

# Lesson 18

## CONTEXT:

### Words and Pictures



**Teacher Preparation:** Read Nancy Newhall's essay "The Caption: The Mutual Relation of Words/Photographs" (1952)

**Materials Needed:** Student book dummies.

**Masterworks:** Photographs in slide list by Joel Meyerowitz, Mary Ellen Mark, Jeff Mermelstein, Graciela Iturbide, Bill Owens, Joseph Rodriguez, Gordon Parks, Richard Misrach, John Conway, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Robert Frank

#### Students will:

- **Know:** The differences among types of writing that accompany images. The distinction between a narrative and an additive caption.
- **Understand:** Words and pictures can work together to create meaning. Photographers and editors make choices when pairing words and pictures together to create meaning.
- **Do:** Students will be able to recognize and write titles, narrative captions, and additive captions.

## Lesson Plan: (1 hr, 15 min)

- Select images from slide list according to your students' understanding, ages, and interests (choose at least one from each category). Use open-ended questions to discuss how the writing works with the images. Why do you think the photographers chose the kinds of words they did? (15)
- Picture title: Describes who, what, when, and where. Doesn't mean much without the photograph next to it.

Joel Meyerowitz, *Red Interior, Provincetown, 1977*

Mary Ellen Mark, *Ram Prakash Singh with His Elephant Shyama, Great Golden Circus, Ahmedabad, India, 1990*

Jeff Mermelstein, *Opening of the Newport Mall, Jersey City, New Jersey, 1987*

Graciela Iturbide, *Heroes de la Patria/National Heroes, Cuetzalan, Puebla, 1993*

- Narrative caption: Describes (narrates) what's happening in the photograph. Means very little without the photograph next to it.

Bill Owens, *"We like to play war," 1972*

Joseph Rodriguez, *The morning after a rival gang tried to shoot Chivo for the fourth time, Chivo teaches his daughter how to hold a .32-caliber pistol. Her mother looks on. Boyle Heights, 1993*

Richard Misrach, *The Union Carbide Corporation purchased the property of the Holy Rosary Church, built circa 1866. A replacement church was constructed in the 1960s in nearby Hahnville, but the cemetery was left behind. In 2009, Dow (which now owns the complex) leaked 26,720 pounds of vaporized ethyl acrylate (EA), a Class II toxic air pollutant, into the atmosphere. No fine was levied, but Dow has pledged a \$100,000 contribution to the Supriya Jindal Foundation for Louisiana's Children, which is led by the wife of the current governor of Louisiana, 2014*

Gordon Parks, *Trapped in Abandoned Building by a Rival Gang on the street, Red Jackson Ponders His Next Move, 1948*

- Additive caption: Does not describe what's happening in the photograph, but works with the pictures to communicate meaning. Means less without the photograph next to it.

John Conway, *Big River First Nation, 1998*

LaToya Ruby Frazier, *Self Portrait (March 10 a.m.), 2009*

## Lesson 18

### CONTEXT:

### Words and Pictures

### Lesson Plan: Continued

- Text: Piece of writing that goes with a series of photographs, usually about their theme. Gives information even without the photographs.

“Robert Frank”, from the book *The Open Road* (Aperture, 2014)

- Show one student photograph and ask the class to come up with a title, narrative caption, and additive caption for it. (10)
- Hand out book dummies and ask students to write a title, narrative caption, and additive caption for one of the pictures. (15)
- Ask students to discuss their text with a partner. “Which kind of text works best? Which conveys the theme of the book?” (10)
- Ask students to decide which kind of text they prefer and then write titles or captions for all of the photographs in the book dummy. Note: they do NOT have to include any text if they prefer. (20)

**Going Further:** Distribute copies of Nancy Newhall’s essay “The Caption: The Mutual Relation of Words/Photographs” (1952). Ask students to begin an introductory essay or artist’s statement about their work.