

GRAY

In Black and White

Role of the Photojournalist

Summary: In this activity, students will explore the role of a photojournalist and consider ways an image, and the decisions made by the photographer, can influence an audience.

Maryland College and Career Readiness

This activity connects to MCCRS Visual Art.

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive

E:6-8:2: Describe ways an image can influence an audience.

E:9-12:1: Hypothesize ways visual imagery influences perceptions or affects human experience.

E:9-12:2: Use historical and contemporary references to determine if an image effectively influences or represents a culture, time, or audience.

Introduction

Photojournalism is telling a story through photos. A photojournalist is someone who uses their photos to take a direct record of events. J.M. Giordano is an award-winning photojournalist based in Baltimore. At the time of the Baltimore Uprising, Giordano was a photo editor at the Baltimore City Paper and covered the protests relentlessly. Evan Serpick, editor of Baltimore City Paper 2012-2015, wrote that “nothing evokes the memory of the events more than Giordano’s photos. In all of the master photographer’s work, there is a depth, an urgency, and an advocacy on behalf of his subjects. Like the best journalists, Giordano demands that people actually consider and understand his subjects, not dismiss or stereotype them.”

Step 1: Introduce photojournalism to your students. Journalists look for events, gather information, and create written stories about the events to share with the public. A photojournalist does similar work, except instead of writing stories with words, they tell stories with images. In newspaper articles, photos and written text often work together to tell a story. What can a written story communicate that a photo can’t? What can a visual image communicate that a written story cannot?

Step 2: Have students explore Giordano’s photos in the online exhibit [Gray in Black and White](#).



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Step 3: Select a photo from the online exhibit to lead a discussion with your class. Start by asking them to make observations about the photograph.

- What is included in the photograph?
- Can you tell if anything wasn't included?
- What do you think might have been left out?
- How is the image cropped or framed?
- Does how the photograph is cropped influence the audience's understanding of what is happening?
- What other decisions might the photographer made when taking this photo?
- How might those decisions influence the audience's understanding of the photo?

Step 4: Have students consider the role of a photojournalist. Read the introductory paragraph of this activity to them. Have students write a response to the question: Is a photograph a neutral document of a subject or event? Prompt students by asking: What does it mean to be objective? Do you think it is ever possible to take a completely objective record? Why or why not?

Step 5: Encourage students to use their cell phones to become photojournalists. Tell them to start documenting their daily life in their home or community. Encourage students to think about their perspective. How will the way they crop or frame their photographs influence the audience viewing their work?

- What do they want to say about their subjects?
- What feeling are they trying to convey?
- What story are they telling?

Check out Devin Allen's *Through Their Eyes*. This project is to spread "hope and love through art" by training students from districts where arts education programs have been underfunded on how to use photography to express themselves. Through crowd-sourced fundraising, Allen provided students with cameras, donated his time holding youth photography workshops, and organized an exhibition of the students' work. Allen is dedicated to empowering young people to tell their stories and the fellowship will support the continuation of his *Through Their Eyes* project.



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