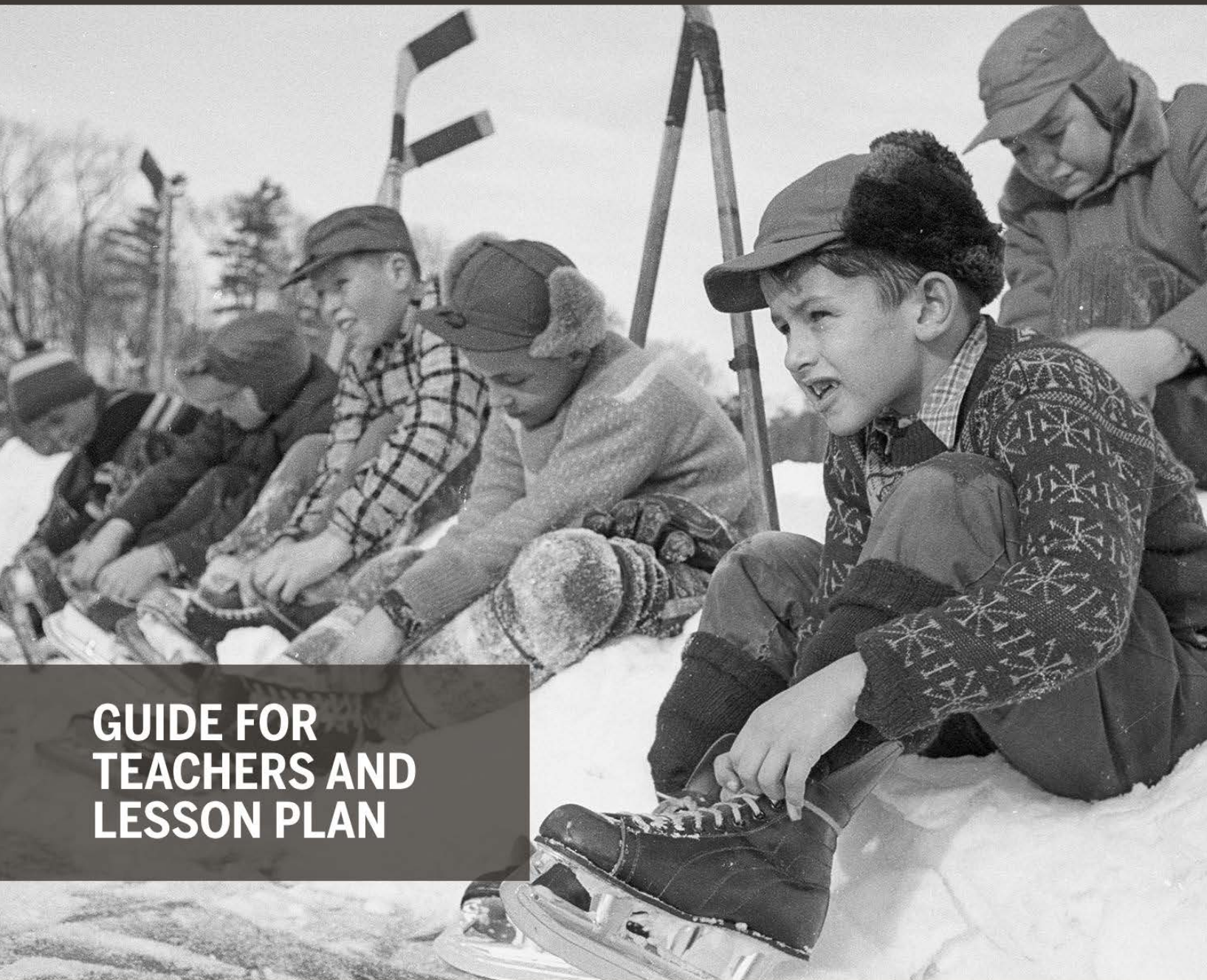


PHOTOSTORIES CANADA



GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND LESSON PLAN



National Gallery of Canada
Musée des beaux-arts du Canada

VMC 
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Canada

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION: A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO PHOTOSTORIES CANADA

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF PHOTOSTORIES

The National Film Board of Canada Still Photography Division produced photostories from 1955 to 1971. A photostory is a form of photojournalism where images and texts work together to tell a story. The Division sent photographers out on photoshoots across the country to cover a variety of subjects. Photographs were combined with text to create fascinating stories about Canada and its people, which were distributed nationally and internationally through magazines, newspapers and books.

The Photostories Canada website is dedicated to helping make photostories available to the general public, students and researchers. An impressive archive, it is a useful tool for students to discover Canada's past through photography. A cross-curricular experience touches on the following subjects:

- Visual Art (Photography)
- Social Sciences (Canadian history)
- Media Studies (Journalism and technology)
- Language and Communication (Writing and photojournalism)

HOW TO USE PHOTOSTORIES IN THE CLASSROOM

With Photostories Canada, students will be able to:

- Explore Canada from coast to coast to coast by browsing the photostories archives.
- Search by theme, photographer, time period or location.
- See photostories created at specific times using the timeline and glimpse what life was like for their parents and grandparents.
- Use photostories as a starting point for discussion or debate.
- Create their own photostory using the Create a Photostory application or the pdf template and accompanying lesson plan.

Did you know...

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) is Canada's public film and digital media producer and distributor. It is an agency of the Government of Canada.

An important part of its mandate is "to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations."

From 1941 to 1984, the NFB's Still Photography Division was dedicated solely to photography. The term "still photography" refers to a non-moving image, as opposed to film or video.

CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

What can you achieve with grade 4 to grade 12 students?

- Introduce students to photojournalism in Canada.
- Develop an understanding of visual elements and vocabulary through an analysis of photographs.
- Explore how a photograph communicates historical events.
- Understand connections between photography and cultural identity or context.
- Link photography to students' own experiences.
- Develop critical thinking strategies.
- Provide a forum for discussion and expressing viewpoints.

SECTION 2 MAKING A PHOTOSTORY

THE PROCESS OF MAKING A PHOTOSTORY

Photoshoot

The Division sent two staff photographers, Gar Lunney and Chris Lund, as well as freelance photographers across the country to take photographs of daily life in Canada, its industries, culture, peoples and significant events.

During that time, photographers used film cameras. A negative, or light sensitive film, was placed inside the camera and exposed to light every time the shutter of the device was pressed, creating an image. A standard photoshoot would include many pictures of the event from different points of view. Unlike digital photography, images could not be seen right away, as negatives and prints must be developed in a darkroom using chemicals.

Example of images from a photoshoot

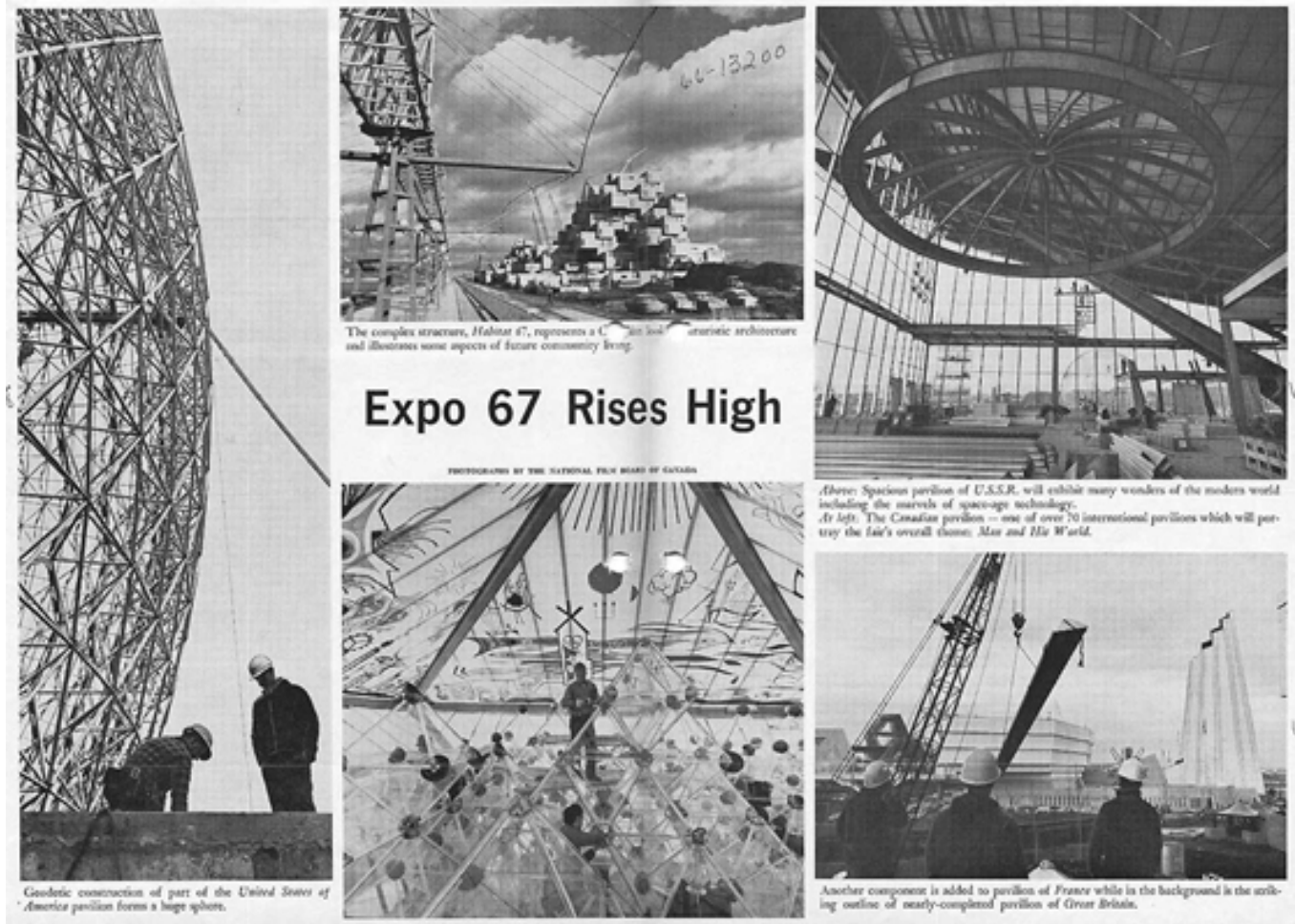


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The editing process and creation of the mat release

After the photoshoot, the photographers would send their rolls of film to the National Film Board (NFB) Photo Lab to be developed. Images that best represented the idea or the event would be selected.

An example of a photostory



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Additional images

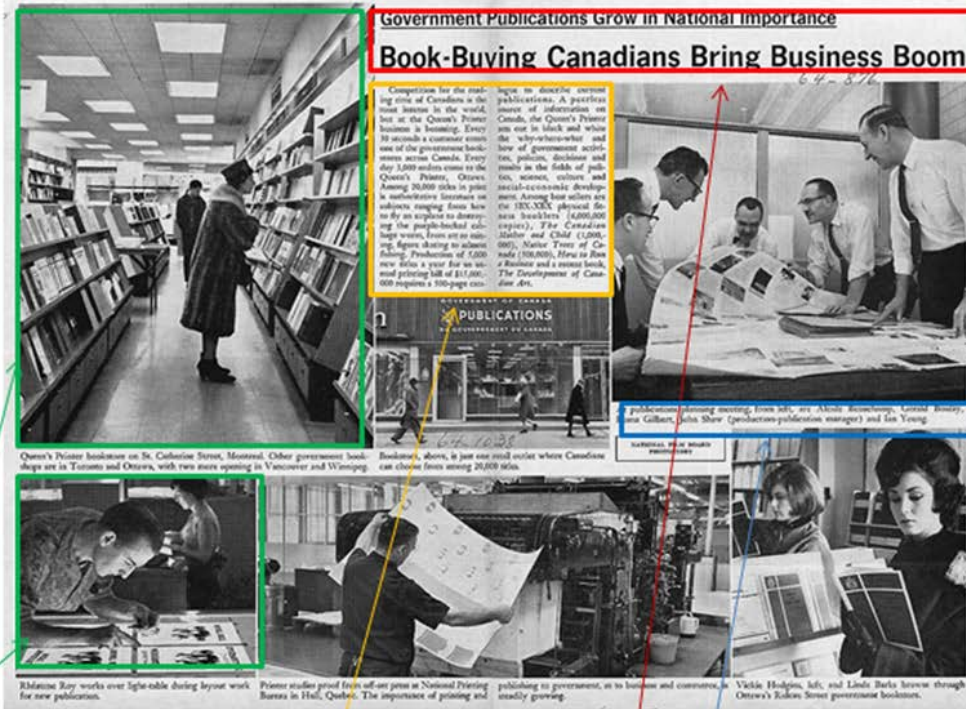
Newspapers and journals requested specific photostories to publish. Beginning with photostory #497, extra sheets were supplied to give the media more options and greater flexibility to adapt the content to their needs.



PHOTOSTORY COMPONENTS

A photostory is a highly-crafted combination of text and image that often takes one idea or theme as its subject. For the NFB Still Photography Division, the main story was Canada, its people and their achievements. As a form of photojournalism, the photostory relies heavily on the association of image and text to create meaning. The type of photography used by the Still Photography Division is called documentary photography; photographs taken of significant events and everyday life.

KEY ELEMENTS



Photographs
Photographs of varying sizes and formats presented on the page to relate a story.

A title
A catchy and descriptive title that invites viewers to read the story

Main body of text
A written description of the overall theme of the photostory. The main body of text is often 1 to 4 paragraphs in length. Not all photostories have a main body of text.

Captions
A caption is a short phrase or a few sentences that is used to describe a particular image or group of images.

The name of the Photographer often appears somewhere on the page, most often in the left hand-side bottom corner. In this case only the mention of National Film Board Photography is visible. When multiple photographers work were included in the Photostory, it was standard practice not to include all of their names.

SECTION 3
DESIGN

PAGE LAYOUT COMPONENTS

Cropping

Images are sometimes cropped to fit the layout and narrative.



Original photograph



Same photograph cropped

Image orientation

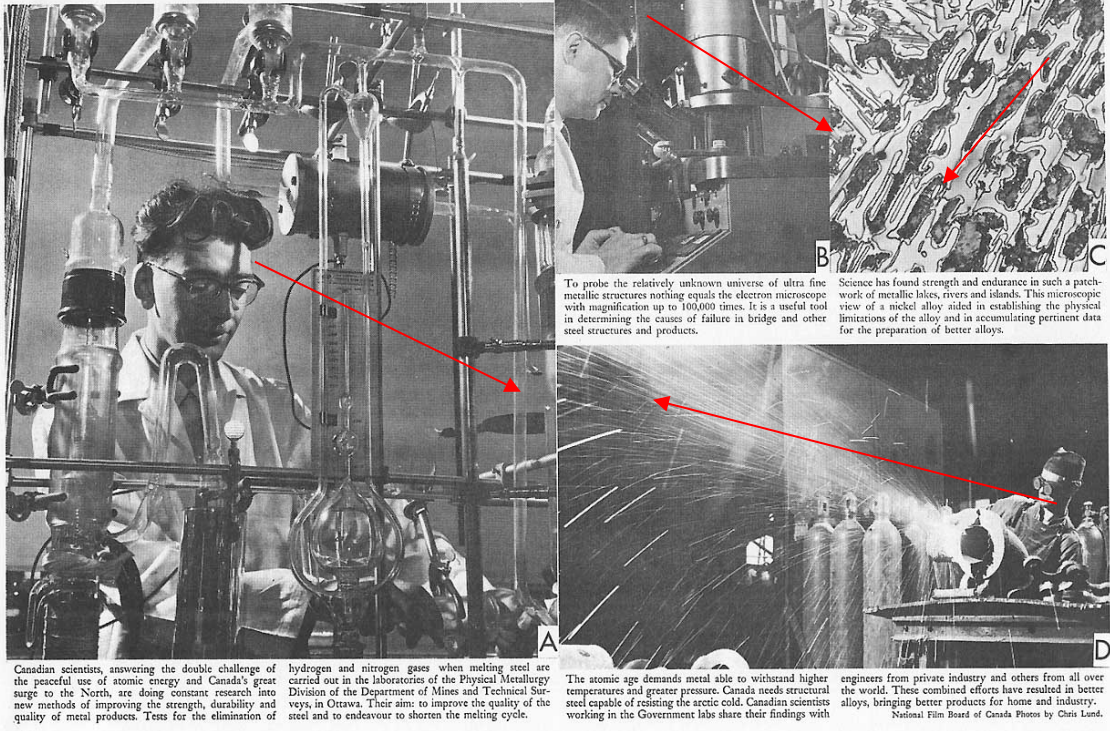
Images are sometimes flipped to make a page visually dynamic. In this photostory, the position of the figures draws our eye to the centre of the page. If the original image were used, our eye would be drawn to the outer edge.



Keeping the page visually active

Scientists Answer Double Challenge

Metals Under the Microscope



Different points of view and careful placement of photographs keeps the viewer's eye moving around the entire photostory.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE STRUCTURE OF A PHOTOGRAPH

Photographers use a visual language to communicate. The photographer's point of view, composition and the elements and design principles help to create meaning. When taking a picture, the photographer makes choices. What will be included in the picture frame? What will be excluded? During the editing process, the image can also be manipulated, cropped or flipped. The layout and addition of text also construct a narrative that will influence the viewer's interpretation of the story being told.

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Point of view

When taking a picture, the photographer makes a choice. What is included in the picture frame? What is left out? Whose point of view is the photographer presenting?



Cropping

The meaning of an image can change by framing or cropping the subject in different ways.

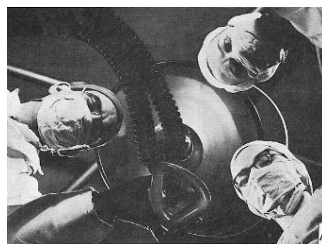


Looking at the subject from different angles



From above

The photographer is higher than the subject. This is called a birds-eye view.



From below

The photographer is below the subject. This is called a worm-eye view.



From up close

The photographer is standing near the subject or is using a zoom (a lens attached to his camera) to get a close-up of his subject.



From straight on

The photographer is standing at the same height as the subject.

ELEMENTS AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

- All photographs contain elements and principles of design.
- Photographers use these elements and principles to compose their photographs and to communicate ideas.

A The elements of design are components used in the development of artworks: **line, shape, space, texture and colour.**

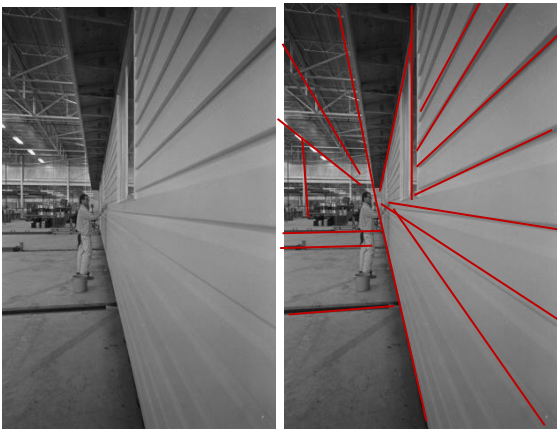
B The principles of design are concepts that help define the relationship of elements and their effect in artworks such as **rhythm, balance, unity, variety, pattern and repetition.**

Elements of design in photostories

The Photostories archive provides an extensive resource to explore the elements and principles of design with students. Here are a few examples.

Line

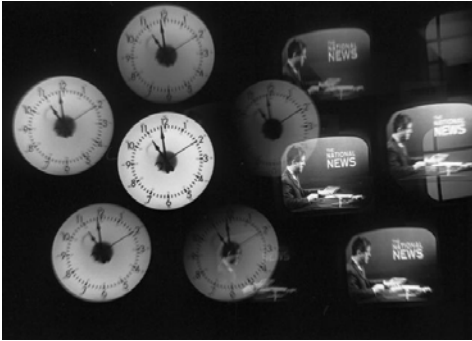
Lines lead our eyes within the image. They can sometime create a sense of space, a rhythm or a pattern.



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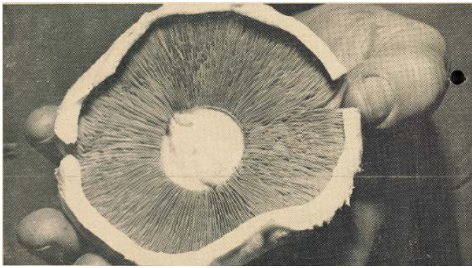
Shape

Shapes can be geometric or organic.



Texture

Texture is the surface quality that can be seen. Does it look smooth, hard or rough?



Space

A sense of space can be created by...



overlapping elements



lines converging to a vanishing point



using big elements in front, small ones behind



the play of positive and negative space

Colour: Values of light and dark

Why are all the images in *Photostories* in black and white? The photographs were created to be published in magazines and newspapers. At the time, to print in colour was challenging.

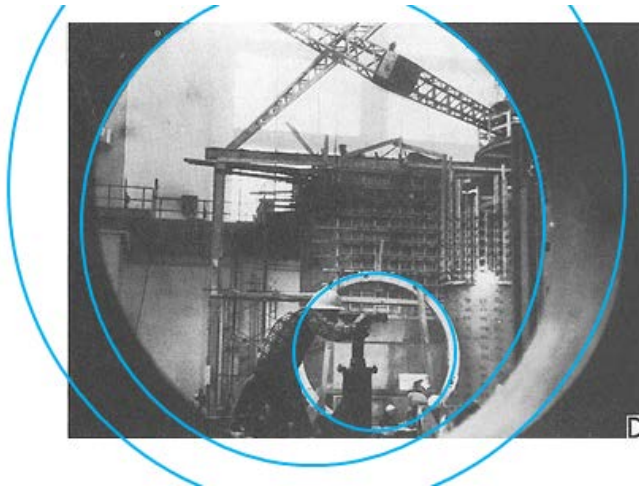
Photostories provide an invaluable resource for studying how photographers created their images using different values and gradations of light and dark.



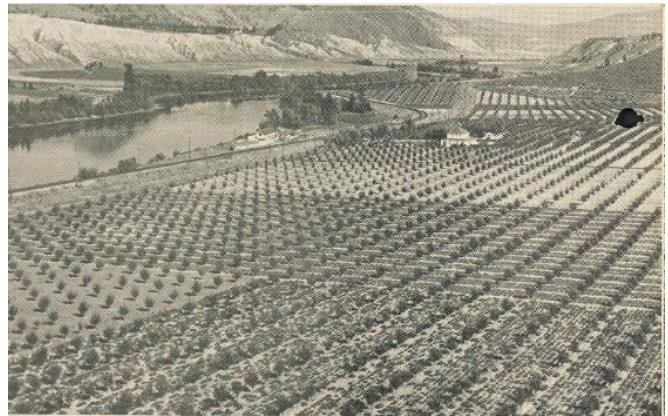
Design principles in Photostories

REPETITION

Repetition of visual elements creates unity: a sense of order that holds a work together visually.



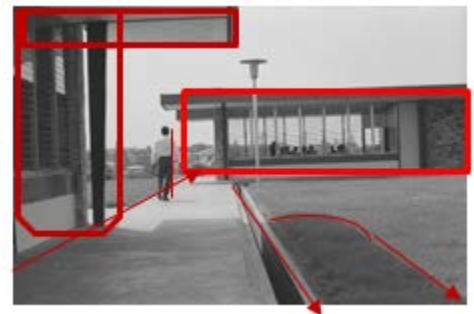
Repetition also creates a pattern.



Balance

Symmetry can give a sense of balance.

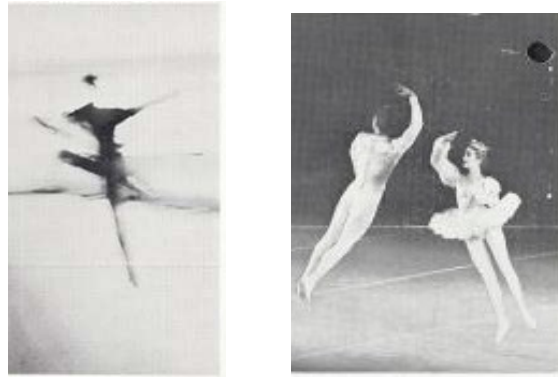
Asymmetry can also give a sense of balance. The balance in the image below is created by a careful framing of shapes, lines and values.



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Movement

The impression of movement is created by the diagonal of the body. The impression of movement is also created by blur. The photographer uses a long exposure to capture movement over a period of time. This technique produces a blurred image.



Unity

Unity is the sense of cohesiveness within an image. The curve of the object in the foreground, the diagonal created by the slanted head, the structure firmly planted in the back makes this photograph visually appealing.



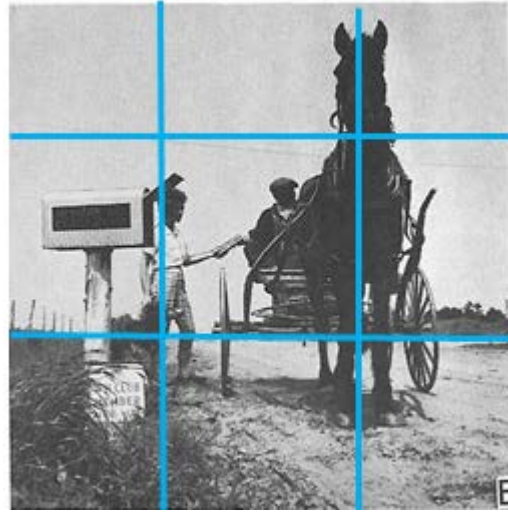
Point of focus

Photographers often play with depth of field. Depth of field is the distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene that appear sharp in an image. Sharp and blurry areas can draw attention to a specific element of an image. Here, our eye is directed to the Stratford Festival booklet.



Composition

Composition is how the elements of design are organized in the image to create principles of design. There are many compositions used to create effects. A popular one is the Rule of Thirds. The image is divided into thirds, vertically and horizontally. Key visual elements (such as the horse) are placed off-centre, along a vertical grid line, while the horizon is aligned off-centre along one of the horizontal grid lines.



SECTION 4 LESSON PLAN

CREATE A PHOTOSTORY

Suggested age group: Grade 4 to 6 and grade 7 to 12

Description

Using the *Create a Photostory* application, students can make their own photostory with images from the archival materials of the *Photostories Canada* website. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the elements and principles of composition in documentary photography and how these are used to convey an idea. They will also explore how the interpretation of an image is affected by surrounding text.

Creation

Students will go through the process of editing and creating a photostory, using the elements and principles of design to organize photographs into a photostory on a chosen theme or topic.

Analysis

Students will discuss the photographer and editor's choices and use a vocabulary appropriate to photography to explain how a photograph reflects a social, political or cultural context. They will explain how they used elements and principles of design to achieve a specific effect in their photostories.

Objectives linked to the Visual Art Curriculum

- Introduce students to photojournalism in Canada
- Explore what a photograph communicates through historical events
- Learn aspects of visual literacy through the analysis of photographs
- Link photography to students' own experiences
- Introduce and develop an understanding of the visual elements and vocabulary in photography
- Provide a forum for discussion and expressing viewpoints
- Develop critical thinking and seeing strategies
- Demonstrate an understanding of connections between art and cultural identity or context

Cross curriculum links

In addition to visual art, this lesson explores concepts in the following subject areas: social studies, media studies, language and communication.

Proposed Duration: 3 sessions of 1 hour each

Session 1

Look, analyze and discuss

Explore the *Photostories Canada* website. Select one or more photostories to look at that fit your curriculum needs. Examine the elements and principles of design in some of the photographs. Try to see them as part of a whole. How does each photo relate to the other photographs in the photostory?

Considering photostories from different perspectives

Photographs can be interpreted from a variety of perspectives, according to the information they contain. Each perspective deepens our understanding of the photograph and of broader concepts and ideas.

Possible questions:

- What's going on in this picture?
- What does the photograph/photostory tell us about the society it depicts or the society by, for, and in which it was made?
- What does the photograph/photostory tell us about culture and identity?
- What does the photograph/photostory tell us about the economy or the political context at the time it was made?

Formal/aesthetic

Use the Create a Photostory application and the Design (section 3) from the Teacher Guide to investigate the use of the formal elements of a photograph or a photostory.

Possible questions:

- What is your eye drawn to first when you look at this photograph?
- Where does your eye travel to next?
- How did the photographer use elements and principles of design?
- What do you think the photographer wanted to communicate?
- What words would you use to describe the photograph?
- When you look at a whole photostory, how are elements laid out?
- Before reading the captions or body text, describe what you think is going on in the picture.
- What visual elements provide evidence for your observations?

Demo

After the discussion, use the *Create a Photostory* application to demonstrate how an image can be manipulated.

Session 2

Create a photostory

The *Create a Photostory* application offers a few themes to choose from. Choose one for your class or ask students to select one.

Invite students to look closely at the photographs provided in the selected theme. How can they reinterpret the story? What photos will they choose? The same ones in a different order? Different ones from the same photoshoot? Have students experience the editing process by carefully selecting and discarding images. Once they have selected their images, students can lay them out onto a page.

Step-by-step tips for students

1. View the photographs, select a theme and read the original photostory.
2. Choose the images that would best reinterpret the story. Which images speak to you? How can you use them to convey the story?
3. Think of your layout (you can use the template provided) or imagine your own.
4. Don't forget these elements must be part of your final project:
 - a. Title
 - b. Main body of text
 - c. 5 to 6 photographs
 - d. Captions for each of the photographs
5. Identify a title. Will it be the same as the original or will you create a new one?
6. Layout the selected images. Play with their placement. Experiment with their sizes. Crop them to draw attention to specific areas of the image. Think about how your eyes "travel" from photograph to photograph onto the page. Look at the elements and principles of design in each of the images and in the project as a whole.
7. Write a main body of text and captions.
8. You will be able to save or print your photostory but you will not be able to Change it once it's saved.

Session 3

Classroom discussion and conclusion

Use the same looking and thinking strategies in Session 1 to discuss the photostories created by the class.

How many students used the same theme? Did they select the same images? How differently were images cropped and laid-out on the page? Ask students to point out the similarities and differences. Compare and contrast what your class has created with the original document.

Take it further...

Did creating a photostory inspire your class? Take it further with the following activities

Classroom photojournalism project

Suggested grades: 4 to 12

Have your students photograph an event in your community. Use the PDF template provided or editing software to create a photostory. To explore the editing process even further, divide your class into groups: photographers, editors and writers. Notice how the interpretation of a story can change at every stage of the process?

A photostory near you!

Suggested grades: 4 to 12

Select a photostory that showcases an event in your province or town, or choose a well-known event that your students can relate to. Recreate that story using current information on the theme. Has the story changed?

A different viewpoint

Suggested grades: 9 to 12

Select a photostory from the *Photostories Canada* website that portrays dated views or a sensitive topic. For example, how women were perceived when photostories were first created (1955 to 1971). One possibility could be Photostory #43: Charm Schools a \$2 Million Business, 1956. Invite students to react and then reinterpret the topic of the photostory with current ideas and values.

If only we had known!

Suggested grades: 7 to 12

Investigate photostories relating to scientific advancements in Canada. What do we know today that we didn't in that time? Are there new facts that contradict what we thought was true back then? For example, the photostory promoting the benefit of asbestos (Photostory #348: Silken Harvest from Sub-Surface Rocks: Asbestos: Canada's Magic Mineral, 1963). Contrast and compare archival documents with current research.

If a photo exists, it must be true...

Suggested grades: 7 to 12

Can you trust photographs? Challenge the idea that a photograph is a truthful representation of an event. As seen in the *Photostories Canada* website and lesson plan, editing and manipulation can happen at different stages of the creation of a photographic story. Discuss the question of whether it's ever acceptable to manipulate photos. Touch on the notion of artistic licence and photography as art. Ask students to create "fictional" photostories using the images from the website or their own pictures. How can a photograph be reinterpreted to create an entirely new story?

A contemporary rewrite

Suggested grades: 9 to 12

At the time the photostories were written, certain terms and ways of describing an event, a person or a situation are now considered derogatory. For example, the word "Eskimo" is used instead of "Inuit." The photostories reflect the time-period in which they were created, not necessarily the perspectives of today. Have students research some of these stories and ask them to rewrite the captions and main body text to be more culturally, racially and gender sensitive.

The media poet

Suggested grades: 7 to 12

Do a creative writing exercise with your students using a photostory. Some of the photostories have engaging titles and text. Titles are written as tongue twisters and use alliteration – or words starting with the same letter (Satellite Safety under Scientific Study), while others rhyme (Across Canada: The Many Things of Spring) or reveal a poetic flair (The Tranquil Summer). Ask students to put their own creative spin on a story by writing catchy titles and text.

The photographer's eye

Suggested grades: 9 to 12

Ask students to research the work of a specific photographer who created photos for different photostories. Are the images similar in any way? Does the photographer use elements and principles of design in a particular way?