



Life

WRITERS

O U T L I N E

WRITING WITH
PHOTOGRAPHS



WRITING WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Physical description of the photograph, not the content

- Weight of the paper – heavy, photo paper
- Border/no border – borders (old), no borders (new)
- Edges of photograph – smooth/scalloped
- Color/black and white
- Date on photograph
- Anything on the back of the photo
- Condition of the photograph

Notes:

2. Objective view of the photograph

- Is the photograph of a person, place or thing?
- Is there one subject or many subjects?
- Is it a formal portrait or a candid shot?
- Is it color or black and white?
- From what perspective was the photo taken?
- Is it a close-up or a distance shot? Is it natural or artificial light?

Notes:



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3. History of the photograph

- Does the photograph have a history?
- Do you know the origins of the photo?
- How did you end up with it?

Notes:

4. Inventory the photograph

- Start at the top of the photograph and look down
- Then start at the left of the photo and look to the right

Notes:

5. Answer basic questions

- Who – who are the people, known or unknown
- What – what's happening in the photo
- When – date, time
- Where – geographic location, specific location
- Why – purpose for the photograph
- How – how was this photo taken

Notes:



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6. Subjective view of the photograph

Listen to the photograph. Let it talk to you, tell you its story.

Aspects to consider:

How do the people in the photo feel about each other?

Is it a happy or a sad photograph?

What do you think happened just before this photo was taken?

Who do you think took it?

What do you think was going on just outside the frame?

What are the people in the photo saying to each other?

Was this a good day or a bad day?

How do you feel looking at this photo?

Why do you think this photo was taken?

How do you think the subjects feel about what is happening?

What are the emotions conveyed in this photo?

Is it a pleasing photo?

Is it beautiful or ugly, new or old?

What is the body language in the photo?

What's not in the photo?

Who's not in the photo?

Is this an ordinary or a special day?

What message do the facial expressions convey?

What do you think the people were thinking?

What's the primary subject of the photo?

Are there secondary subjects in the photograph?

Notes:



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7. **Writing about photographs** – variety of ways to use this information

Caption – caption your photograph with minimal amount of information – basic information necessary to identify the image and tell its significance

Cameo narrative – as defined by *The Photo Scribe: How to Write the Stories Behind Your Photographs* by Denis Ledoux – “short lifestory narratives, generally 50 to 150 words” – combine these to create an annotated photo album to tell your personal or family history

Character profile – group several photographs together and write a character sketch of one person – choose photographs that show different facets of the person – may show the person during a certain time period or different aspects of the person’s life

Profile of a place – tell about the place, its history, its significance to you or your family, what happened at this place, describe the place in detail, what are your memories about it, what does it mean to you, etc.

Event profile – bring a certain event, trip, party, holiday to life with a photograph and a story – set the stage for the event, give the details about it, the people involved, the emotions of the event, etc.



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Enhance your story – take the information you gleaned from examining the photograph and add it to a story you’re writing – blend it into the story – even if you are including the photograph in the story you’re writing, still describe it – what you see may be different from what others might see – allow others to see the photograph through your eyes

Notes: