

Photography/Art Key Words

Describing Colour

Think about your overall impression of the colours used in the photograph, how they look and feel, how the colours work together (or not), how they fit with the subject of the picture, how the photographer has arranged these (or not). Are there any specific colours you can identify?

Natural, clear, compatible, distinctive, interesting, lively, stimulating, subtle, sympathetic.

Artificial, clashing, depressing, discordant, garish, gaudy, jarring, unfriendly, violent.

Bright, brilliant, deep, earthy, harmonious, intense, rich, saturated, strong, vibrant, vivid.

Dull, flat, insipid, pale, mellow, muted, subdued, quiet, weak.

Cool, cold. Warm, hot. Light, dark.

Blended, broken, mixed, muddled, muddied, pure.

Complementary, contrasting, harmonious, monochrome, saturated.

Describing Texture

Can you see any different textures within the photograph? Do the textures help to create a mood or effect? Does the lighting help to highlight these textures? Don't guess; if you don't see any texture, don't try to talk about it in that particular photograph.

Flat, polished, smooth.

Raised, rough, coarse. Cut, incised, pitted, scratched, uneven,

Hairy, sticky.

Soft, hard.

Shiny, glossy, reflective. Satin, silk, frosted, matte.

Describing Composition

Look at how the elements in the photograph are arranged, the underlying structure (shapes) and relationships between the different parts, how your eye moves around the composition.

Arrangement, layout, structure, position.

Landscape format, portrait format, square format, circular, triangular. Rule of thirds.

Horizontal, vertical, diagonal, angled.

Foreground, background, middle ground.

Centred, asymmetrical, symmetrical. Balanced, unbalanced, lopsided, space.

Overlapping, cluttered, chaotic. Separate, spacious, empty, repetitive, repetition.

Free, flowing, fragmented. Formal, rigid, upright, confined.

Negative space, positive space.

Describing Atmosphere

What is the mood or atmosphere of the subject of the photograph and how it is taken? What emotions do you experience looking at it?

Calm, content, peaceful, relaxed, tranquil.

Cheerful, happy, joyful, romantic.

Depressed, gloomy, miserable, sad, sombre, tearful, unhappy.

Aggressive, angry, chilling, dark, distressing, frightening, violent.

Energetic, exciting, stimulating, thought-provoking.

Boring, dull, lifeless, insipid.

Describing Focus

Many photos use focus to highlight certain areas or aspects of the image.

Visible, blurred, depth of field.

Background, foreground, highlighted.

Soft, sharp.

Motion blur, focus blur, Gaussian blur.

Circle any words you do not understand and ask a teacher to explain them for you!