Working Assumptions

LESSON PLANS

Titles & Captions

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Working Assumptions is a cultural non-profit that explores the everyday give-and-take of family and care through visual storytelling, encouraging reflection and dialogue.

workingassumptions.org

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Overview

A title immediately colors how a viewer reads a photograph. When writing your title, consider what context, feelings, or ideas you want the viewer to have. A strong title is original, playful, or intriguing.

A caption enhances your photograph in a few clear and compelling sentences. It can be something surprising that the viewer might not know from just looking at the photograph, or it can elaborate on a detail from the photograph.

Look at the image below without reading its caption. What story does it tell you? Now read the caption. Does that change the story you gathered? How?



Luz Cuevas, Grade 12, *Untitled*, 2017
"Even after a long day at work, my dad comes home and takes care of anything that needs to be taken care of. Fixing the cars is an opportunity to bond more with my two little brothers and teach them about what he is doing. This is my dad's favorite cap and shows how proud he is of his daughter who is currently in college."

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Writing Titles and Captions

There are as many approaches to writing titles and captions as there are to making photographs. Some captions are only a few sentences long. Others are poems. Some include quotes from subjects in the photograph.

Follow the steps in this activity to write a unique title and caption for one of your photographs.

Brainstorm. Use the organizer on page 3 to brainstorm ideas for your title and caption. Don't be concerned with spelling, grammar, or punctuation at this point—just get your ideas and feelings down on paper. If you're having a hard time getting started, write down whatever words come to mind when you look at your photograph. The more words you have, the easier it will be to write your title and caption.

Write. Referring to your organizer for help, start off with a short sentence describing what is happening in your photograph. This introductory sentence is often more compelling when written in the present tense, using active verbs. For example:

Past Tense	**Present Tense**
"Even after a long day at work, my dad came home and took care of anything that needed to be taken care of."	"Even after a long day at work, my dad comes home and takes care of anything that needs to be taken care of. "

Thoughts

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List things that were happening before, during, or after you took the picture. You can include things happening outside the frame.

Describe any surprising or fascinating information that the viewer can't know and that helps give the photograph context.

Describe things that the photograph cannot capture such as smells, tastes, sounds, temperature, or bits of conversation.

List any emotions or feelings that you associate with this image.

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Write a few more sentences about something your photograph does not show directly. This is something that only you, the photographer, know about the image. It could be something that happened before or after the photo was taken, something going on just outside the photo's frame, something that the camera cannot capture (such as smells, sounds, taste, temperature, or bits of conversation), or something you imagine about the photograph. Alternatively, you can expand on something that is seen in the photograph. For example:

"Even after a long day at work, my dad comes home and takes care of anything that needs to be taken care of. Fixing the cars is an opportunity to bond more with my two little brothers and teach them about what he is doing. This is my dad's favorite cap and shows how proud he is of his daughter who is currently in college."

Thoughts

Now write a title for your photograph. The title can summarize, expand on, or add additional context to your caption. You could even choose not to assign a title to your photograph (*Untitled*), leaving room for the viewer's own interpretation.

Thoughts

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Share. Share your photograph, but not your title or caption, with a partner. Ask your partner to describe what is happening in the photograph. Write down their questions. From the work you've done with your partner, is there something you would change or add to your title or caption now?

Thoughts

Learn. Now have your partner read your title and caption. Do they have any thoughts or suggestions?

Thoughts

Revise. Based on the feedback you received, look at how you can revise your title and caption. Keep these tips in mind:

- Read your title and caption out loud to yourself.
- Cut unnecessary words or phrases.
- Keep your language varied.
- Clarify any sentences that are confusing.
- Remember that the steps are just suggestions.
- Feel free to be creative!

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My Final Title

My Final Caption

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