“I always wanted my photographs to challenge the status quo, to contest the kinds of images that existed in popular culture”

—Dawoud Bey

Need some inspiration or guidance as you experiment with photography? These online resources can help you get started.

- 15 Photography Composition Techniques to Improve your photos
- Tips for Teenage Photographers
- Rule of Thirds
- Motion
- Contrast
- Leading Lines
- Depth of Field
- Balance

Keep reading to discover the work of master photographers in the Art Institute’s collection and explore a selection of lesson plans on photography and visual narratives.
Dawoud Bey
Since the mid-1970s, Dawoud Bey (b. 1953) has worked to expand upon what photography can and should be. Insisting that the craft should be an ethical practice requiring collaboration with his subjects, Bey creates poignant meditations on visibility, power, and race.

Amanda Williams
Amanda Williams (b. 1974) is a visual artist based in Bridgeport, Chicago. Williams grew up in Chicago’s South Side and trained as an architect. Her work investigates color, race, and space while blurring the conventional line between art and architecture. Learn about her series, Color(ed) Theory, here.

Mikki Ferrill
A member of a network of black photojournalists working on Chicago’s South Side in the 1960s and ’70s, Valeria “Mikki” Ferrill (b. 1937) gained recognition through her work for periodicals such as Ebony, Downbeat, and the Chicago Defender. After three years in Mexico apprenticing with photographer Ted Williams, Mikki Ferrill returned to Chicago, her hometown, where she began documenting the Garage, a makeshift music venue that popped up every Sunday in a car garage located at 610 East 50th Street. Learn about her series, “The Garage,” here.
Exploring your Community
Grade levels: 9–12
Duration: Minimum one 45-minute classroom period
In this lesson, explore how photography can represent communities, cultural backgrounds, bias, injustice toward groups, stereotypes, and differences and similarities in groups.

Photography and Social Justice
Grade levels: 9–12
Duration: Minimum one 45-minute period
In this lesson, you will explore how photographers can become advocates, and how photographs and other documentary evidence can both chronicle and persuade.

Introduction to Visual Narratives:
Definitions and Purposes
Grade levels: 9–12
Duration: Minimum one 45-minute classroom period
Visual narratives are everywhere. They not only reflect but shape our daily experiences, our thoughts, and even our values.