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AP Photography Summer Assignment
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30 Images: Inquiry, Experimentation, and Artistic Growth

Welcome to AP Photography! This summer assignment is designed to prepare you for the expectations of **AP Photography**. In AP Photography, students do more than simply take “good pictures.” You will learn to investigate ideas, take creative risks, experiment with materials and processes, and develop a personal artistic voice.

This assignment will help you begin thinking like an AP artist by exploring themes, experimenting with photographic techniques, studying artists, and reflecting on your work.

You do **not** need a professional camera. **Phone cameras are completely acceptable.** Strong ideas, experimentation, and intentional choices matter more than equipment.

Summer Assignment Requirements

You will create **30 original photographs** over the summer divided into the following categories:

Category	Number of Images
Inquiry-Based Images	15
Experimental Edits/Manipulations	5
Artist-Inspired Images	5
Open Choice Images	5
Total	30 Images

- All images must be **original work created by you during the summer.**

Part 1: Inquiry Based Images

Submit:

- 15 Photographs
- Written Reflection - 1 paragraph

Goal:

Begin thinking like an AP student by exploring an **idea or question** through photography.

Instead of photographing random subjects, choose a **guiding inquiry question** that interests you. (See the end of this document for a more thorough explanation of what a **guiding inquiry question** is).

Examples of Strong Inquiry Questions:

- How does light affect emotion?
- What makes ordinary places feel meaningful?
- How does isolation appear in everyday life?
- What stories can objects tell about a person?
- How can photography distort memory?
- How does routine shape identity?
- What does comfort look like?
- How can perspective change meaning?

Expectations:

Create 15 photographs exploring your question.
Your images should demonstrate:

- experimentation
- multiple approaches
- visual problem solving
- thoughtful composition
- intentional lighting
- risk-taking

* Avoid creating 15 versions of the same image.

Try:

- close-ups and wide shots
- different times of day
- varied lighting conditions

- multiple perspectives
- symbolic imagery
- Abstraction

Respond to:

1. What inquiry question did you explore?
2. Why did you choose it?
3. What visual discoveries did you make?
4. Which image best represents your investigation and why?

Part 2: Experimental Edits / Manipulations - 5 Photographs

Submit:

- Create 5 images that involve editing, manipulation, or experimentation.
- Written Reflection

Goal:

Show willingness to experiment and take creative risks.

Photographs can be created/edited in:

- Photoshop
- Lightroom
- PicsArt
- Canva
- Phone editing apps
- Other applications you discover

Ideas for Experimentation:

- double exposure
- surreal composites
- texture overlays
- motion blur
- long exposure
- selective color
- distortion
- reflections
- fragmentation
- dramatic color grading
- layered imagery

- abstraction
- intentional blur

Expectations:

These should move beyond filters.

Ask yourself:

“How can editing/manipulation strengthen meaning or mood?”

Respond to:

For each edited image:

- What technique did you use?
- Why did you choose it?
- Did it improve the meaning or mood of the image?

Part 3: Artist-Inspired Images

Submit:

- 5 Photographs
- Written Response

Goal:

Study photographers and apply visual inspiration to your own work.

Research **2 photographers** whose work interests you.

You will create **5 photographs inspired by their artistic style, themes, or techniques.**

You are **inspired by** the artist — not copying exactly.

Expectations:

Consider:

- lighting style
- composition
- storytelling
- color palette
- conceptual themes

- portrait style
- subject matter

Suggested Photographers:

- Cindy Sherman – identity, constructed imagery
- Gregory Crewdson – cinematic storytelling
- Vivian Maier – street photography
- Annie Leibovitz – portraiture
- Sally Mann – mood and environment
- Alec Soth – documentary style
- Zanele Muholi – identity and portraiture

These are just suggestions - I suggest doing some research to find a photographer you connect with and would like to emulate.

Respond to:

For artist inspired images written assignment:

- Brief artist research (5–7 sentences)
- Why you selected them
- How they influenced your photographs

Part 4: Open Choice Images - 5 Photographs

Submit:

- Create 5 photographs of your choice.

Goal:

Show your strongest independent work.

Create **5 photographs of your choice**.

These should represent:

- your interests
- creativity
- technical ability
- artistic voice

You may revisit themes from earlier sections or try something completely new.

Think:

“What kind of photographer do I want to become?”

- No written response is required for Part 4.

Part 5 Reflection:

Submit:

- 1-2 pages total when you complete your 30 photographs.

Goal:

Look back at your 30 images and reflect on the process.

Reflection (1–2 pages total)

Respond thoughtfully:

Reflection Questions

1. Which category challenged you the most? Why?
2. What risks did you take?
3. Which image are you most proud of?
4. What technical skills do you want to improve?
5. What themes or ideas kept appearing in your work?
6. What possible sustained investigation ideas might you explore during AP?

Grading Rubric (100 Points)

Category	Points
Inquiry Images (15) [Part 1]	30
Experimental Images (5) [Part 2]	20
Artist-Inspired Work (5) [Part 3]	15
Open Choice Images (5) [Part 4]	10
Written Reflection [Part 5]	15
Effort, Creativity, Risk Taking	10
Total	100

AP-Level Expectations

Students will be evaluated on:

- experimentation
- originality
- visual communication
- composition
- technical decisions
- conceptual thinking
- artistic risk-taking
- evidence of sustained exploration

Important: This assignment is not about perfection. AP Photography values **process, growth, curiosity, and experimentation**. Strong portfolios emerge from students who are willing to try ideas, revise, and push beyond obvious solutions.

Due: First Day of School

Camera: DSLR, mirrorless, point-and-shoot, or phone camera accepted.

All About Inquiry Questions

What Is a Guiding Inquiry Question?

In AP Photography, you are not simply taking random pictures of things you like. Instead, you are learning to think like an **artist and investigator**. A **guiding inquiry question** is a question that helps focus your photography and gives your work meaning, direction, and purpose.

Think of it as:

“What idea am I curious about exploring through photography?”

Your inquiry question becomes the thread that connects your images together.

Instead of photographing *anything*, you are photographing with intention.

Example:

Instead of saying:

Topic: “Nature”

An AP-level photographer might ask:

Inquiry Question:

How can nature communicate emotion or mood?

Now your photographs have a purpose:

- dark storm clouds = tension
- soft morning light = calmness
- dying flowers = sadness or change
- bright sunlight = energy or hope

The question helps guide artistic decisions.

The Difference Between a Topic and an Inquiry Question

Weak Topic

Strong Inquiry Question

Portraits	How can a portrait reveal identity without showing a face?
Sports	How can photography communicate movement and intensity?
My family	What everyday moments reveal connection between family members?
Summer	How can photography capture memories and the feeling of time passing?
Buildings	What stories do overlooked places tell?
Objects	How can ordinary objects become meaningful through photography?

A topic is broad.

An inquiry question investigates something.

What Makes a Strong Inquiry Question?

A strong inquiry question should:

1. Be Open-Ended

There should not be one correct answer.

Good:

How does lighting influence mood?

Not strong:

What is the best lighting?

2. Be Personal or Interesting to You

Choose something you genuinely care about or wonder about.

Ask yourself:

- What do I notice often?
- What emotions or ideas interest me?
- What experiences matter to me?
- What am I curious about visually?

The best AP work usually comes from personal curiosity.

3. Allow for Experimentation

A good inquiry question gives you room to try multiple ideas and approaches.

Strong:

How can perspective change the meaning of an image?

This allows:

- high angles
- low angles
- close-ups
- wide shots
- distortion
- unusual framing

Weak:

Can I take pictures of my dog?

You may run out of ideas quickly.

4. Be Visual

Ask questions photography can actually explore.

Strong visual questions:

How does light shape emotion?

How can photography make ordinary places feel mysterious?

How do objects tell stories about people?

Less visual:

Why are people stressed? (Too broad and difficult to communicate through images.)

Formula for Building an Inquiry Question

You can use this sentence starter:

How can photography...

or

How does... affect...

Examples:

- **How can photography reveal hidden stories?**
 - **How does color influence emotion?**
 - **How can ordinary spaces become visually interesting?**
 - **How does routine shape identity?**
 - **How can photography distort memory?**
 - **How does absence tell a story?**
 - **How can shadows create meaning?**
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Strong AP Photography Inquiry Question Examples

Identity & People

- How can photography show identity without showing a face?
- What objects best represent who someone is?
- How do environments shape identity?
- How do routines reveal personality?

Emotion & Mood

- How can light communicate emotion?
- What makes an image feel lonely?
- How can color affect mood?
- How can photography communicate comfort or tension?

Time & Memory

- How can photography represent memory?
- How do photographs capture change?
- What visual evidence shows time passing?

Environment & Place

- What stories do overlooked places tell?
- How can ordinary locations feel cinematic?
- How do spaces reveal human presence even when empty?

Perspective & Visual Experimentation

- How can unusual perspectives transform ordinary subjects?
 - How can abstraction change meaning?
 - How does framing influence storytelling?
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Questions to Avoid

Avoid questions that are:

- too broad
- too simple
- impossible to photograph
- based only on a subject instead of an idea

Examples of bad questions/topics:

Dogs

My vacation

Nature photography

Cool pictures

Why do humans exist?

These are topics, not investigations.

A Helpful Test

Before choosing your inquiry question, ask yourself:

“Can I make 15 different photographs exploring this idea without repeating myself?”

If the answer is **yes**, you probably have a strong inquiry question.

If the answer is **no**, the question may be too narrow.

Student Example

Inquiry Question:

How can ordinary objects become meaningful?

Possible photographs:

1. worn sneakers by a doorway
2. old family recipe card
3. cracked phone screen
4. forgotten toy in a room
5. backpack contents arranged intentionally
6. close-up textures of personal belongings
7. objects photographed in dramatic lighting

Notice how all the photos connect to one idea while still being different.

AP Reminder for Students

Your inquiry question is **not permanent**. It is okay if your ideas change as you photograph. In AP, artists often discover new directions through experimentation. The goal is to **explore, take risks, and stay curious**.