

Free Press 101: Middle & Senior Years

WHAT IS PHOTOJOURNALISM?

This collection of learning experiences will introduce your learners to concepts, ethics and skills in news photography and visual storytelling.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- ☐ Read through this document and **What is your policy on photo editing?** in **Free Press 101**.
- ☐ Facilitate learner access to technology as needed.

GOALS OF THESE LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

Learners will actively produce and demonstrate understanding of photojournalistic practices:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Truthfulness and accuracy | <input type="checkbox"/> Objectivity and unbiased reporting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical conduct and respect | <input type="checkbox"/> Context and fact-checking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Synthetic media and AI | <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism and responsibility |

DEFINITIONS:

Composition: The arrangement of elements within a photograph.

Contrast: The difference in brightness and color between parts of an image.

Cropping: The removal or editing of unwanted outer areas from an image.

Candid: A photograph taken without posing the subject, often without the subject's awareness.

Clarity: The quality of a photograph that conveys its message clearly.

Colour: The use of photographic media capable of capturing and reproducing the spectrum of colours.

Cutline: A descriptive text accompanying a photograph that provides essential information.

CONSENT:

Ensure your learners are aware of your school and divisional policies on taking photographs within or on school grounds and distributing those images. Practice with your learners the process of obtaining consent to take photographs. Remind them of relevant laws regarding taking and sharing of photos.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE 1: PHOTOS TELL STORIES

1.
 - Use the photos provided on pages 4-15 ([PDF here](#), and [PPT here](#)), or find and display other photos from news stories. As each photo is shared, ask learners to complete a column on the Photo Inquiry activity (page 3, or [PDF here](#)) and then compare their responses in a large group discussion.
 - Note where learners agree on a particular idea, and discuss how the idea is communicated through the photograph.
 - Note where learners disagree on particular ideas, and have them suggest ways the photo could have been improved for clarity.
 - Reveal the photo **cutline** once discussion of each photo is complete.
 - Introduce the concept that photojournalists tell stories with photos instead of words, and each photo is carefully captured and shared not just to record events, but to carefully and intentionally communicate mood, motion, relationships and other important information.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE 2: ETHICS AND AUTHENTICITY

2.
 - Explain to learners that while altering or re-posting photos online has few rules, photojournalism abides by strict rules of ethics and accountability. Share the poster on page 16 ([PDF here](#)) and discuss with your learners.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE 3: THROUGH THE LENS

3.
 - In this learning experience learners will practice the skills learned in this topic.
 - Learners should choose a real event or issue in their school or community and take 3-6 photos that tell a story from beginning to end. Every photo should have a cutline and photographer credit. This can be done individually or in small groups.
 - Ask the learners to print their photo stories or share as a slideshow.
 - Use the discussion guide (page 17 or [PDF here](#)) to reflect on the effectiveness of the photos and cutlines at telling the story. This can be done as a large group, or in small groups circulating and discussing amongst themselves.

Learning experience 1: Photo inquiry

As you view each photo, record your observations and assumptions in the chart below.

	What do you think is happening in this photo?	What kind of feeling or mood does this photo convey? How?	What do you think might have happened just before the photo was made?	What do you think might have happened just after the photo was made?	What do you think might be happening outside the frame?
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

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Learning experience 1: Photo inquiry



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Learning experience 1: Photo inquiry

*"Storm of disinformation,
incompetence: New doc explores
the bungling – and racial
undercurrents – behind the
recovery from Hurricane Katrina"*

Robert Lloyd

July 29 2025

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Stranded victims of Hurricane Katrina wait outside the Superdome in New Orleans to be evacuated after Hurricane Katrina Sept. 2, 2005. MARK TUNNEY / GETTY IMAGES

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Learning experience 1: Photo inquiry



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*"Israel begins 'tactical pause' in
Gaza: Military measures include
airdrops to relieve surging hunger"
Wafaa Shurafa, Tia Goldenberg,
and Samy Magdy
July 28 2025*



Humanitarian aid is airdropped to Palestinians over Gaza City, Gaza Strip, Sunday.

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Learning experience 1: Photo inquiry

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"Home, street home"

Ben Waldman

July 6 2019

Photo credit: Mikaela MacKenzie/Winnipeg Free Press

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Signs of temporary habitation can often be found by Winnipeg's rivers, including this mattress near Osborne Village.

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Learning experience 1: Photo inquiry



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"Fringe reviews #14: The actors identify

you as the playwright after the show:

Improvisation: Anti Pasta"

Rob Williams

July 21 2025

Photo credit: Supplied*

*We use "supplied" as photo credit when someone provides us with a photo to use.

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The Strike's Centennial: Members of the Flaming Trollys band (above) marched down Main Street on Friday evening as part of the dedication ceremonies on the 100th anniversary of the General Strike of 1919. Later on, fireworks erupted at the statue of the 1919 streetcar.

Standup* photo by Phil Hossack/Winnipeg Free Press

June 22 2019

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*A standup is a photo that does not have an accompanying article. Its' storytelling "stands" on its own.

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Learning experience 1: Photo inquiry



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Jean Morrison, 97, has the crowd howling with her standup routine at the Red River Ex. Photo by Sasha Seftor/Winnipeg Free Press

"Why did the senior cross the road? To leave the Ex crowd in stitches"
Nadya Pankiw
June 20 2019



Free Press

Learning experience 2: Ethics and authenticity

BEFORE YOU PUBLISH YOUR PHOTO, MAKE SURE YOU KNOW

PHOTOJOURNALISM 101

GOOD PHOTOJOURNALISM ALWAYS:

- Shows real people, places and events.
- Helps the reader understand what is happening and why it matters.
- Includes context to add depth to a story.
- Looks like it did in real life.
- Includes the name of the photographer.
- Aims to observe, record and document reality, not invent or embellish it.
- Is truthful, respectful, and free from bias.



GOOD PHOTOJOURNALISM NEVER:

- Alters photos from reality. No filters, no photoshop, nothing.
- Stages photos to look real or to look like something is happening that isn't.
- Uses AI to generate, edit or alter photos.
- Uses photos obtained illegally in any way, such as taking them from online sources without permission.
- Misleads the reader or misrepresents the reality of the situation.

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Learning experience 3: Discussion guide

Below are some sample questions you may want to use to encourage critical conversations around photojournalism. Learners should be able to critically assess the impact their decisions have on how a story is told, and be able to identify opportunities to influence the outcome. Look for consensus and dissonance on ideas and processes, and encourage learners to recognize the different ways people make decisions and solve problems.

1.	Framing and Composition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the way a photo is framed influence the viewer's interpretation? What is included or excluded from the frame, and why?
2.	Captioning and Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do captions shape the narrative or emotional tone of an image? Are the captions factual, biased, or emotionally charged?
3.	Ethics and Consent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the subject aware they were being photographed? Did they need to be? Are all the photos credited to a photographer?
4.	Manipulation and Authenticity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the image been edited or altered? Does the image look staged in order to create a scene?
5.	Bias and Representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whose stories are being told, and whose are left out? Are any stereotypes being reinforced or challenged?
6.	Impact and Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the potential impact of this image on public opinion or policy? What responsibilities does the photographer have to their subjects and audience?