Welcome to the World Press Photo 15 exhibition. During this lesson you will learn what press photography is. And why, for example, so many bad-news stories are published in the newspapers. You will also find out what freedom of the press means, and the rules that press photographers have to stick to.

This is the 58th time that World Press Photo has organised an exhibition. This one includes the best press photos taken in the past year. All the winners have been chosen by an independent jury from all over the world. They have selected one photo to be World Press Photo of the Year: the best photo of all.

The exhibition will not just be shown here, but also at some hundred other locations around the world. For example, it will be held in Madrid and Tokyo, and Rio de Janeiro and Milan.

OK, so let’s get on with the assignments! The lesson contains two kinds of questions: standard questions and detailed questions. Ask your teacher if you also have to answer the detailed questions. You can work in a group or on your own. Write your answers on the dotted lines under the question. Your teacher may want to see them after your visit to the World Press Photo exhibition.

Have fun!
This series is an example of ‘hard news’: something terrible that has just happened, and hardly anybody knows anything about it. Additionally, ‘hard news’ is news that the photographer has been unable to prepare for because it happened so quickly and suddenly.

► What do you see in the photo that tells you that something terrible has just happened?

► What do you think has happened? And how long ago do you think it happened?

Press photos are not like the photos you see in advertising or art. Press photos show us news. Everyone has their own ideas about what news is exactly, but two things are important.

1. News is something that hardly anyone knows about yet, and has just happened. For example, that a storm has just devastated a block of houses, or that a plane has crashed.

2. News is something that has a huge impact for a lot of people. For example, that major flooding has occurred in a densely populated area. Or that a war has broken out.

Find the photo:

Find the series that this photo is part of:

It’s only when something out of the ordinary happens that it becomes news. But some things change very slowly, so slowly that you hardly notice it. These slow changes can also be news. Because, for example, they are different from normal changes, or because they have a big impact for a lot of people.

Typical characteristics that determine whether something is news:
- It is different from the normal situation
- Nobody, or hardly anybody, knows about it
- It is important for the reader or viewer
- It has a big impact for a lot of people
- To the reader or viewer, it feels as though it happened somewhere close by
- It is about a contemporary theme
- It evokes emotions and excitement in the reader/viewer
- It features well-known people

► Why is this series about pollution in China considered to be news?

► Assignment 2: EMOTION

Find this photo:

Study the photo for a few minutes.

A good press photo will produce emotions in the person looking at it. You think: ‘Oh, how terrible!’ Or: ‘Oh, how beautiful!’.

► What do you feel when you look at this photo?
By evoking people's emotions, a photographer can grab the viewer's attention. And that's how the photographer gets the chance to tell a story. Maybe that's why so many photographs from disaster areas have children in them. Because people feel sorry for children more easily than they do for adults.

► How do you think the girl ended up in this situation? Why is she looking the way she does and why is she wet?

A good press photo can tell us more than just what the photo shows. A good photo can become a symbol for a bigger story. The girl from the previous photo was a symbol for all the people who, together with her, were demanding attention for the death of the 15-year-old boy who died after being beaten during a demonstration against the government. The photo also tells us something else. The girl in the photo is being held, by people in uniform. It looks as if these hands aren't helping her, but holding her back. The photo is therefore telling us something about the relationship between the government and its citizens.

Press photographers tell stories that not very many people have heard about, and that they consider to be important enough to show to other people. Press photographers therefore teach us something about the world.

They show us, for example, how beautiful and fascinating the world is, as in the photo series about 'Chollywood', the film industry in China. But also about how cruel and nasty the world can be. They do this because they believe it's important to record it, and to let the world know that such terrible things happen—in the hope that people will change the way they act and think.

Study the series for a few minutes, and read the caption.

► What is the bigger story this photo series is telling us?

In 2013, a law was passed in Russia making it illegal to promote homosexuality among the youth. This means that the
writer of a soap series for the youth can be fined if he allows two young men to fall in love with each other. A music group that lets two women kiss each other in a video clip can be sent to prison.

**Detailed question**

Freedom of the press means that journalists and press photographers are free to write and show what they want. It means that everyone in the world can get information, and that nobody is allowed to hide that information. Not even a president who wants to stop people knowing that he allows citizens be shot and killed.

Last year 69 journalists were murdered. The organisation ‘Reporters without Borders’ monitors the number of journalists that are killed. Some are killed because someone else wants to stop certain stories from being told. Others are killed as a result of the violence they are trying to portray, or because they happen to be in a war zone when something goes wrong.

**Assignement 5:**

So the work of a photojournalist can be extremely dangerous. But still, press photographers and other journalists continue to risk their lives, because they believe it’s important that other people in the world can see what’s happening there.

**Assignement 6:**

Study the series for a few minutes and read the caption.

The men that are taking the bodies away are all wearing white suits to protect them from the virus. The photographer is also taking a risk of becoming infected. For his own safety, he had to stay at least two metres away from the dead and dying. He also put on a white suit and rubber boots, and made sure that he didn’t touch anything that could transmit the virus.

**Assignement 5:**

Why do you think the jury chose this photo as the best press photo of the year?

**Assignement 6:**

Why do you think photographer Pete Muller wanted to make this series, despite the danger to his own life?

Do you think this photo would have won if it had been taken in Sweden or the Netherlands, or another country where homosexuality is legally accepted? Why/why not?

Do you think the photographer’s life is in danger for taking and showing this photo? Why/why not?

Do you think this photo would have been won if it had been taken in Sweden or the Netherlands, or another country where homosexuality is legally accepted? Why/why not?

What’s your opinion on press photographers risking their lives to show us the injustices taking place in the world?
Press photographers have to stick to a few rules. A press photo has to show the truth. The press photographer is not allowed to stage anything. He or she has to show the world as it really is. And the viewer has to be able to trust the photographer. If that’s not the case, everything could be fake, and we won’t know at all what’s true and what’s not.

There are a few exceptions. When photographers make a portrait, they are allowed to decide where and how the person is going to be photographed. Even with this series, there’s something different.

Photographer Glenna Gordon wanted to give a face to the girls who had been kidnapped. But how do you do that if the girls have vanished already? She contacted the family of the girls who had disappeared and asked if she could use some of their personal belongings. Because it was dangerous for Gordon to travel to the village the girls came from, the stuff was brought to her. She then took photos of the personal belongings in a studio. That’s how Gordon was able to find a way to show a picture of the girls. And this method is within the rules of press photography because she didn’t make any changes to the objects themselves.

► The photographer took photos of the items exactly as she had received them from the family. Making changes to the items and the photo is against the rules of press photography. Can you think of three ways you could change the items to make the photos more interesting, but which would mean that they were no longer press photos?

1)..............................................................
2)..............................................................
3)..............................................................

► Assignement 7: SUBJECTIVITY

Find this photo:

Study the photo for a few minutes and read the caption. Although press photographers have to present their subjects as much as possible in a neutral (objective) way, 100% objectivity is impossible. In each photo you will catch a glimpse of the photographer’s opinion or their view of the world. We call this personal perspective subjectivity.

In multiple countries and within many religions, transgenders are considered to be abnormal individuals. Transgenders are people who don’t feel at home with the gender role that is appropriate for the body they have been given. For example, men who would prefer to be women, or vice versa.

► How are the transgenders in this photo portrayed?

► Read the text that corresponds to the photo. Why do you think the photographer chose this topic to focus on?

► Detailed question

Find this photo:

A photo is a snapshot taken at a particular moment in time. Even someone who’s always cheerful will look angry once in a while. If you take a photo just at that instant, the viewer will see an aggressive person. Photographers have an endless variety of ways they can influence how a photo comes across. And before you get to see the photo, an image editor of a newspaper or a website has usually made a choice from a whole lot of photos.
When you take a photo of your own face, you choose your best side, making sure a lock of your hair will hide that one black-head. Press photographers are constantly thinking about which side to shoot from, the perspective.

A press photographer is not allowed to stage anything. But he or she can choose whether to shoot a close-up or a total shot. Whether the photo is black and white, or in colour. Or to shoot from below or from above. All these decisions play a role in how the event or situation comes across in the photo. Which means that it’s the photographer that decides how you see the event that has been recorded.

► These photos have been shot from above. They show us a picture of the world in a very special manner. Do you think they’re good photos? Why/why not?

The photographer also decides the framework. What gets shown and what doesn’t. Study the photo.

► What do you think is happening outside the frame? Is there anything happening outside? Or is someone standing next to the table?

► Why do you think the photographer chose to take a shot of just the table and the curtain?

If you’ve got some time left, wander around the rest of the exhibition and choose your own personal World Press Photo of the Year. Explain why you think this photo is the best!

Thanks for your time and attention, and we hope to see you again next year!

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