Possibilities

volume eleven

Photo Pro Challenge

Objective: Students will reverse-engineer professional photographs by identifying the settings used and recreating those photos under similar environmental conditions.

- Zip file of example photos
- Cameras or mobile devices with manual control
- Lighting condition reference chart
- School locations for shooting (gym, classroom, stage, outdoor fields, etc.)
- "How They Did It" photography pages from *Possibilities*

Part 1 Introduction

- Review fundamental camera controls: aperture, shutter speed, ISO.
- Show students the "how they did it" callouts for context: settings, lighting, rule of thirds, contrast, group interaction and vantage point.
- Stress the reality: Great photos aren't accidents. They are intentional choices layered together.

Part 2 Photo Breakdown

Observation: Students receive your example photos and note:

- The likely aperture, ISO and shutter speed
- Composition techniques used (leading lines, rule of thirds, framing, shallow depth)
- Environmental lighting challenges (fluorescent, stadium light, harsh sun) using the reference list
- What emotion or story the photographer focused on

After guessing, students check their predictions against the real metadata you'll provide in the key.

Part 3 Replication Shot

Activity: Students work in pairs to recreate at least two photos.

1. **Match location and light.** Find a spot at school or on campus with parallel lighting to the original.
2. **Set the camera.**
   - If the original uses shallow depth, match with f/2.8 or lower.
   - If the original freezes action, use 1/500 or higher.
   - If the original photo was taken in dim light, adjust ISO reasonably without blowing out grain.
3. **Recreate the vantage point.** Match height, angle and distance.
4. **Copy the composition.** This includes rule of thirds placement, group interaction or framing elements.
5. **Shoot 25–50 frames.** Push students to go beyond a single attempt. Improvement comes with volume.
6. **Select their best match.** Students choose the closest replica and prepare a side-by-side.

Part 4 Critique & Refine

Evaluate: Students evaluate sharpness, exposure match, depth of field, composition accuracy and storytelling intent. Challenge them to articulate what technical choice limited their success.