



Muse Machine 2018 ATTS-Inspired Lesson Plan

## A Career in Journalism

Developed by Julie Crace

Springboro High School, Springboro, OH

### Lesson Plan Summary:

During the Advanced Teacher Training Seminar in New York City, Muse Machine advisors are always exposed to inspirational speakers. Muse regularly brings producers, singers, actors and directors into the seminar so that the teachers can hear firsthand what it is like to be working at a high level in the performing arts. In 2018, one particular speaker struck a note for many teachers. Michelle Agins, a photojournalist from the *New York Times*, spoke about her work and the struggles she faced as a black woman trying to be successful in a male-dominated field. Not only did she make it to the top in her field, she won the Pulitzer Prize in 2001. Julie Crace from Springboro High School was so inspired by Michelle's talk that she and two teachers from Wogaman Middle School in Dayton teamed up to bring a photo-inspired lesson to all of their students. The students and teachers met at the Dayton Metro Library and took photos together. Everyone was a bit nervous about how the joint meeting would go. Much to the relief and joy of all, they worked together with ease. It was a lesson learned far beyond expectations and beyond the classroom!

<b>Name Julie Crace</b>	<b>School Springboro HS</b>	<b>Subject Photo 2</b>	<b>Date Oct. 1, 2018</b>
<b>Inspiration</b>	Michelle Agins – Pulitzer Prize NY Times Photographer		
<b>Title</b>	Newsworthy		
<b>I. OVERVIEW</b>	<b>A. Summary:</b> The students are going to learn about Michelle Agins and her life as a journalist. Composition rules will be reviewed. Students will take photographs of Dayton communities using journalistic styles. They will enter their photography in a contest judged by Michelle.		
	<b>B. Standards: (Visual Arts)</b> 1PE Analyze interdisciplinary connections that influence social and cultural contexts of visual imagery. 3PE Compare and contrast the styles in artworks by artists of different cultures and historical trends. 4PE Explain how individual artists impact cultural developments. <b>(Writing)</b> W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.		
	<b>C. Objectives/Outcomes:</b> The students will create photos that portray the cultures in their neighborhoods. They will identify the composition rules that were used in their photography.		
	<b>D. Teaching Approach:</b> Structured Inquiry: I will lecture/show the Michelle Agins interview and discuss good photograph composition. Students will experiment with angles and subjects and will analyze which photographs best use the composition rules to enter into the contest.		
	<b>E. Assessment:</b> Rubric. Creating photos that depict their neighborhoods with good use of the composition rules.		
<b>II. LESSON PREPARATION</b>	<b>A. Teacher Needs:</b> Google Slide presentation about Michelle Agins. Google slide presentation with composition rules and samples of Agins photographs.		
	a. <b>Teacher Information:</b> YouTube Michelle Agins interview: <a href="https://www.c-span.org/video/?308492-1/contemporary-photojournalism-america">https://www.c-span.org/video/?308492-1/contemporary-photojournalism-america</a> and information that I learned about Michelle during the ATTS talk back with Agins.		
	b. <b>Helpful Hints:</b> <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>		
	<b>B. Student Needs:</b> A camera or a phone with a camera.		
	a. <b>Prior Knowledge:</b> General understanding of good use of composition and basic grammar and writing skills.		
	b. <b>Student Voice:</b> Students will meet students from other schools/communities and work/learn with them.		
	c. <b>Vocabulary:</b> Pulitzer Prize, Journalism, Rule of Thirds, Elements and Principles of Design		
<b>III. EVIDENCE/ ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES</b>	The students will use real world application to provide evidence of learning. They will use journalism skills to take photos implementing the rule of thirds and elements and principles of design and will identify them in the attached rubric.		

<b>IV. ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS</b>	The students will leave this lesson with information on a career in art/photography and better understand what a journalist does on a daily basis. They will also learn about the educational background of a photo journalist and gain knowledge about the challenges and benefits of this career. Students will also learn about how African Americans and women have progressed in the working world and see that Michelle was a leader in this movement.
<b>V. LEARNING PLAN</b>	<b>A. Prompt:</b> Students will watch the interview of Michelle Agins on YouTube and another short video following her on a photo shoot.
	<b>B. Hooks:</b> Discuss women in history that have paved the way for women’s rights particularly in the work force today.
	<b>C. Essential Question(s):</b> How do artists shape, as well as reflect, a culture? How do we decide if the world as it is today, is better or worse than it was in the past? How can one individual’s experience reflect the struggles of an entire nation? What would journalists photograph in your neighborhood? How do we critique/discuss good/bad photography?
	<b>D. Resources:</b> <b>New York Times, Chicago Tribune,</b> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGK_ZgDz7uQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGK_ZgDz7uQ</a> ; <a href="https://fraser61.wordpress.com/2008/09/07/agins-wins-pulitzer/">https://fraser61.wordpress.com/2008/09/07/agins-wins-pulitzer/</a> ; <a href="https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/07/michelle-agins-photos-new-york-times/">https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/07/michelle-agins-photos-new-york-times/</a> ; <a href="https://brandedplaylist.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/1247466845581/on-assignment-with-michelle-agins.html">https://brandedplaylist.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/1247466845581/on-assignment-with-michelle-agins.html</a>
	<b>E. Teacher and Student Performance Tasks:</b> Day 1: Students will watch the YouTube interview with Michelle Agins and the short video “On Assignment with Michelle Agins”. Teacher will go through the Google Slide presentation about Agins and discuss other women in history that have impacted the Women’s Rights Movement. Day 2: Teacher/students will discuss Michelle’s photography using terminology from the Elements, Principles of Design and rule of thirds handout and show the Google Slide presentation. Day 3: Springboro HS students will meet Wogaman MS students at the Dayton Public Library. We will first do some quick icebreakers to get to know each other. We will discuss/review about Michelle and show samples of her photography along with some quick tips in getting good photographs. Students will then work with a buddy from the other school to get some good photos inside and outside of the Dayton Public Library. They will utilize the elements, principles of design and composition rules discussed in class. Day 4: Follow up lesson: Springboro HS students will pick their 4 best photos from the field trip and share them with the Wogaman MS students. Wogaman students will write articles to go along with the photos. The articles will be sent back to and Springboro students and they will Photoshop the photos and articles to look like a newspaper. Both schools will choose one of their four photographs to enter in contest judged by Michelle. All will be printed and displayed at Muse.
	<b>F. Final Review:</b> Students will complete the attached exit slip and graded on a rubric.
<b>VI. LESSON REFLECTION</b>	Students really seemed to enjoy this lesson. They particularly enjoyed the field trip to the Metro Library with the students from Wogaman. Their photos speak for themselves!

**Notes:** Click here to enter text.

## Bio for Michelle Agins

Michelle Agins joined The New York Times as a photographer in June 1989. Prior to that, she had been a staff photographer for The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer since December 1987.

Ms. Agins began her career in photography as an intern for The Chicago Daily News and in less than a year became a sports photographer.

In 1975 and part of 1976, she became affiliated with Project Upward Bound and taught photography first at Loyola University and later, at the University of Illinois at Chicago. From 1976 to 1977, she worked briefly as a photojournalist for the South Shore Sentinel Newspaper in Chicago.

In 1977, Ms. Agins became a photographer and audio-visual specialist for the City of Chicago's Department of Human Services and in 1983 she switched to the mayor's press office where she became the mayor's office photographer, a position she held until 1987 when she joined The Charlotte Observer.

Ms. Agins' photographs have been widely exhibited. In 1981, in Chicago, she received the Mayor's Award for Photographic Excellence and staged a one-woman show titled "I Saw You." She exhibited in a show titled "Faces" at the 1987 National Black Journalists Conference in Miami, and in 1990 she was awarded citations by the New York Association of Black Journalists and the New York Associated Press.

Ms. Agins has received two Pulitzer Prize nominations, first in 1990 for her coverage of the Bensonhurst protests and then again in 1995 for her work on the Times series "Another America: Life on 129th Street." In 2001 Ms. Agins and her colleagues won a Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for their series "How Race is Lived in America."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **EXIT SLIP**

- 1. How do artists shape, as well as reflect, a culture?**
- 2. How do we decide if the world as it is today is better or worse than it was in the past?**
- 3. How can one individual's experience reflect the struggles of an entire nation?**
- 4. What would journalists photograph in your neighborhood?**
- 5. How do we critique/discuss good/bad photography?**

# A Lesson in Composition

by Julie Crace  
Art Instructor  
Springboro High School  
2018-2019

# 1. Fill The Frame / Cropping

If your shot is in danger of losing impact due to busy background/surroundings, crop in tight around your main point of focus, eliminating the background so all attention falls on your main subject. This works particularly well with portraits when you're trying to capture something more intimate and focused, or are shooting in a busy location where what's around them would just cause a distraction. Filling the frame could involve you capturing them from the waist up or, for more impact, fill the frame with just their face. Patterns are another subject that when capturing, you should fill the frame with, aligning it up carefully to ensure it's straight.



## 2. Don't Cut Off Limbs

Keep an eye on the edges of your frame to make sure the person/animal you're photographing hasn't had any of their body parts chopped off by it. Cutting off your cat's tail, your dog's ears, or even part of your model's head will not only spoil your shot, the unintentional limb chopping can pull attention away from what the viewer should really be looking at. Of course, there are times when this rule can be ignored, but for the most part pay attention to it.

**YES**

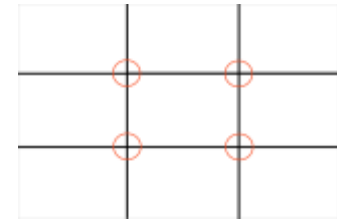


**NO**

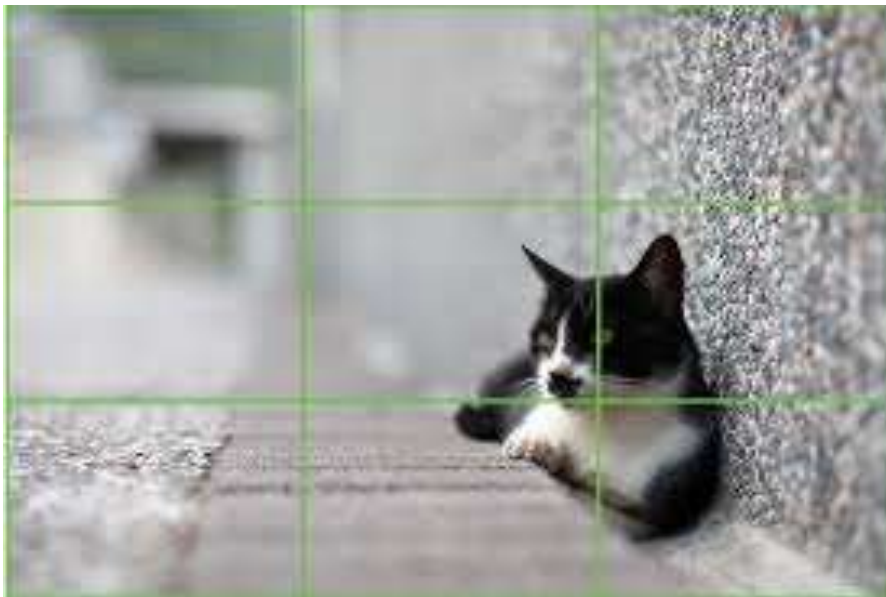




### 3. Understand The Rule Of Thirds

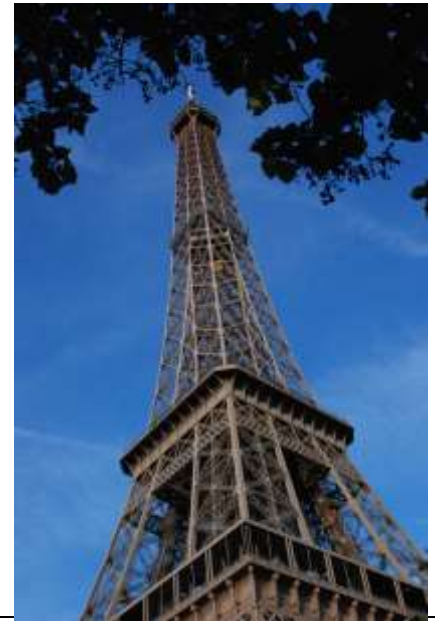


The most basic of all photography rules is all about dividing your shot into nine equal sections by a set of vertical and horizontal lines. With the imaginary frame in place, you should place the most important element(s) in your shot on one of the lines or where the lines meet. It's a technique that works well for landscapes as you can position the horizon on one of the horizontal lines that sit in the lower and upper part of the photograph while you're vertical subjects (trees etc.) can be placed on one of the two vertical lines.



## 4. Use Frames

Frames have various uses when it comes to composition. They can isolate your subject, drawing the eye directly to it, they can hide unwanted items behind it, give an image depth and help create context. Your frame can be man-made (bridges, arches and fences), natural (tree branches, tree trunks) or even human (arms clasped around a face).



## 5. Make The Most Of Lead-In Lines / Shapes

Our eyes are unconsciously drawn along [lines](#) in images so by thinking about how, where and why you place lines in your images will change the way your audience view it. A road, for example, starting at one end of the shot and winding its way to the far end will pull the eye through the scene. You can position various focal points along your line or just have one main area focus at the end of your line that the eye will settle on. Shapes can be used in a similar way, for example, imagine a triangle and position three points of focus at the end of each point where the lines of the shape meet. By doing so you create balance in your shot as well as subtly guiding the eye.



*Photo by Rick Hanson*

## 6. Simplify – Know Your Focus

Having too much going on in your frame can mean the person who's looking at it just keeps searching for a point of focus and soon gets bored of looking when they can't find one. This doesn't mean you can't have secondary points of focus, it just means you should make every effort to make sure they don't steal all the limelight. Take a look at our tutorial on using points of interest in photography for more information on this.

**NO**



**YES**



*Photo by Rick Hanson*

## 7. Watch The Background

Unightly objects, overexposed or particularly bright areas and blocks/dots of bright color will all pull the eye from what it's meant to be focusing on, so take a good look at your background before you take your shot. And, if possible, find a background that's not so obtrusive. If you're working on portraits, make sure there are no unwanted items sticking out of your subject's head and, unless it adds to the shot, throw the background out of focus. To do this, select a wider aperture if working with a DSLR or select the Portrait Mode on a compact camera to tell it you want to work with a wider aperture. If you're working with plants and flowers, try creating your own backgrounds out of card and other material which can be slipped into your bag alongside your camera gear.

**YES**



**NO**



**NO**



## 8. Look For Symmetry / Patterns

Filling your frame with a pattern that repeats gives the shot more impact, exaggerating the size/number of the objects you're photographing. Shots—e.g., where there's symmetry in them such as lamp posts lining either side of a street or a long line of trees or a series of arches—can also be used to guide the eye to a single point. Just remember you need a focus point at the end of your shot, otherwise it won't work as well. Symmetry can also involve non-related objects that resemble each other in shape, color or texture. To be different, break the repetitive pattern with one shape/color that stands out from the rest. You'll probably have to play around to see how positioning the 'odd one out' changes the composition/feeling of your shot.



*Photo by Rick Hanson*

## 9. Create Depth

Having fore-, middle- and background detail will add depth to your image as well as draw the eye through the picture. Compositional elements that complement each other (for example, with color or by association, work well, but do be careful with the size of objects you use and how you place them as you don't want the shot to be thrown off balance. You don't want a rock in the foreground of your landscape shot, for example, drawing the eye away from the hills and mountains in the background. Adding water to the foreground can also lighten your shot as well as adding an extra element of interest as it reflects the sky back out.



Photo by **Rick Hanson**



# EXPERIMENT & Think About the Elements of Design

With the dawn of the digital age in photography we no longer have to worry about film processing costs or running out of shots. As a result, experimenting with our photos' composition has become a real possibility; we can fire off tons of shots and delete the unwanted ones later at absolutely no extra cost. Take advantage of this fact and experiment with your composition – you never know whether an idea will work until you try it. **Sometimes the best photos break all of these rules!!!**



Color and Good Use of the **Rule of Thirds**



Leading **Lines** and Good Use of **Space**  
**Shapes, Form** and **Texture**



Strong **Value** and **Lines**



## Art Rubric – Lesson Title: Photography as a Career

<b>Category</b>	NAME _____  <b>Description</b>	<b>Check &amp; comment here</b>		
		Good (4-5 pts)	Average (2-3 pts)	Needs work (0-1 pts)
<b>Growth New Learning &amp; Improving</b>	How does this work compare to previous work by same person?	.	.	.
	Does it show more thought?	.	.	.
	Does it show more skill?	.	.	.
<b>Creativity &amp; Unexpected Discoveries</b>	How original, innovative, and daring is the work?	.	.	.
<b>Fulfills Assignment</b>	How well does the work solve the problems outlined in this assignment?	.	.	.
	Didn't rush to get it done, but paid attention to consistency in the work.	.	.	.
<b>Grammar Usage &amp; Mechanics</b>	Did the student use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar?	.	.	.
<b>Composition And Design</b>	Experimenting with principles of design and composition used to make the visual elements work well?	.	.	.
<b>Quality of Writing</b>	Piece was written in an extraordinary style and voice.	.	.	.
	Was the information well organized?	.	.	.

**Total Points: \_\_\_/50**

## **Studio vocabulary, definitions and notes:**

**Elements of Design:** Line, Shape, Space, Form, Color, Value

**Pulitzer Prize:** An award for an achievement in American journalism, literature, or music. There are thirteen made each year.

**Journalism:** The activity or profession of writing or photographing for newspapers, magazines, or news websites or preparing news to be broadcast.

**Rule of Thirds:** Breaking an image down into *thirds* (both horizontally and vertically) so that you have 9 parts and then placing the focal point in one of the intersecting points. It also suggests that you place the horizon in the bottom third of the composition.