ANSEL ADAMS: AMERICAN MASTER
Selections from the David H. Arrington Collection
AUGUST 14, 2015-JANUARY 17, 2016

Teacher Resources

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This Teacher Resource Guide was made in collaboration with the exhibition, Ansel Adams: American Master Selections from the David H. Arrington Collection.

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**BIOGRAPHY:**

*Ansel Adams*

Ansel Adams (1902-1984) is one of the most celebrated photographers of all time. His images of the American landscape, and especially those of the American West, are familiar to millions. Born and raised in San Francisco, Adams studied music as a youth with the hope of becoming a concert pianist. At age 14, while on a family vacation, he took his first snapshots of Yosemite National Park. From that time on, Adams was captivated by the idea of recording nature on film. While in his twenties, he abandoned his musical ambitions for a career in photography, working as a portrait and commercial photographer. By the 1930s he began to achieve success for his visionary yet highly detailed photographs of western landscapes, especially those taken in Yosemite National Park. Over the next decades, Adams continued to work as a photographer, staging exhibitions and writing several important books on photographic technique. He also became a champion of the conservation movement in the United States, speaking out for environmental concerns and serving on the board of directors of the Sierra Club. Today, Ansel Adams's photographs remain immensely popular, "conveying to millions," according to his biographer, "a vision of an ideal America where nature's grand scenes and gentle details live on in undiminished glory."

In 1941 Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes asked Adams to take photographs of the American West for a series of murals to be installed in the Department of the Interior Building in Washington, DC. The murals were never completed, but 226 of Adams's signed original prints were later added to the National Archives holdings and can be found among the records of the National Park Service.

---Biography from The National Archives and Record Administration
BIOGRAPHY:

David H. Arrington

David H. Arrington is a native Texan, born and raised in the South Dallas community of Oak Cliff. Reared by educators, his father was a principal with the Dallas ISD and his mother was a teacher at Kimball High School. David attended Texas Tech University and earned a finance degree in 1983.

After graduating from Tech, David’s interest for the oil and gas industry led him to the Permian Basin. He moved to Midland in 1984 and began a career as an independent oil producer.

David has been married for 22 years to his wife, Shelley, also an educator. He is a devoted father of five and upholds an active role in his community. David enjoys fly-fishing and names many of his wells after trout flies. He also enjoys photography and jokes that he is, “a photographer trapped in an oilman’s body.”

David has been a collector of Ansel Adams since 1993 and has aggregated the largest privately owned collection with over 600 photographs. His collection has grown more from passion than intent. He has shared his collection with the public through a series of exhibitions at museums in the United States and several other countries. He also showcases Adams’ work in his corporate offices located in Midland, Texas.

With education in his blood, David enjoys accompanying the photographs on tour and teaching and speaking on Ansel Adams’ talent and creativity.
VOCABULARY

1. **Photography**: Greek origin, and literally means,” painting or writing with light.”

2. **Shutter Speed**: The length of time the camera’s shutter is open. The speed determines how long the film is exposed to light.

3. **SLR**: Single Lens Reflex is a camera with one lens that involves a mirror and prism. The viewer looks through this lens when shooting photos, as opposed to a “point and shoot”, where the viewer looks through a separate viewfinder.

4. **Wide Angle**: a lens that makes it possible to include more of the scene or subject.

5. **Filters** adjust the color, texture, and/or style of photographs. Filters might adjust one or multiple aspects of an image.

6. **Depth of Field**: The portion of an image that appears sharp. A large depth of field (or deep focus) places the entire scene in focus.

7. **Tripod**: A 3-legged stand that the camera sits on.
Art with Ansel Adams

Objectives
The students will be able to:
• Identify color in a photograph while relying on their perceptions of the environment.
• The student expresses ideas through their own original artwork that was inspired by an Ansel Adams’ photograph.

Age group
Elementary (1st – 2nd grade)

TEKS
117.5 Art 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b

Materials
• Paper
• Pencils
• Ansel Adams’ photographs
• Color Pencils

Preparation
• Have the Ansel Adams’ photographs printed beforehand for each student.

Lesson
• Ask Students, “Do you think a photo is art?” Students may give many answers, but a common one might be no, because they have grown up in a world where taking a photo is common, due to technology.
• Explain to students that a camera phone is a very new form of photography. There was a time where there were only black and white photos. Explain that photographers had to carry around equipment that weighed around 35 pounds. Some landscape photographers had to have a
A donkey can carry around 100 pounds of supplies. This is a way to tie in Ansel Adams.

- Explain who Ansel Adams was and why he was important. Keep the explanation to the fact that he was a photographer (a person who takes photos as a job). Have they ever had their photos taken professionally? Do they have baby pictures that are professionally done, gone to a wedding and seen a photographer?

- Show the students some of Ansel Adams’ works that are attached to this lesson plan.

- Explain briefly that the photos are black and white because that was the norm in photography at the time. However, color photography was possible in Ansel Adams lifetime, but the photographer mostly worked with black and white prints. Ask the students, “Why do you think Ansel Adams wanted his picture to be in black and white?” The students will give various answers.

- Allow each student to attempt to copy the image, and color in the black and white aspects.

- Once they have their own colored image of the landscape, allow the students to compare their work with the Ansel Adams photo.

- Ask the students, “Why did you color that object in that particular color?” Students will have various answers that can then be tied back to why Ansel Adams made some of his photographs in black and white. These are all aesthetic choices by an artist.

- Once the students have given color to Ansel Adams’ photographs, allow them to draw their very own landscape in either color or black and white.
The students’ personal landscapes should not be the same as the photos of Ansel Adams’ landscape.

**Differentiation**

- For older students: Allow the students to write a few sentences explaining their aesthetic choices.

- For older students: Allow the students to take a landscape photograph and use Photoshop to edit the photo. Photoshop will help the student realize their original vision. You can then explain the use of chemicals and the darkrooms in photography.

*Lesson created by Tiffany Demmon*

*The following images were found on The National Archives at [http://www.archives.gov/research/ansel-adams/](http://www.archives.gov/research/ansel-adams/) and are public domain.*
79-AAG-2 "Grand Tetons."
79-AAH-4 "Bishop Pass."
79-AAH-7 “Kearsage Pinnacles.”
79-AAH-11 “Junction Peak.”
Storytelling with Ansel Adams

Objectives
The students will be able to:

• Identify key parts of a photograph.
• Students will use their sensory knowledge and life experience as sources for ideas about visual symbols, self, and life events.

Age group
Elementary (3rd – 4th grade)

TEKS
113.14 Social Studies a1, a2
110.14. ELAR 1a, 1b, 2a, 3
117.11 Art a1, b1a

Materials
• Sketch pads
• Pencils
• Camera (allow students to use camera phones or share cameras)
• Ansel Adams biography
• Paper
• Ansel Adams conservation history

Preparation
• Have the attached documents printed out beforehand for the students.

Lesson
• Explain to students that today they will be exploring nature. Show the students an Ansel Adams photograph, and ask them who was Ansel Adams?
• Pass out the Ansel Adams biography and conservation history; the link is provided. Allow the students to read over both documents. Website Link for Adams’ conservation history:
Website Link for Adams’ biography:


Now, show the students several of Ansel Adams’ photographs. You can use the attached photos or search for your own Ansel Adams’ nature photographs.

- Allow the students to connect Ansel Adams’ love of nature with his photographs.
- Ask students to identify three new and interesting connections between Ansel Adams’ photographs and what they now know of Ansel Adams.
- Take the students outside with their sketchpads, pencils, and cameras.
- Allow the students to find a spot to sit down and sketch. While outside with the students, go over perspective, lines and details, then allow them to go to work on sketching their own landscape.
- After they sketch, allow them to use the cameras to attempt to take their own landscape photographs.
- During the next class, line the newly developed photographs out and allow the students to pick out each others’ photographs (they cannot pick out their own photo).
- Then once again pass out the Ansel Adams’ photographs to each student.
- The students will write two narrative stories about the two different photographs.
- The students should use the Question Mark Map (provided in Appendix B) to plan out the six questions (what, who, where, why, how, when) needed to develop their stories.
• The students then have to use the Essay Planning Map (provided in Appendix B) to plan out their stories.

• After the students finish, have them read their stories out loud and let the other students attempt to pick out which photo the story represents.

_Differentiation_

• For older students: Students research on their own about Ansel Adams and then take a picture of a landscape and then write an expository story. The essay should explain how their landscape describes not only Ansel Adams, but also them as an artist. Encourage students to think of as many details as possible—why that spot, why that image, is it a close up (if so why), is it a landscape (why).

• For younger students: Have the students sit in a circle and show them one of Ansel Adams’ photographs. Have a student start a story verbally. After five seconds, the next student has to continue the story based on the photograph.

_Lesson created by Tiffany Demmon_

*The following images were found on The National Archives at [http://www.archives.gov/research/ansel-adams/](http://www.archives.gov/research/ansel-adams/) and are public domain.*
79-AAC-2 “Canyon de Chelly.”
79-AAG-2 "Grand Tetons."
79-AAH-4 “Bishop Pass.”
79-AAH-7 “Kearsage Pinnacles.”
79-AAH-11 “Junction Peak.”
He said! I thought! (Writing)

Introduction

Ansel Adams did not have a “typical educational experience”. He was an energetic child who would have preferred being outdoors than in a classroom. When he was 13 years old, his dad, along with other tutors, began to teach him at home because Adams and his father felt that regular school was too restrictive. He studied subjects like Greek and piano. He began to surround himself with others who loved music and the outdoors as much as he did. When he was 14, he went on a family vacation to Yosemite Valley and was given his first camera, a No. 1 Brownie Box camera. This began a long tradition of visiting Yosemite every summer and taking photographs of his treks through the wilderness.

Ansel Adams was known as an active and sickly man, but his family, friends, and environment molded him into a great photographer, pianist, and conservationist.

Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Organize thoughts using a graphic organizer
- Make text-self connections
- Demonstrate the writing process
- Produce a well-written expository text

Age Group

6th – 8th grade
**TEKS**

ELAR: 14, 17 A; 20 A, B; 21, 27, 28

**Materials**

- Handouts:
  - *He said! I thought!* Graphic organizer (provided in Appendix B)
  - *Ansel Adams Writing Practice* (provided in Appendix B)
  - *Writing Process* (provided in Appendix B)
- Paper
- Writing Utensils

**Preparation**

- Make quote visible to all by writing on board, poster, projector, etc. along with writing process.
- Make copies of graphic organizer, *He said! I thought!* See Appendix B
- Make copies of *Ansel Adams Writing Practice*. See Appendix B
- Make copies of *Writing Process*. See Appendix B

**Lesson**

- Hand each student a copy of *Ansel Adams Writing Practice*.
- Discuss the handout, *Ansel Adams Writing Practice*, and Adams’s background with the class.
  - What did the quote mean to Adams, what does it mean to you (the teacher), and what does it mean to them (the students)?
  - How does the quote relate to the prompt?
• Review the writing process (Use handout provided):
  o Brainstorm: Hand out the graphic organizer, *He said! I thought!*
    With help from the class, fill out the graphic organizer based on
    your own experiences as an example, and then have them fill out
    their own.
  o Rough Draft: Demonstrate to students how they might organize
    their ideas into a multi-paragraph essay.
  o Revise and Edit: Have students reread and fix their errors in wording
    and writing throughout their essay. This can be done individually or
    with a partner.
  o Publish: Students should rewrite their essays fixing their mistakes
    and share with the class.
• Closing: As a class, compare how each other’s stories have shaped their
  lives. What did they learn about each other? How can this quote apply to
  a bigger idea about others and tolerance (i.e. Don’t judge others because
  you never know what they have been through).

_Differentiation_

• If students are having trouble interpreting the quote or thinking of
  examples to write about, they can “Kick around some ideas”.
  o Kick around some ideas—Group students based on who is having
    trouble understanding the quote and who is having trouble
    thinking of examples and instruct them to form a circle. Groups
    should not have more than 5 students at a time. Have each student
    write an idea of what they think the quote means or an experience
    /person that shaped their lives. No answer is wrong at this point.
Crumble the papers up and throw all the papers into the middle of their circle and literally kick them around. Once the papers have been thoroughly mixed up, have each person pick one at random and discuss as a group. Make sure to be on hand to help guide their thinking and discussions.

- If students finish their expository text early, challenge them to turn the same information from their graphic organizer into a personal narrative. Think of one specific experience or person that has caused them to become the person they are today. For instance, Adams' father supported him leaving school and getting private tutors. He also took him on a family vacation to Yosemite and gave him his first camera. These events led to Adams becoming one of the most influential photographers of the 20th century. (TEKS: ELAR 16)
Introduction:

Picture this: When Ansel Adams was taking photographs, he couldn’t just pull out his phone and snap a picture whenever he wanted. Adams used a **view camera**, which had to be set on a tripod. He then had to get behind it and cover his head with a black cloth. Once this was all done and he took the picture, he was not able to see the picture until he took the film to a dark room and used the negative to develop the photograph.

Taking pictures and creating photographs was not always the simple process it is today.

How do people take pictures and create photographs?

Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able:

- Compare and Contrast creating photographs long ago to the present-day process.
- Use different applications to alter photographs, such as Adobe Photoshop, Snapspeed, etc.
- Create a multimedia presentation that demonstrates their knowledge and process of creating photographs and how it compares to Adams’s work.

*Age Group*

7th-8th Grade

*TEKS*

ELAR: 14, 17D, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28
Technology: 2A, 4, 5, 6

Materials

- Ansel Adams Gallery Questions (provided in Appendix B)
- Composition notebook or paper
- Pencil
- At least 1 computer for every 2-3 students
- Smart phone, tablet, or digital camera

Prep

- Print out gallery questions for students to answer while at the museum.
- Make sure that students have access to smartphones, tablets, or digital cameras with photo editing software or apps after visiting the museum.

Lesson

At the Museum

- Visit the Ansel Adams: American Master, Selections from the David H. Arrington Exhibit at the Museum of Texas Tech University and examine many of his works.
- In groups of 2-3, answer the following questions on a piece of notebook paper or in a composition notebook.
  - What do you notice about his photographic style?:
    - What does he take pictures of usually, and why?
    - What colors does he prefer to use?
    - Why do you think he generally sticks to one color palette?
    - What do you think he was trying to express in his photographs? What was the message he was trying to get
across to his audience? (Think about his efforts with conservation)
  
  - What do you think of the photographs?
  - Which was your favorite one, and why?

After visiting the Museum

- Adams focused on taking pictures of landscapes rather than people. Have students study the following websites to gain a better understanding of Ansel Adams’s photographic style and process:
  
  
  
  

- Now it is your turn to try your hand at landscape photography. Use a smartphone, digital camera, or tablet to take a picture of a landscape in your area. Make sure that you strive to take a unique picture rather than just going outside and taking just any picture. Pretend that you are Ansel Adams and you are looking for just the right photograph. Take more than one if you need to at this point.

- Choose one photograph to modify and develop. Adams was very
particular in the pictures he took and the way he developed them.

- Use software, like Photoshop, or apps like Adobe Photoshop Express, Snapseed, or Adobe Lightroom mobile, just to name a few, to create works of art that would make Ansel Adams proud.

- Have students create a multimedia presentation that shows the progression from their original photograph to the final product.
  - Students should also use their presentation to explain the process they used to create their final product, and why they did what they did.

**Closing**

Have students write a summary or a multi-paragraph essay that:

- Compares and contrasts their process to Adams’ process,
- What Adams has meant to the world of photography,
- And what Adams has meant to conservation through his use of landscape photography.

**Differentiation**

1. Instead of having all of the students look at all of the suggested websites in “After the Museum: Step 1,” they could be split up. Groups could be assigned to one website, and then explain it to the class.

2. If students have extra time, encourage them to create more works of art using photo-editing processes.

*Lessons created by Anna Davis.*
Pre and Post Visit Activity-
The Zone System: Using Ansel Adams’ Photos to Apply the Concept

Photographs: Moonrise Hernandez, New Mexico (3)

Objectives
By the end of this lesson students will be able to

• Use a zone-scale card
• Determine contrast
• Critically examine prints to determine what zones were used or represented

Age Group
• Junior and senior level photography students
• University level beginning photography students

TEKS
117.53. Art, Level II 1,3, and 4

Materials
• Cardstock paper for the Zone Scale Card
• Pencils
• Legal or reporter pads

Raymond Parker Photography.
Preparation

- Print out enough copies of the Zone Scale Card for the amount of students you have. Cardstock works best. The cards are in Appendix B of this learning guide.

Lesson

The Zone System is a set of techniques used to determine the ideal film exposure and development. Developed by Ansel Adams and Fred Archer in the 1930s, this method provides a systematic way to define the relationship between the way a photographic subject is expected to look and the actual outcome of the photograph. This system is typically used with black and white sheet film but can be modified to use with other types of film as well as digital photography. The Zone Card can be used to determine the zone of the elements in a photographic subject or to determine the zones in a printed photograph. For this activity, we will be using the card to determine the zones in the various prints titled *Moonrise Hernandez, New Mexico*. There are 3 prints from the same negative in this exhibit. This might sound excessive, but the prints were made years apart and show very different portrayals of the same negative. This is a great example of using The Zone System as it relates to developing photographs. Adams was an expert at getting contrast, highlight, and shadows into a print from a negative that was not very dynamic.

Before going to the museum, review The Zone System using this video: [https://youtu.be/Dwar84Jdcro](https://youtu.be/Dwar84Jdcro). Remind the students before showing the video that they will be using their Zone Card to identify the zones, so they may want to take notes.

Make sure the students have their pencil, notepad, and Zone Card. Explain that they will hold onto them and use them while at the museum. Head to the
Museum of Texas Tech University and visit the exhibit *Ansel Adams: American Master Selections from the David H. Arrington Collection.*

Locate the 3 prints with the title *Moonrise Hernandez, New Mexico.* Instruct the students to make note of the dates when referencing each specific piece as this is the only way to differentiate the three.

The students should make observations about the distinct features of each image, and one photo at a time they will find the zones in the photo. It will be easiest to do this by drawing a rough sketch of the photograph in their notepads. They should find many zones in each. They should notate the zones within the sketch of the photograph they have done in their notepad.

After doing the exercise, the students will walk around and review the rest of the exhibit. Ask them to pick their favorite photograph and take some notes about why they chose that particular photograph and what specific techniques they appreciate in the photograph.

During the next class you will discuss The Zone System briefly and have the students discuss what zones they found in the three photographs. Likely there will be some disagreement, as this is somewhat subjective. Encourage them to explain why they picked the zones they did for the element of the photograph they are referencing (i.e. the moon).

Lastly, you will have them discuss the photos they chose from the exhibit. Ideally this would be a critique style discussion and students would agree and disagree about the specific reasons for the techniques they preferred.

**Differentiation:**
- This activity can be used as an extra credit assignment while the Ansel Adams exhibit is open, or can even be applied to any other black and white photographs. Students could be asked to go to the exhibit outside of school and
perform the same tasks as above. They will not be able to do the discussion, but if you utilize an online discussion portal of some kind, you could facilitate the conversation there.

Lesson prepared by Samantha Biffle
Comparisons in Landscape Photography

Objectives
By the end of this lesson students will be able to

• Critically think by comparing and contrasting
• Research skills will be developed
• Students will work on their writing skills.

Age Group
• Junior and senior level photography or English students
• University level beginning photography, or art history students

TEKS
117.53. Art, Level II. 1, 3, and 4

Materials
• Internet access
• Computer with word processing software

Preparation
• Some light research into the description of landscape photography

Lesson
Begin by giving a description of landscape photography. It shows spaces in our world, often depicting nature, but man-made objects can also be included. It is common for landscape photographs to depict man-made structures interfering with nature. A very well known example of landscape photography is Adams’ The Tetons and the Snake River (pictured above), which is featured in the exhibit, Ansel Adams: American Master Selections from the David H. Arrington Collection. Ansel Adams is one of the most recognizable landscape photographers of all time. This would be a good time to show some more of Ansel Adams’ images or perhaps some other landscape photographers’ images. Some other landscape photographers you could reference are Galen Rowell, or Edward Weston.
The homework assignment will be to write a 3-page, double-spaced, typed report on a landscape photographer who is not Ansel Adams. The students will look up a landscape photographer on their own time and write the report. They should include a brief explanation of landscape photography, biography of their artist, and a section that compares and contrasts the works and life of their artist with Ansel Adams. Finally, they will have a conclusion in which they sum up what they’ve already talked about and give some of their own opinions about their artist and Ansel Adams. They should talk about photographic techniques. They are welcome to cite resources but must make sure not to take any information without attributing it properly. This is a research paper. They should include photos as necessary, but those cannot be included in the 3-page count. They should be attached at the end of the paper.

On the day the students turn in their report they should prepare a brief oral summary of their paper and share it with the class. This will hopefully spur a discussion and won’t be so much a formal presentation but a discussion that involves critical thinking and thoughtful dialog from other classmates.

These reports and presentations should be graded based on the student’s grasp of the subject of landscape photography and the artist they researched.

**Differentiation**

- If you have computer lab access, you could make this a briefer assignment and let the students research during class time so that they can present their findings orally at the end of class.

*Lesson prepared by Samantha Biffle*
APPENDIX A: TIMELINE
Ansel Adams: Timeline

2/20, Ansel Easton Adams is born in San Francisco, CA

1902

1925

He receives his first camera, Kodak Brownie Box camera

Ansel decides to become a pianist

1928

1931

Has an exhibition of 60 photographs at the Smithsonian Institution

1933

1937

First acknowledged photograph, Monolith, The Face of Halfdome

Opens his own gallery in San Francisco

Develops the “Zone System” for developing film. The National Park Service commissions Ansel to create a photo mural for the Department of the Interior Building in Washington, DC.

1941

1963

Ansel receives the John Muir Award

Ansel receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Mount Ansel Adams is dedicated, at Lyell Fork, in Yosemite, in his memory

1980

1984

1985

Ansel Adams dies at the age of 82

1995

Appointed to President Johnson's environmental task force

1965

Becomes a consultant for the Polaroid Corporation

1949

His darkroom at Yosemite burns, destroying 20 percent of his negatives.

1937

Ansel receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom

1980

Mount Ansel Adams is dedicated, at Lyell Fork, in Yosemite, in his memory

1985

Ansel Adams dies at the age of 82

1984

Ansel receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom

1980

Mount Ansel Adams is dedicated, at Lyell Fork, in Yosemite, in his memory

1985

Ansel Adams dies at the age of 82
APPENDIX B: HANDOUTS
3 Paragraph Essay Planning Map

Introduction

Thesis

Body Paragraph

Conclusion

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HE SAID:

I THOUGHT:

PROMPT:

ENVIRONMENT

OTHERS

ME:
Consider this:

There are no 2 people exactly alike on this entire planet. People may look the same or act the same, but their lives never turn out the same. Why is that? Could it be where they grew up? Could it be who their parents are? What about their friends? What kind of people do they hang out with during or after school?

Ansel Adams once wrote,

“I trace who I am and the direction of my development to those years of growing up in our house by the dunes, propelled especially by an internal spark tenderly kept alive and glowing by my father.”

Prompt:

How have your environment and those around you shaped your life and choices?
Writing Process

1. Brainstorm:
   Plan your writing by using graphic organizers and taking notes.

2. Rough Draft:
   Write your first draft.

3. Revise and Edit:
   Reread and hunt for any mistakes in wording or grammar.

4. Publish
   Fix all mistakes to make a final draft and share.
Gallery Questions

Instructions: Study the photographs in the collection at the Museum of Texas Tech University. With your group, answer the following questions.

1. What do you notice about his photographic style?:

   a. What does he take pictures of usually, and why?

   b. What colors does he prefer to use?

   c. Why do you think he generally sticks to one color palette?

   d. What do you think he was trying to express in his photographs?
      What was the message he was trying to get across to his audience?

2. What do you think of the photographs?

3. Which photograph was your favorite, and why?
