

Photography 101: The Simple Truth

Developed by Heather Eaton
La Joya Community High School
Avondale, Arizona

Overview and Rationale

Journalism students need to effectively tell the story not only through words but also through pictures. We live in a world surrounded by “pics” with the digital devices carried in our pockets. The issues are not the devices; the issue lies in the lack of composition and technique in effectively using the device. The simple truth shows with the correct tools and guidance, a journalist can take their “pics” and turn them in to powerful journalistic images.

Goals for Understanding

- a. The students will learn photography basics through the elements and principles and rules of composition.
- b. The students will be able to break down the components of the exposure triangle in order to better understand the relationship between the ISO, aperture and shutter.
- c. The students will be able to trouble shoot common issues resulting from camera settings being incorrect.

Essential Questions

- a. Is there a difference between a “pic” and an “image?”
- b. When using different visual and camera techniques, do you feel this can alter the viewer’s reaction to the story?
- c. Do images have a distinct voice like a narrative might have?

Critical Engagement Questions

- a. What is the difference between photojournalism and photography as a fine art?
- b. Under what situations can the settings on the camera alter the impact of the visual story?
- c. Is a picture really worth a thousand words?

Resources/Materials

- PDF: Photography 101: The Simple Truth
- Handout: Photography 101: The Simple Truth
- Website: www.camerasim.com
- Cell phone or Camera
- Post-It Notes
- Pens/Pencils

Overviews and Timeline

Activity 1 (One 55-minute class):

- Opening: Give each student a Post-it Note.
 - Ask the students to write their answer to this question on the Post-It Note:
 - What makes a GREAT picture?
 - Have the students put the Post-It Notes on the board.
- PDF-Photography 101: The Simple Truth Hand-Out
 - Discuss each slide with the students. Have the students create a “visual journal” to take down the notes. The students can also use the journal to find magazine clippings showing examples of each term on the slides in the PDF Slide show.
- Give each student the Photography 101: The Simple Truth Handout
 - The handout can be a guide for the note taking process.
- Closure/Ticket Out:
 - Ask the students the same question and have them write their new answer on a different Post-It Note.
 - What makes a GREAT picture?
 - Have them compare their answers with a shoulder partner.

Activity 2 (One 55-minute class)

- Opening: Give each student a Post-it Note.
 - Ask the students to write their answer to this question on the Post-It Note:
 - What makes a GREAT picture?
 - Have the students put the Post-It Notes on the board.
- Website: <http://www.camerasim.com>
 - Talk about each control:
 - Aperture priority: You set the aperture according to how you want your depth of field and then the camera will set the shutter for you.
 - Shutter priority: You set the shutter according to how much action/stop motion you want in focus and the camera will set the aperture for you.
 - Manual: You will need to set the aperture and the shutter according to what you feel is more important.
 - Rule of thumb:
 - If you are shooting a portrait or head shot for an interview your aperture should be more important to achieve the best depth of field (DOF).
 - If you are shooting moving objects or people then set the shutter speed first and adjust everything else accordingly. (Stop Motion: A person jumping a hurdle, start with shutter of 1/250)
 - Tripod: This should be used if your shutter speed is 1/60 or below!
 - Lighting: What does the environment conditions look like?
 - Distance: How far are you from your subject?
 - Focal length: This is the focal length of the lens.
 - Rule of thumb:
 - The smaller the number (18mm) the wider the area or the more environment you will see in the image. Cell phones tend to give us around a 20mm-30mm focal length.
 - ISO: This is like Film speed! It controls the sensitivity to light. It is very similar to our eyes. The smaller the number (100) is for bright environments like outside in full sun. The higher the number (1600) is for low light situations like lights off during a birthday party to blow out candles.

- Rule of thumb:
 - ISO100: Bright sunny day.
 - ISO200-400: Inside under fluorescent lights.
 - ISO800: Low light.
 - ISO1600 and above: This will show noise or grain. Your images will look fuzzy like snow. We also see this when we zoom in with our cell phones!
- Aperture: Also know as f-stops. We see them as decimals in our cameras (f4.0). Aperture controls the amount of light coming into the camera; essentially, how big the hole is at that moment.
 - Rule of thumb:
 - The wider the f-stop, which creates a shallow depth of field (blur in the background) like an f2.8, this will make your subject POP!
 - The smaller the f-stop, f22 will keep everything in your image all in focus. Think about when you photograph the Grand Canyon or a photo of the entire Senior Class.
 - BE AWARE! The wider opening is a SMALLER number (f2.8) and the smaller opening is a BIGGER number (f22). This confuses people often!
- Shutter: We see this as a fraction in our camera (1/250). Shutter controls the duration of light entering the camera; essentially, how quick the hole opens and closes.
 - Rule of thumb:
 - The faster the shutter the LESS light is entering your camera.
 - The slower the shutter the MORE light is entering your camera, but it may result in you needing a tripod.
- In order to stop motion with no blur, you need a shutter of at least 1/250 of a second.
- The three components together ISO, SHUTTER and APERTURE are called the exposure triangle. You must have all three in order to create an image that is correctly exposed.
- Light Meter: This is the number line you see in your viewfinder when pressing down the shutter button.
 - Rule of thumb:
 - The curser should be right in the middle on “0” to create proper exposure. If it goes to the right (positive) it will be overexposed and to the left (negative) it will be underexposed.
- Closure: Have the students try combinations that work with the following starting scenarios.
 - Example scenarios:
 - Lighting: Mostly sunny
 - Distance 7.5 ft
 - Focal length: 18mm
 - Shutter: 1/125
 - What are the ISO and the aperture to create a good exposure?

VI. Assessment

Activity 1: Vocabulary Test

Activity 2: Camera Simulation Worksheet