

How to Critique a Photo

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Durango Photography Club

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What is a critique?

- ▶ An article or essay criticizing a literary, architectural, or some other work
- ▶ Powerful education tool
- ▶ A critique is an opinion
- ▶ Photo critiques should be balanced
- ▶ The critique should be objective

Components of an Effective Critique (Five Steps)

1. Describe what you see
2. Analyze Technical Qualities
3. Analyze Composition and Artistic Qualities
4. Interpret the Photo's Story
5. Evaluate/Judge

Describe what you see

▶ What type of photo is it?

▶ Portrait	Selfie	Family	Landscape
▶ Posed	Action	Event	Documentary
▶ Candid	Aerial/Satellite	Architectural	Abstract

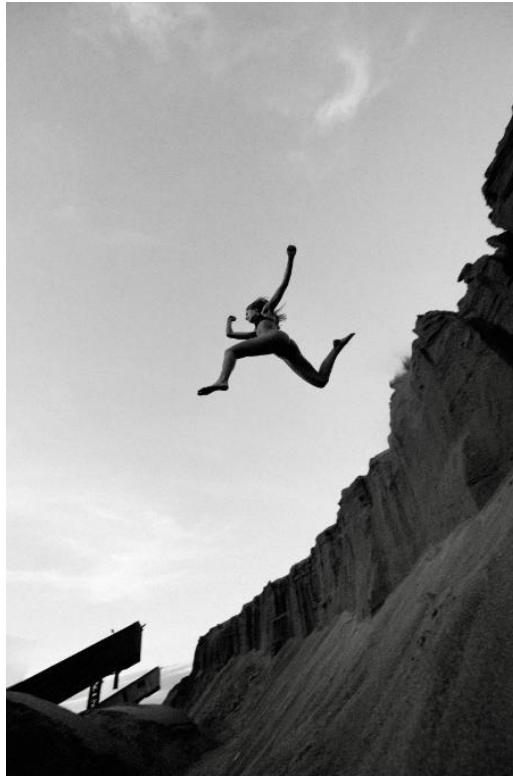
▶ Is there a caption? EXIF data?

▶ Observe the photo's parts.

▶ Where does your eye go? Is anything distracting?

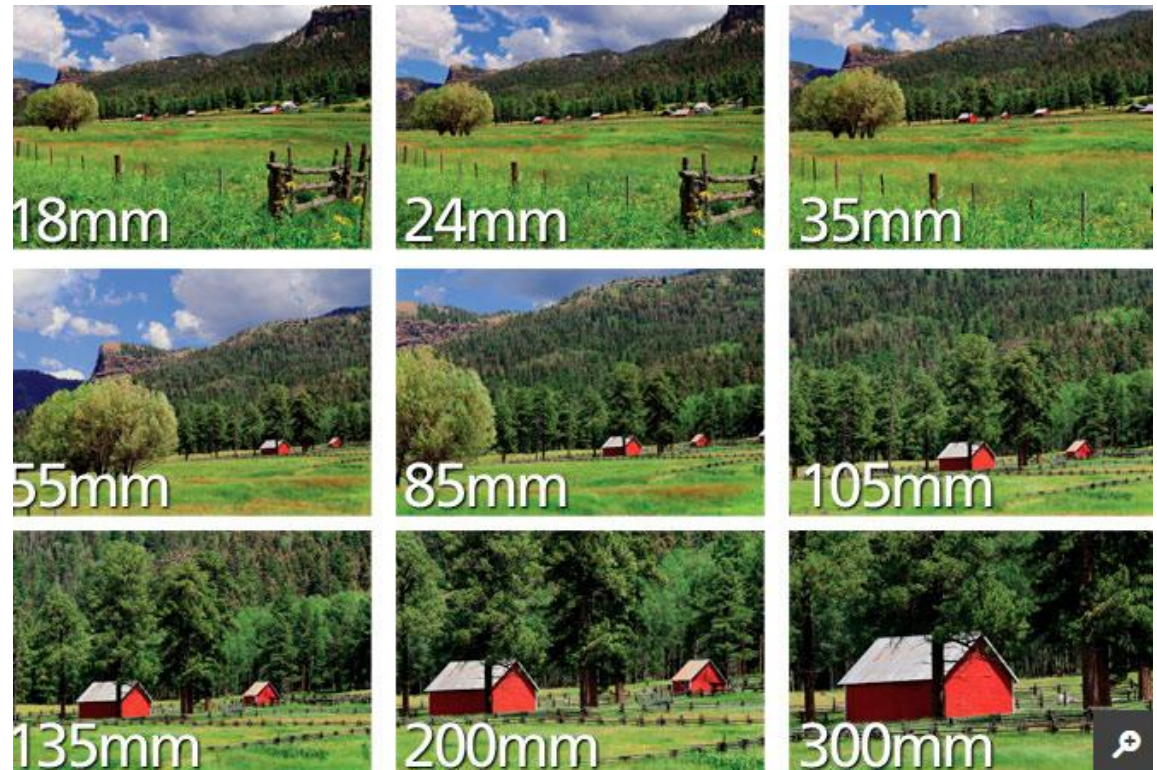
Describe What You See

- What types of photos are shown here?



Analyze the Technical Qualities

► Depth of Field and Focal Length



Analyze the Technical Qualities

- ▶ Technical qualities to analyze include:
 - ▶ Shutter Speed Depth of Field Focus/Focal Exposure
 - ▶ Length White Balance Noise Processing
 - ▶ Cropping Lighting HDR Processing/Ghosting
 - ▶ Crooked Horizon Sensor Dust
- ▶ Does the EXIF data indicate any changes that improve photo?
- ▶ Were the technical aspects successful?

Analyze the Technical Qualities

- What technical flaws do you see? What could have been done to avoid the flaw? What can be done in post-processing?



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Analyze the Composition and Artistry

- ▶ Taking vs Making
- ▶ Ask yourself, what composition or artistic techniques are used to create a successful work of art that goes beyond a snapshot?
- ▶ Photography isn't just about the main subject
 - ▶ Are there supporting players to the focal point?
 - ▶ Are the supporting pieces bringing your eye to the focal point or distracting from it?
 - ▶ How are the elements creating interest in the photo?

Analyze the Composition and Artistry

- ▶ Is there a strong subject?
- ▶ Common composition techniques are:
 - ▶ Rule of Thirds Balance (formal & informal) Simplicity Layers
 - ▶ Framing/Emphasis Lines—leading, diagonal Symmetry
- ▶ Artistry techniques are:
 - ▶ Camera Angle Movement Contrast Color Shape
 - ▶ Texture Patterns Juxtaposition
- ▶ Was there intentional use of composition and artistry?

Analyze the Composition and Artistry

- What composition or artistry techniques do you see?



Analyze the Composition and Artistry

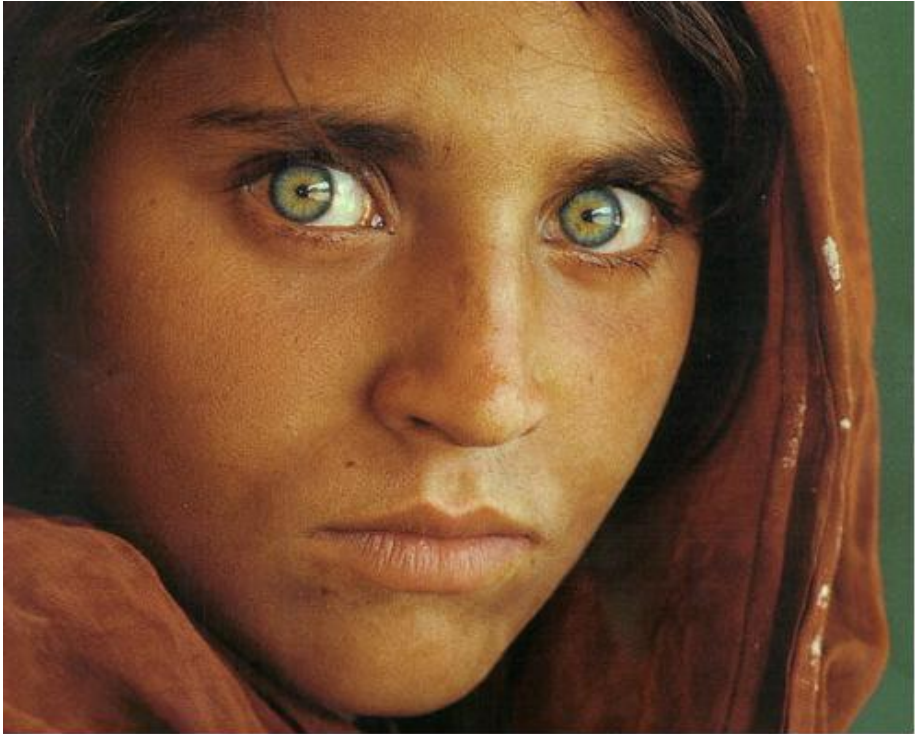
- What composition or artistic techniques do you see?



Is there a Story?

- ▶ Does the image express any:
 - ▶ Feelings Emotions Mood Ideas
 - ▶ Unique Moment in Time
- ▶ What is the photographer trying to say?
- ▶ Why did they create this image in this way?

Is there a Story?



Is there a Story?

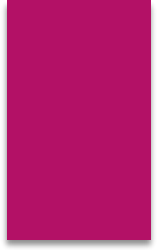


Sum it up! Overall Evaluation and Scoring

- ▶ Was the photographer successful in delivering their message?
- ▶ Use the Photo Evaluation Rubric to rate the photo on all the criteria:
 - ▶ If participating in a competition, did the photo meet the brief? Was it imaginative?
 - ▶ What technical settings/techniques were used successfully? Unsuccessfully?
 - ▶ What composition and artistic techniques were used successfully? Unsuccessfully?
 - ▶ Did the photo tell a story? Did it impact you emotionally in some way?
- ▶ Rating categories—Poor, Needs Work, Solid, World Class

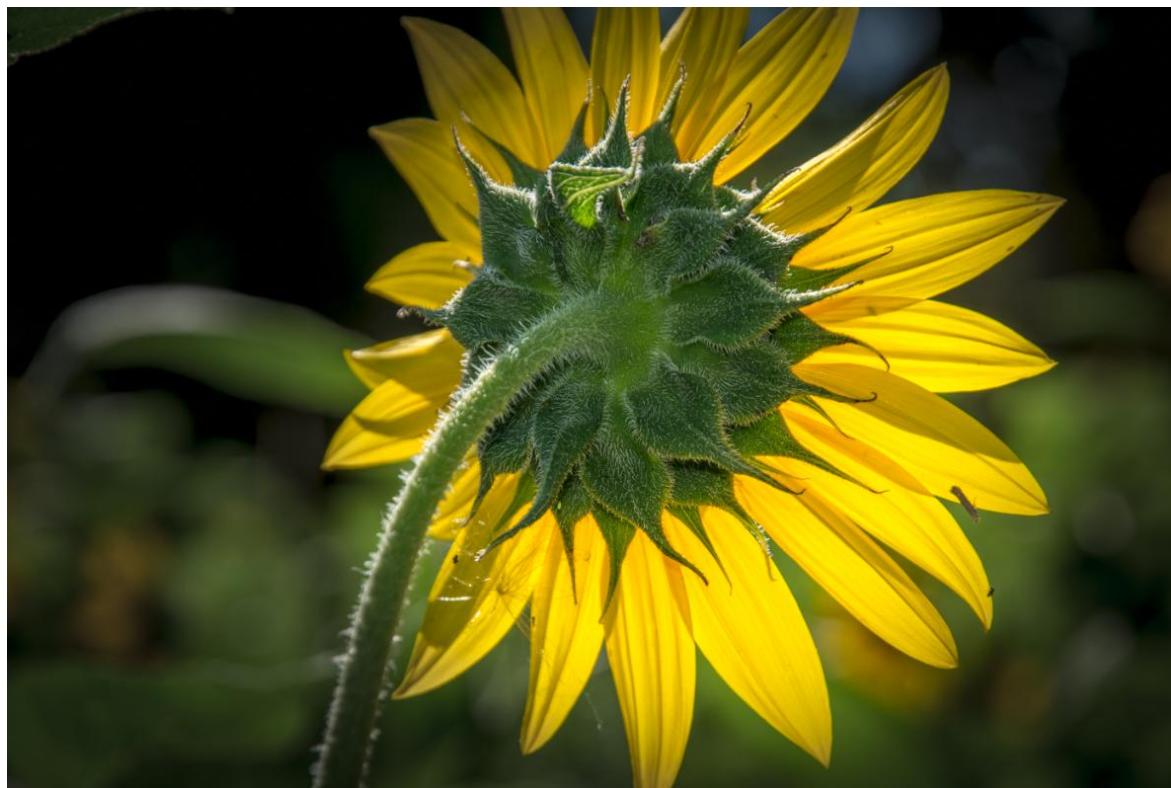
Exercise—Critique a Photo

- ▶ Pair up with a club member to critique this photo using the Photo Critique Prompt and the Evaluation Rubric
- ▶ 10 Minutes then Review



Imperfect
Beauty by
Janis Connell



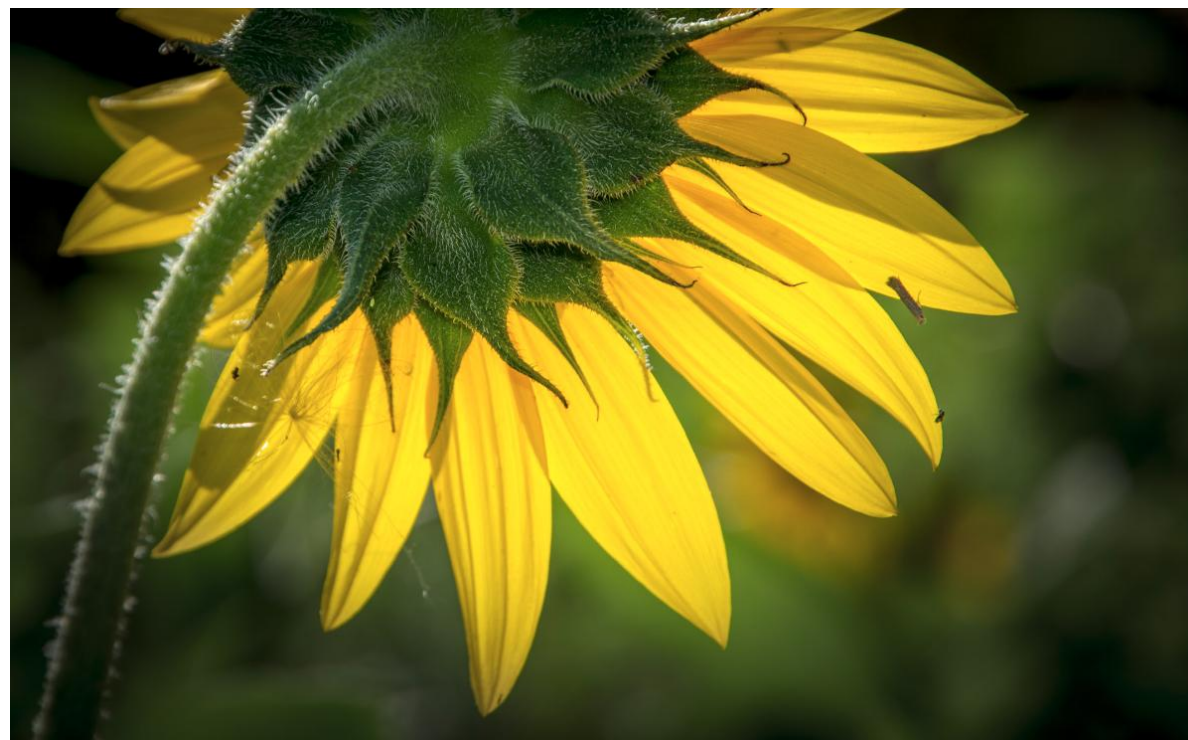


As shot with some
color enhancement

ISO 100, 85MM, F/5.6, 1/320 sec, flash fired

Imperfect Beauty by Janis Connell

The sun was high and harsh so I decided to snap a pic of my favorite flower from behind. I love that it has spider webs & bugs. Beauty is not necessarily perfect.



Final shot

Summary

- ▶ Use the Photo Critic Prompt sheet to facilitate your analysis
- ▶ Use the critique prompts to put your thoughts into words
- ▶ Use the Evaluation Rubric to more objectively score the photo
- ▶ Be fair and objective
- ▶ Offer ideas for improvement

Helpful Resources

- ▶ <https://fstoppers.com/critiques/how-properly-critique-photograph-82407>
- ▶ Fstopppers Youtube channel
- ▶ <https://www.reddit.com/r/photocritique/>
- ▶ Facebook, Flickr, et al
- ▶ <https://petapixel.com/photography-composition-techniques/>
- ▶ <https://petapixel.com/2018/04/28/9-composition-tips-for-shooting-good-landscape-photos/>
- ▶ <https://petapixel.com/2018/03/05/7-simple-composition-tips-improve-landscape-photos/>
- ▶ <https://expertphotography.com/photography-subjects/>