBJECT, COLORS, SHAPES, CONTRASTS BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARK

A well-structured photo can make anything what? VISUALLY APPEALING, APPEALING

ROUND TABLE: Do you agree with Ken Rockwell, that any subject can be an interesting photo? Let's discuss why you agree or disagree.

Next, there's the COMPOSITION of the photo. Exclude everything that does not contribute to the image you are choosing to HIGHLIGHT. Mr. Rockwell suggests moving the camera forward and backwards, left and right, up and down, to fit in the elements of your photo exactly the way you want them FRAMED. When considering composition, bear in mind the EYE PATH: that is, to what is the viewers eye meant to be attracted. In "Ruins," your eye immediately is drawn to the CENTRALIZED corner of the bright, red building. BRIGHTNESS, contrast, and color, are all elements that can be used

to direct the eye. Thus, he suggests, keep the details away from that central subject. And be sure that important elements are not cut off by the frame of the photo. He suggests keeping the corners of the photo darker, to keep the viewers' eyes centered on the picture. Let's take a look at another EXTREMELY famous photo to see if these basics are covered.

SPELL: HIGHLIGHT SPELL: CENTRALIZED SPELL: BRIGHTNESS

What the viewer's eye is meant to be attracted to is called the what?
EYE PATH

What should not be cut off in a photo? **IMPORTANT ELEMENTS**

The corners of the photo should be what so as to keep the viewer's eye centered on the picture? **DARKER**

What is the eye attracted to in "Ruins"? **CENTRALIZED CORNER OF BUILDING**

What elements can be used to direct the eye? **BRIGHTNESS, CONTRAST, COLOR**

How should one move the camera to frame your photo perfectly?
FORWARD, BACKWARDS, LEFT, RIGHT, UP, DOWN

ROUND TABLE: Let's do the same for this photo of Marilyn Monroe below. Each of you analyze what you find particularly interesting (or not) in it and share your thoughts with each other. Why do you personally think it is so famous?



The iconic Marilyn Monroe in 1954

SAM SHAW'S MARILYN MONROE, 1954

This photo of the actress, Marilyn Monroe, is so famous that a version of it - as a 26 foot tall, 30,000 pound statue - landed in the middle of the city of Stamford, CONNECTICUT in 2018. Notice the structure of the photo: the contrast of her blowing white dress to the dark BACKGROUND. The eye is immediately drawn, and kept, in the center of the picture, to the flash of the bulb behind her (creating almost a HALO over her head) and to Marilyn's face and the flowing ripples of the dress. In terms of composition, unimportant details are kept in the background where they are wholly UNOBSTRUSIVE, not DETRACTING from the central image. Also not that Marilyn's dress is seen in full on the left (not cut off in the frame of the photo). Notice how your eye is captured by the central subject: the details behind are unimportant. The photo contains all the critical elements we've discussed so far, including contrast, a clear eye path, structure, composition, and so forth.

SPELL: CONNECTICUT SPELL: BACKGROUND SPELL:
UNOBTRUSIVE

In what city was the statue of Marilyn Monroe placed? STAMFORD

The flash of the bulb behind her looks like what around her head?

HALO

What word in this paragraph means diminishing the value of?

DETRACTING

SAY/MEAN/MATTER: What does this paragraph suggest is
incredibly important in terms of the background of a photo?

How tall was the statue of Marilyn? 26 feet

How much did the statue of Marilyn weight? 30,000 pounds

30,000 pounds is how many tons? 15 ($30,000/2000 = 15$)



The completed Marilyn Monroe statue in Stamford on June 6, 2018.

There are a few other important basics for creating a great photograph: for example, LIGHTING. Again, thinking about the photo of Marilyn above, the parts of the photo you want EMPHASIZED should be lighter than the unimportant details. And speaking of those details, another rule: if details don't add to the

photo, they detract. Get rid of them. Also, keep in mind color, an absolutely CRITICAL element in great photography, including black and white pictures, like the above one of Marilyn Monroe. Lighter and warmer colors like red, orange and yellow move “forward” toward the viewer in that, the eyes are attracted to them first. Cool colors move into the background, like greens, blues and violets. To create a 3-DIMENSIONAL effect, just put a warm color in front of a cool color. Look again at “Ruin”: the building pops out at you because it is a warm red in front of cool blues. Colors also evoke feelings: warm colors are INVIGORATING and get us heated up whereas cool colors are SOOTHING and peaceful.

SPELL: EMPHASIZED **SPELL: CRITICAL** **SPELL: SOOTHING**

The parts of the photo you want emphasized should be what as compared to unimportant details? LIGHTER

What kinds of colors move forward toward the viewer? LIGHTER AND WARMER COLORS

RAPID FIRE: Name some warmer colors? Cooler colors? RED, ORANGE, YELLOW or GREEN, BLUES, VIOLOETS

Rapid Cool colors move where? INTO THE BACKGROUND

If details don't add to a photo, what should you do? GET RID OF THEM

What feelings do warm colors evoke? INVIGORATING, HEAT US UP

The feelings cool colors evoke are described as what? SOOTHING, PEACEFUL

What is a synonym for the verb to sooth? CALM, PACIFY, SUBDUE, COMFORT

Putting a warmer color in front of a cooler color creates what kind of effect? 3 DIMENSIONAL

RAPID FIRE: What color do you find most soothing?

BREAK OUT GROUPS: Discuss your answers to the most soothing or most invigorating colors. Explain your reasoning.

Let's take a look at the use of color in another incredibly famous photo: “Firefighters Raising the Flag” by THOMAS E. FRANLIN. Mr. Franklin, a news photographer, describes his emotions as he stood

over the ruins of the 2 WORLD TRADE CENTER buildings, which were attacked and fell on SEPTEMBER 11, 2001: "This was an important shot. It told more than just death and DESTRUCTION. It said something to me about the strength of the American people and of these firemen having to battle the UNIMAGINABLE." Look at the structure and composition of the picture. There's just so much to be said: the pop of color of the firefighters and the flag against the gray of the rubble of the destroyed buildings; the way the flagpole blends into the gray of the rubble, almost completely PARALLELING one of main beams in the background, yet it also stands out because of the flag dangling from it.

SPELL: SEPTEMBER SPELL: UNIMAGINABLE SPELL: DESTRUCTION

What buildings were destroyed on 9/11/2001? WORLD TRADE CENTER

The photographer believes his picture depicts not only destruction but also the what of the American people? STRENGTH

Who took the photo "Firefighters Raising the Flag"? THOMAS E. FRANKLIN

What elements in this photo add the pop of color? FIREMEN, FLAG
Mr. Franklin uses the word strength in his quote to mean what? FORTITUDE, RESILIANCE

ALL SPELL: Before we proceed, everyone look at this photo and tell the group, in just a word or two, what emotion it evokes in you.



“Firefighters Raising the Flag” by Thomas E. Franklin

Other professional photographers have their own theories. For example, JUSTIN MOTT, states that he believes the most important element of a photo is the emotion it evokes – a great photo tells a story. He is not alone in that belief. One of the most famous photographers in American history was ANSEL ADAMS, who was also an ENVIRONMENTALIST. Adam’s love of nature is CAPTURED in his ASTOUNDINGLY beautiful photos of American’s natural places. He said: “In my mind’s eye, I VISUALIZE how a

particular...sight and feeling will appear on print. If it excites me, there is a good chance it will make a good photograph.”

SPELL: CAPTURED SPELL: VISUALIZE SPELL: ASTOUNDINGLY

Where does Ansel Adams visualize how a sight or feeling will appear in print? **MINDS EYE**

Besides photography, what was Ansel Adams other profession? **ENVIRONMENTALIST**

What photographers state that the emotion evoked by a photo is also a key element? **JUSTIN MOTT, ANSEL ADAMS**

Again, looking at the firefighters: think about their emotions at that moment, their eyes raised up to the heavens, standing in front of the **UNSPEAKABLE** destruction that cost thousands of lives. Notice that the flag is not yet fully raised, “flying at half mast.” You don’t have to have an actual experience of that day to feel the horror and heartache, but also the belief in American **COURAGE** and determination. The photo was named, by multiple organizations including the **ASSOCIATED PRESS**, best picture of the year and it was a runner-up for a **PULITZER PRIZE**.

SPELL: UNSPEAKABLE SPELL: COURAGE SPELL: HEARTACHE

The flag is flying in what position? **HALF MAST**

What media organization named this photo of the year? **ASSOCIATED PRESS**

The photo was a runner up for what? **PULITZER PRIZE**

What does a flag flying at half mast denote? **MOURNING, THE DEATH OF SOMEONE**

RAPID FIRE: Name one thing you love or dislike about this photo.

Below are five more of the most iconic photographs ever taken. Take a few minutes to **CONTEMPLATE** each before you set out on your own photographic **ADVENTURE**. Think about all the basics you learned about today: structure, negative space, eye path, composition, lighting, color, emotion. And then think about Ansel

Adam's IMMORTAL words of photographic wisdom: "A great photograph is one that fully EXPRESSES what one feels, in the deepest sense, about what is being photographed."

SPELL: CONTEMPLATE SPELL: ADVENTURE SPELL: IMMORTAL

A great photograph expresses what one feels about what? WHAT IS BEING PHOTOGRAPHED

Before we embark on your photographic adventure, name again some of the basic elements of a truly great photo for you to bear in mind: **STRUCTURE, EYE PATH, NEGATIVE SPACE, COMPOSITION, LIGHTING, COLOR, EMOTION, SUBJECT, STORY**
ROUND TABLE: Let's look at the below photos together. Share your thoughts about one or more of them with each other.

COLLABORATIVE RESPONSES: Let's plan out two or more photos that express to the world both what it's like to live in silence...and what learning to spell to communicate means to those who have. As a group, brainstorm your ideas for each in terms of structure, composition, subject, and the other photographic elements you learned about today. Then we'll move on to the VAKT below

The time has come, photographic adventurers! Let's head off into the photographic wilds. Take several pictures keeping in mind what you learned today. (Get help with the motor as needed until you are independent.)

CREATIVE WRITING: PICK ONE OF THE ICONIC PHOTOS BELOW AND TELL A STORY ABOUT IT.



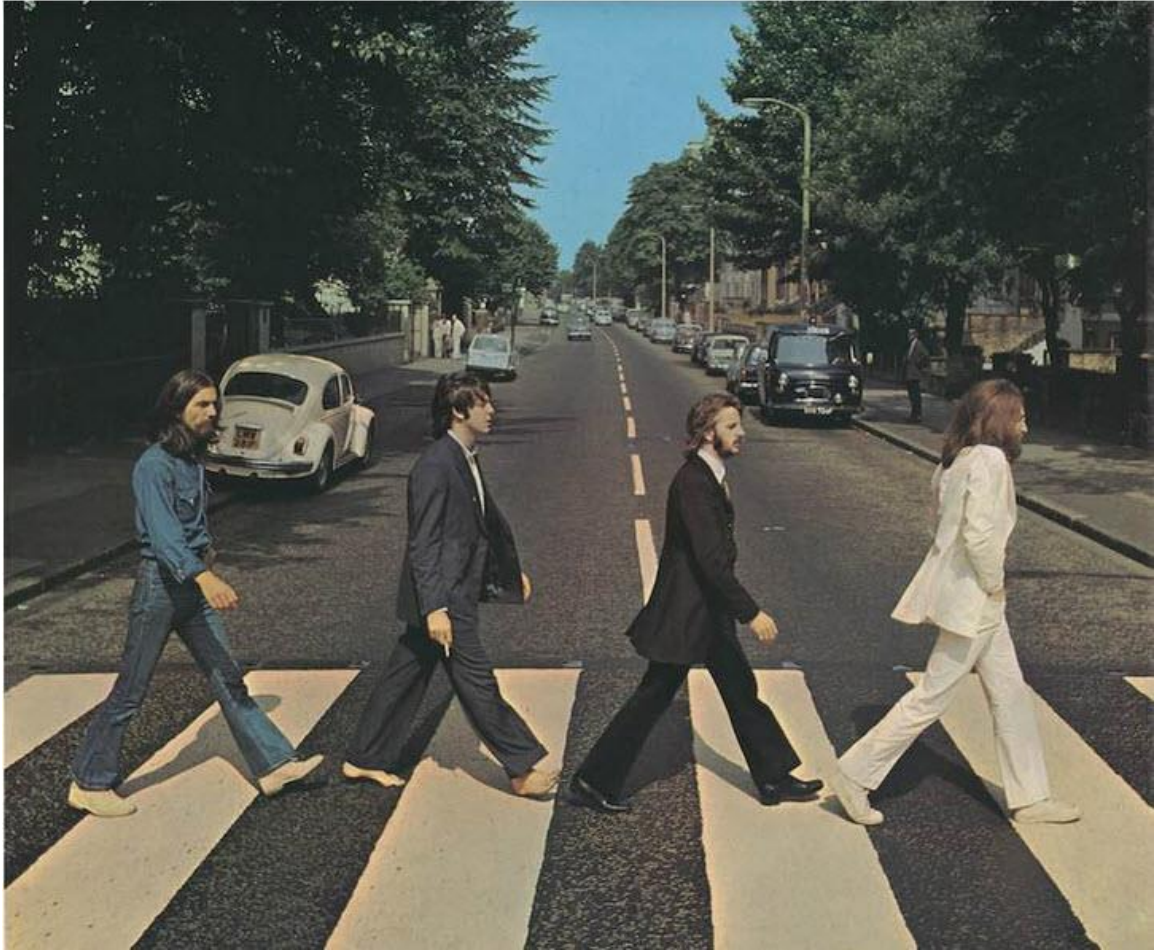
“V-J DAY KISS,” BY ALFRED EISENSTAEDT (A U.S. Navy Sailor kisses a stranger in New York City’s Times Square, on August 14, 1945, the day World War II ended)



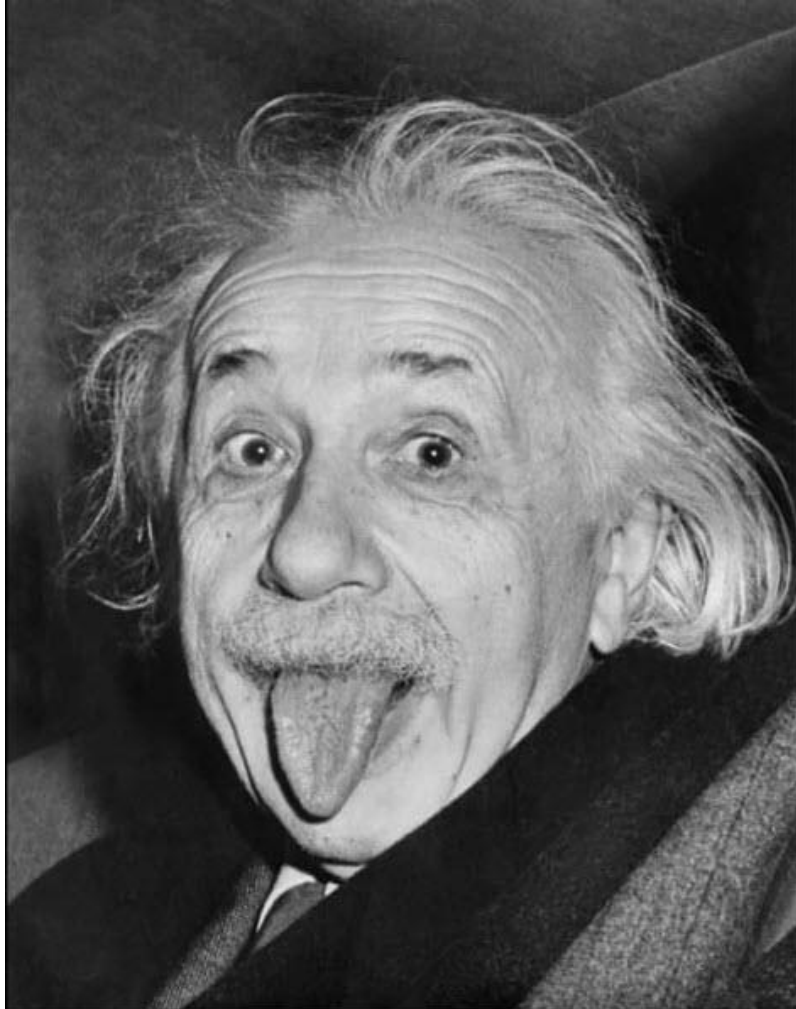
**"LUNCH ATOP A SKYSCRAPER," BY CHARLES C. EBBETS
(SEPTEMBER 20, 1932, NEW YORK CITY)**



“FLAG RAISING ON IWO JIMA” BY JOE ROSENTHAL, 1945 – THIS ONE DID WIN A PULIZER PRIZE



ALBUM COVER FOR ABBEY ROAD, THE BEATLES, BY IAIN
MACMILLAN



“EINSTEIN,” BY ARTHUR SASSE

Judy Chinitz is the Founder of [Mouth-to-Hand Learning Center](#) in Mt. Kisco, New York where she delights in teaching nonspeakers how to type.

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