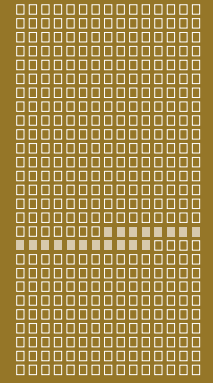


BEST OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Selected from published material submitted by members for the 2010 NSPA Picture of the Year contest. Picture selections and copy by Jill Chittum, newspaper and yearbook adviser, Blue Valley High School, Stillwell, Kan.



19 SELECTIONS

CAPTURING MOMENTS

Photojournalism is all about capturing moments. Photographer Henri Cartier Bresson called it the “decisive moment” – that magic instant when all the elements fall into place.

Good light. Good composition. Great emotion.

If you can remember those three little rules, you’ll be well on your way to making great pictures.

Great photographs are immensely important to any publication. The photos are the first thing a reader’s eye goes to when they open a newspaper or yearbook.

Chances are if you’ve taken a basic photography class, you already know about good light and good composition. You’ve studied factors of exposure, you’ve studied leading lines and the rule of thirds. Photojournalism brings in the last essential element: great emotion.

Moments can be happy, sad, funny, big, quiet. As high school students, you’re living one of the most dramatic, emotional times of your life. Moments happen every day – it’s your job to document them. Take your camera everywhere.



Leila Farhood, El Paisano Yearbook, Westlake High School

In the photo above, photographer Leila Farhood knew that the team would be excited to win the match, and she was smart enough to stick around and be prepared for that moment. A lot of times, in sports photography, capturing moments means keeping the camera up and ready even after the whistle blows.



Maegan Kabel, The Tiger Print newspaper, Blue Valley High School

This photo of a young cancer patient and his mother is a great example of a quiet moment. The photographer spent a few hours with the mother and child, shooting photos of them playing with blocks and playing other games, but the best photo from the shoot was this one. A little patience and knowing the camera to get proper exposure made a great photo to go with a story about the mom’s desire to spend as much quality time with her son as possible in the midst of his sickness.



Haleigh Jacobson, The Orange and Black Newspaper, Grand Junction HS

This photo is a great example of a story-telling moment between two students. Many times when we talk photos, we talk about action and reaction photos, but you also want to look for interaction in your photos. Interaction helps draw the reader into the photo's content, because it may help them think of a time they felt the same way.



Kendrick Gaussoin, Excaliber yearbook, Francis Howell North HS

Tommy Roam's turn to shout out to the drumline takes this marching band photo from ho-hum to a solid yearbook photo. The photographer, Kendrick Gaussoin, could have been satisfied with a simple photo of the drumline marching by, but by being patient and shooting multiple images from the situation, he got this great moment.



Megan Wilkerson, The Teresian yearbook, St. Teresa's Academy

Though the background in this picture takes a little away from the composition of the photo, the laughter between the girl and her date is a great moment to which readers can relate.

CROPPING

Keep in mind that the job of each and every photo published in the yearbook or newspaper is to quickly and clearly communicate a message. From the instant the photo is taken, the photographer should keep that in mind.

One technique that is often overlooked, or worse, done by a designer instead of photographer, is cropping. Hopefully photographers are “cropping” in camera, by closely examining what they see in the viewfinder at the instant they hit the shutter button.

Cropping in camera means filling the frame with your subject, moving closer or farther depending on your desired composition, and watching for distractions in the background.

Sometimes, though, a photo does need to be cropped once you download it onto your computer.

A good crop enhances the photo’s message, and a bad crop can confuse the message. Crop carefully, and really look at your images with a critical eye.

(thumbnails next to each picture show the original, uncropped version)



Emily Strickland, Teresian yearbook, St. Teresa’s Academy

This photo is a great example of good composition and a great moment, but with a minor crop, it can be cleaned up and straightened out. By cropping out the post on the lower left side of the frame, and straightening the horizon, the photographer could remove non-essential elements, bringing the reader right to the center of visual interest (the girls on the right).



Gareth Patterson, The Prospective newspaper, Bryant HS

Even without a crop, this is a great feature picture from a PowderPuff football game – the high angle cleans up the background, and it’s a great moment. Look at the faces on the girls – you can tell they’re working hard. But try cropping it a little tighter, and see if you like it. Does it strengthen the photo’s message?



The tighter crop really highlights the looks on the girl’s faces, and strengthens the center of visual interest in the frame. Also, from a design standpoint, the tighter crop takes the image from an almost perfect square to a horizontal, which can be a stronger design element.

One thing to keep in mind when cropping it that it’s in the eye of the beholder, so if you’ve got a question on a crop, talk it out with another photographer or your adviser. You can try cropping a photo many different ways, and if you don’t like them, just undo the crop and re-try.



Tanner Maxwell, The Lion’s Roar newspaper, Goddard HS

Cropping this photo from a horizontal snapshot to this vertical version helps remove some distracting elements from the frame, and really draws us right to the great expression on the student’s face. This is a good example of the old photo axiom “Tight is Right.”



Lydia Mitchener, The Kirkwood Call newspaper, Kirkwood HS

This photo is really improved with a tighter crop – removing some of the fence in the background and strengthening the composition.





Jamie Carney, Falcon Yearbook, Glendale High School

ENVIRONMENTAL PORTRAITS

First, let's get something straight – an environmental portrait is NOT a portrait of the environment (also known as a landscape shot).

An environmental portrait IS a photograph of someone in his or her environment. The word portrait, by definition, means a likeness of a person.

It's more than a mug shot. It's more than a senior portrait.

An environmental portrait tells a story about your subject using the place where they work or play as the setting, and sometimes props can be used to enhance the storytelling qualities of the photo. Your goal is to help the reader connect with the subject.

Portraits should feature the same characteristics as other great photos – good light, good composition and great emotion.

When planning the shoot for an assignment that requires an environmental portrait, brainstorm ideas for these three key aspects: location, props and light. You're in control – because it's a portrait shoot, you're free to set up the shot (usually a no-no in photojournalism).

Before shooting the assignment, talk to the reporter. Find out what the subject of the story is “famous” for. You could even interview the subject yourself to get a better idea of his or her personality.

Questions to get you started:

- Why are you shooting her photo?
- What tells her story?
- Should anyone else be in the photo?
- What items does she use/work with? What time of day does the action usually occur?

Keep in mind that environmental portraits, just like other types of photographs, should “read” quickly. You want the reader to know what the story is just by looking at the photo, almost without even reading the caption. (But you still need to write a great caption!)



Shannon Auwill, Panther Pride Newspaper, Midlothian (Texas) HS

Using the soccer goal for internal framing, photographer Shannon Auwill puts the reader immediately into the subject's environment. This portrait is a nicely composed quick read that any daily newspaper would be happy to run in their sports section.



Henry Ehrenberg, Prep Press, Univ. Prep HS

This image of maintenance assistant David Lopez is a solid example of how using props can tell the story. Through good use of shallow depth of field, we see a hint of the custodians tools in the background, and the American flag tells us that immigration or citizenship in the U.S. figures prominently in his life. The reader "gets" this, even before reading the caption. It works.



Mackenzie Wylie, The Harbinger, Shawnee Mission East HS

For this portrait of aspiring fashion designer senior Caroline Sheridan, photographer Daniel Stewart chose to use a studio lighting setup and found a creative way to showcase more of Sheridan's work. Hanging many of her drawings gives the reader some sense of her dedication to fashion design, and hanging them from the ceiling gives them image more visual interest than, say, having her hold them up to the camera.

LEADING LINES

One composition technique photographers can use is leading lines. Use of leading lines in photography gives pictures energy and movement. Keep in mind that leading lines should always be used to direct the reader's eye to the focal point of your image. You'll want to avoid lines that lead away from your center of visual interest.

High school photographers have a distinct advantage when it comes to use of leading lines – you're surrounded by them every day at school. Lockers, hallways, yard lines on the football field, rows of desks in classrooms – all of these can create leading lines in photos.

Asa Ferqueron,
Legacy
yearbook,
Harrison HS

Photographer Asa Ferqueron realized that by choosing a lower-than-eye-level angle, the leading lines of the path and the plants on the table would take the reader's eye directly to the subject of the photo. It's little decisions like that (changing your point of view) that can make a big difference in photo quality.



Sarah
Campbell,
Horizon
yearbook,
Blue Valley
Northwest HS

Both the flagpoles and the yard line on the football field create leading lines to encourage reader eye movement in this photo.

The movement in the routine can be easily imagined for people who weren't there when the photo was taken. The implied lines give the photo energy.



Sydney Morman, Legend yearbook, William R. Boone HS

Your school's swimming pool is a natural for shooting photos that feature the leading lines composition technique. Both the ropes on the surface of the water, and the lines along the bottom of the pool can be used to direct the reader's eye to the swimmer.

WORM'S EYE VIEW

Worm's eye view is a compositional technique in which photographers shoot pictures from below their normal eye level. Sometimes it's just a matter of kneeling or crouching down, but some of the best worm's eye view photos are taken by actually placing the camera on the ground to take the photo.

Worm's eye view is a great way to clean up the background in your images. By using the lower angle, especially when shooting outdoors,

photographers can avoid buildings, trees, cars and other distracting items.

Worm's eye view tends to make the subject of a photo look larger than life, so be mindful of the message you're trying to capture in the image. Do you want the subject to look imposing or intimidating? If so, worm's eye view would be a good technique to employ.



**Kayla Patak,
Paragon
yearbook, Oak
Mountain HS**

This photo is a great example of showing the reader something they wouldn't normally see. While you wouldn't want to run this photo by itself to illustrate a lacrosse story (unless it was simply a story about teamwork), it's a great example of the photographer not being afraid to try a new and different angle. It would be great as part of a three-picture package on the lacrosse team.



Kailey Booten, Madisonian yearbook, Ft. Madison HS

The angle in this photo helps us see the faces of the students involved in the experiment. Sometimes, if photographers are taller than their subjects, worm's eye view is a necessity – it helps capture faces instead of the tops of people's heads.



Valerie Kutchko, The Mission newspaper, Shawnee Mission North HS

This photo is a great example of how using worm's eye view can clean up backgrounds. Because of the low angle, the reader immediately goes to the athlete, the center of visual interest. This is a great shot – a different look on a track and field photo.