THINK AND DISCUSS

1. What do you think makes certain things—for example, landscapes, buildings, or images—beautiful?

2. What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen? Why is it beautiful?
Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy concerned with the study of beauty. Aesthetic principles provide a set of criteria for creating and evaluating artistic objects such as sculptures and paintings, as well as music, film, and other art forms.

Aesthetic principles have existed almost as long as people have been producing art. Aesthetics were especially important to the ancient Greeks, whose principles have had a great influence on Western art. The Greeks believed that beautiful objects were intrinsically beautiful; that is, their beauty did not depend on people’s interpretation of them. Concepts such as proportion, symmetry, and order made objects beautiful.

For example, the “golden spiral,” applied here to Johannes Vermeer’s Girl with a Pearl Earring, is thought to illustrate the geometric proportions that people find aesthetically pleasing.

Today, however, most people would agree that aesthetic principles are culturally influenced and are not universal. Ideas on how the human form is represented, for example, vary widely. In traditional African art, sculpture is often abstract and stylized rather than realistically representing particular individuals.
The words in blue below are used in the reading passage. Match the correct form of each word to its definition (1–8).

1. ________ (v) to follow
2. ________ (v) to bring into contact with
3. ________ (adj) extremely important
4. ________ (n) the general situation that an idea or an event relates to
5. ________ (n) an accurate and deep understanding of something
6. ________ (v) to break or to fail to comply with
7. ________ (n) ideas or beliefs about something
8. ________ (n) the way in which the parts of something are arranged

Complete the sentences with the words in the box. Use a dictionary to help you.

balance       depression       ethics       imperfect

1. ____________ is a mental state in which you are sad and feel that you cannot enjoy anything.
2. ____________ are ideas or moral beliefs that influence the behavior, attitudes, or philosophy of a group of people.
3. If something has ____________, elements in it are treated equally in strength or importance.
4. If a thing is ____________, it has faults; it is missing certain possible desirable qualities or characteristics.

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. What skills do you think are ____________ if you want to be a professional artist?
2. Would you encourage someone with artistic talent to ____________ a career in art? Why or why not?

Discuss your answer to this question in small groups: Look at the everyday items around you. Can you see anything beautiful? What makes it beautiful to you?

Look at the photos in the reading passage and read the first sentence of each paragraph. What are some of the aspects of photography that the reading passage discusses? Note your ideas below. Then read the passage to check your answers.
Some photographs rise above the others. These are photos that catch a moment of emotion or light that make them ignite a deeper response in the viewer.

Photography has opened our eyes to a multitude of beauties, things we literally could not have seen before the advent of the frozen image. It has greatly expanded our notion of what is beautiful, what is aesthetically pleasing. Items formerly considered trivial, and not worth an artist’s paint, have been revealed and honored by photographs: things as pedestrian as a fence post, a chair, a vegetable. And as technology has developed, photographers have explored completely new points of view: those of the microscope, the eagle, the cosmos.

What is it that delights the human eye and allows us to proclaim that a photograph is beautiful? Photography depends on three principles: light, composition, and moment. Light literally makes the recording of an image possible, but in the right hands, light in a photograph can make the image soar. The same is true with composition. What the photographer chooses to keep in or out of the frame is all that we will ever see—but that combination is vital. And the moment that the shutter is pressed, when an instant is frozen in time, endows the whole image with meaning. When the three—light, composition, and moment—are in concert, there is visual magic.

Let us begin with light. Light literally reveals the subject. Without light, there is nothing: no sight, no color, no form. How light is pursued and captured is the photographer’s constant challenge and constant joy. We watch it dance across a landscape or a face, and we prepare for the moment when it illuminates or softens or ignites the subject before us. Light is rarely interesting when it is flawless. Photographers may be the only people at the beach or on the mountaintop praying for clouds, because nothing condemns a photograph more than a blazingly bright sky. Light is usually best when it is fleeting or dappled, razor sharp or threatening, or atmospheric. On a physiological level, we are all solar powered. Scientific studies have proved that our moods are profoundly affected by the amount of light we are exposed to. Lack of sun has been linked to loss of energy and even depression. Light in a photograph sets an emotional expectation. It can be soft or harsh, broad or delicate, but the mood that light sets is...
a preface to the whole image. Consider the light in a stunning scene by Sam Abell (below). It is the quality of light through morning fog that blesses this image and turns a forest into a field of light, shadow, and color, where every tree takes on a personality.

Composition represents the structural choices the photographer makes within the photographic frame. Everything in the photo can either contribute or distract. Ironically, the definition of what makes a picture aesthetically pleasing often comes down to mathematics: the geometric proportions of objects and their placements within the frame. When we look at a beautiful photograph with an objective eye, we can often find serpentine lines, figure eights, and triangular arrangements formed by the objects. The balance, or mathematical proportion, of the objects makes up the picture's composition: a key element in any beautiful image. Look closely at photographer James Stanfield's charming composition of a child jumping for joy in a doorway at the Louvre (right). It is the moment that draws us in, but that moment is set in a striking composition of the doorway and the architecture beyond. The geometric composition of the photograph makes the child look small, and even more appealing.

The third crucial element in a photograph is the moment when the shutter is pressed. The moment captured in a beautiful image is the storytelling part of the photograph. Whether a small gesture or a grand climax, it is the moment within a picture that draws us in and makes us care. It may be the photographer’s most important choice. If a special moment is caught, it endows the whole image with meaning. Often, waiting for that moment involves excruciating patience, as the photographer anticipates that something miraculous is about to happen. At other times, it’s an almost electric reaction that seems to bypass the thought process entirely and fire straight to instinct. Capturing that perfect moment may be a photographer’s biggest challenge, because most important moments are fleeting. Hands touch. The ball drops. A smile flashes. Miss the moment and it is gone forever.

Light, composition, and moment are the basic elements in any beautiful photograph. But there are three other elements that draw the viewer in and encourage an emotional response. These are palette, time, and wonder.

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\(^3\)Something that is serpentine is curving and winding in shape, like a snake.
Palette refers to the selection of colors in a photograph that create a visual context. Colors can range from neon to a simple gradation of grays in a black-and-white photograph. Even in the abstract, colors can make us feel elated or sad. The chosen palette sets up the mood of the whole image. It can invite or repel, soothe or agitate. We feel calm in a palette of pastels. Icy blues can make us shiver. Oranges and reds tend to energize. For example, Martin Kers’s photograph below has a soothing palette of yellows and greens that almost glows. It beckons us to walk down a path in the Netherlands. It’s a simple composition made memorable by its palette.

Other images stand out because of the freezing or blurring of time. There are the lovely images of raindrops falling, lightning flashing, and athletes frozen in midair. There are also time exposures that allow us to see a choreography of movement within the still frame. The laundry flutters, the traffic merges, the water flows. In a photograph of a bird in flight, the high-speed exposure allows us to see things that our eyes literally cannot: every feather supporting the

bird’s fight, the arc of the wings, the light in the bird’s eye. High-speed photography has been a gift to both art and science.

Wonder refers to the measure of human response when the photograph reveals something extraordinary—something never seen before, or seen in a fresh, new way. Wonder is about insight and curiosity. It is an expression of the child inside every one of us. Some photographers, following theirchildlike sense of wonder, have literally given their lives in pursuit of images so wonderful that they must be seen.

Light, composition, and moment come together in a photograph to bring us the ultimate reality: a view of the world unknown before the invention of the camera. Before photography, the basic artistic rules of painting were rarely violated. Images were made to please, not to capture reality. But as photography evolved, painterly rules were often rejected in the pursuit of fresh vision. Photographers became interested in the real world, warts and all, and it was the accidental detail that was celebrated. Photography invited the world to see with new eyes—to see photographically—and all of the arts benefited from this new point of view. Painters, sculptors, designers, weavers, and dancers all expanded their vision of beauty by embracing the photographer’s love of reality. And when the photographer is creative with the basic elements in a photograph, the resulting image has greater appeal. A surprising truth about photography is that each element is most effective not when it captures perfection but rather when it reveals the imperfect. Photographs are most eloquent when they impart a new way of seeing. What is more wonderful than the imperfect moment, when a simple scene turns sublime because a cat entered the room, the mirror caught a reflection, or a shaft of light came through the window? And real beauty depends upon how the image moves us: A photograph can make us care, understand, react, emote, and empathize with the wider world by humanizing and honoring the unknown.

Photographs have created a new ethic of seeing. They have greatly expanded our notion of what is beautiful. It is to photography’s credit that it has found beauty in the most humble places, and that it has ushered in a new democracy of vision. People from all walks of life are able to feast their eyes on subjects remote and grand. Photographs have given us visual proof that the world is grander than we imagined, that there is beauty, often overlooked, in nearly everything.

Adapted from “Simply Beautiful Photographs” by Annie Griffiths: National Geographic Books 2010

A time exposure is a photograph that results when the camera’s shutter is left open for a long time.

Painterly means relating to or characteristic of painting or painters.

If you describe something as sublime, you mean that it has a wonderful quality that affects you deeply.

To emote is to express emotion in an intense way.

Photographer and writer Annie Griffiths has documented the lives of people in nearly 150 countries around the world. She has received awards from the National Press Photographers Association, the Associated Press, and the White House News Photographers Association.
UNDERSTANDING THE READING

A  Note answers to the questions below.

1. What are the three main elements that make a photograph beautiful?

2. What additional elements make a photograph beautiful?

3. The passage is divided into two main parts. Which paragraph begins the second part?

B  Note answers to the questions below. Then discuss with a partner.

1. How has photography changed our notion of beauty?

2. Write a definition for each of the main elements you listed in exercise A, question 1.

3. What is the effect of color in a photograph, according to Griffiths?

4. What kinds of things do time exposures help us to see in a photograph?

5. What is wonder as it applies to a photograph, according to Griffiths? Explain it in your own words.

6. How has photography affected other art forms?

C  Find the following quotes in paragraph J of the reading passage. Note answers to the questions. Then discuss with a partner.

1. “Before photography, the basic artistic rules of painting were rarely violated. Images were made to please, not to capture reality.” Can you think of any famous paintings or types of artwork that are examples of this idea?

2. “A surprising truth about photography is that each element is most effective not when it captures perfection but rather when it reveals the imperfect.” Can you find a picture in this book that is an example of this? Do you agree with the writer?

D  Find and underline the italicized words below in the passage. Use the context to help you understand the meaning. Then circle the correct words to complete the definitions.

1. Paragraph A: If something is pedestrian, it’s ordinary / extraordinary.

2. Paragraph B: You use in concert when you’re talking about things that work well together / are not coordinated.

3. Paragraph D: If an idea comes down to something in particular, it means it is an essential / unimportant part of it.

4. Paragraph E: If a moment is fleeting, it goes by very slowly / quickly.

5. Paragraph J: If a photograph shows images of real life, warts and all, then it is showing us just the positive / both the positive and the negative aspects of reality.

6. Paragraph K: If something has ushered in a thing, such as a new era or way of thinking, it has ended it / brought it into being.

7. Paragraph K: People from all walks of life are people who come from similar / different backgrounds.

E  What is your opinion of the photograph below? Consider the elements of a beautiful photograph mentioned in the reading passage. Discuss with a partner.

Argentine gauchos photographed by O. Louis Mazzatenta
DEVELOPING READING SKILLS

READING SKILL Using a Concept Map to Identify Supporting Details

A concept map is a type of graphic organizer. It helps you see how main ideas and details in a reading passage relate to each other. Taking notes in a concept map can help you understand and remember information so you can use it later in a discussion, a writing assignment, or a test.

When you take notes in any kind of graphic organizer, be as brief as possible. Use abbreviations and leave out unimportant or repeated information.

A Complete the concept map using information from the reading passage.

B Now look back at the reading passage in Unit 1. Create a concept map to summarize the key ideas relating to the Anthropocene.

PHOTO CONTEST

BEFORE VIEWING

A How would you rate the photo above? Consider Griffiths’s six criteria and discuss in a small group.

B Read the information. Then answer the questions.

Each year, National Geographic invites amateur photographers to enter their photographs into a competition. In 2014, people from more than 150 countries submitted photos representing three categories: people, places, and nature. Over 9,000 photos were submitted, but only a handful were chosen as winners. The winning entries all had one thing in common: they told a story. The grand prize winner, Brian Yen, received $10,000 and a trip to National Geographic headquarters. When asked why he takes pictures, he explained, “Photography to me is like going on an archaeological dig: It offers me a tool to interpret reality by dusting away the uninteresting bits to reveal the gem underneath. It’s an exciting, creative, and exploratory process.”

1. What story does Yen’s photo tell?

2. Why does Yen compare taking pictures to archaeology?
Read these extracts from the video. Match the correct form of each bold word to its definition.

“Everyone looks really peaceful but at the same time it just looks really surreal and something, you know, otherworldly.”

“The overall tone of it was just very relaxing in what was a very chaotic scene.”

“A photograph like this has got to be like a chessboard, where everything is there and there’s no foreground.”

1. __________________ (adj) strange; dreamlike
2. __________________ (adj) not having any order or organization
3. __________________ (n) the front part of a picture
4. __________________ (v) the general character or feeling of something, for example a place or piece of writing

WHILE VIEWING

A Watch the video about judging the 2014 National Geographic Photo Contest. What criteria for judging the photos do the judges mention?

A winning photo …
- a. should have just one main element
- b. touches the viewer emotionally
- c. must be well technically
- d. must have good composition
- e. needs to look natural
- f. has good use of color and light
- g. shows something new and unusual

B Watch the video again. Match each image from the video (a–e) with a statement.

a. the swimming pool b. the owl c. the wildebeest d. the train e. the basketball game

1. It took time for the judges to appreciate it. ______
2. The judges had divided opinions about it. ______
3. A judge felt that it offered a new perspective. ______
4. The judges felt it had a calming effect on them. ______
5. It was rejected by the judging panel. ______

UNDERSTANDING MAIN IDEAS

B What do you think the judge means when he refers to a “gut reaction”? Discuss with a partner.

UNDERSTANDING DETAILS

B Considering the elements of a good photo described earlier, which photo in the video do you think was best? Discuss your choice with a partner.

CRITICAL THINKING: SYNTHESIZING

A The following words and expressions can be useful when writing about visual art forms. Find the words in this unit’s reading passage. Use the context to guess their meanings. Then use the words to complete the definitions.

- aesthetically pleasing (paragraph A)
- within the frame (paragraph D)
- illuminate (paragraph C)
- gradation (paragraph G)
- atmospheric (paragraph C)
- pastels (paragraph G)

1. If a scene is __________________, it has a particular quality that is interesting or exciting and makes you feel a particular emotion.
2. If a work of art is __________________ it is beautiful.
3. In a photograph, things that are __________________ are the things that the photographer has chosen to include in the image.
4. To __________________ something means to shine light on it.
5. A __________________ is a small change in something, such as a slight change from one color to another.
6. __________________ are pale colors.

B Read the sentences (a–e) below. Then answer the questions (1–3).

a. The winning photo was taken by Brian Yen, who lives in Hong Kong.

b. My personal favorite was the photo that came in second place.

c. Yen’s photo, which is called “A Node Glows in the Dark,” uses an interesting balance of light and dark.

d. Yen, whose image shows people on a train at night, mostly takes photos after dark.

e. The central focus of the image is on the woman who is using her cellphone.

1. What is the purpose of the underlined clauses?

2. What words are used to introduce the underlined clauses?

3. If you take away the underlined clauses, which sentences still make sense? Why?
Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Adjective Clauses

Writers use adjective clauses to give more information about nouns. An adjective clause has a subject and a verb.

Palette is a term that refers to the selection of colors in a photograph.

My father was someone who was interested in photography from a young age.

As in the examples above, restrictive adjective clauses give essential information about a noun. In other words, if you take away the clause, the sentence no longer makes sense. Nonrestrictive adjective clauses give nonessential information:

Our concept of beauty has been influenced by photography, which is a relatively recent art form.

Annie Griffiths, who is a professional photographer, is the executive director of an organization that empowers women in developing countries.

Annie Leibovitz, whose photographs have been published in several magazines, is famous for her use of light and color.

Adjective clauses are a good way to add details to your writing. They help vary your sentence types and make your sentences more interesting.

Note: Remember to use commas in nonrestrictive adjective clauses. Use one comma before a nonrestrictive adjective clause that appears at the end of a sentence. Use commas before and after a nonrestrictive adjective clause when it appears in the middle of a sentence. Use which (not that) for objects in nonrestrictive adjective clauses.

C Read the pairs of sentences below. Join them into a single sentence using a restrictive or nonrestrictive adjective clause.

1. Vivian Maier was a photographer. Her work was only discovered after her death.

2. Ansel Adams was an American photographer. He was most known for his images of the Californian wilderness.

3. Aesthetics were important to the ancient Greeks. They believed beautiful objects were intrinsically beautiful.

4. Vincent van Gogh was influenced by Japanese art. He made a copy of Hiroshige’s print Sudden Storm Over Ohashi Bridge.

D Write three sentences about photographs in this unit using nonrestrictive or restrictive adjective clauses.

E Read this excerpt from an introduction to an essay on Frank Lloyd Wright’s famous building, Fallingwater. Underline the key concepts in the thesis statement. Then answer the questions.

The term organic architecture, which was coined by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, applies to structures that create a sense of harmony with the natural world.

Fallingwater, the western Pennsylvania house designed by Wright, is a perfect example of the organic approach to architecture due to its surroundings and its materials.

1. How many body paragraphs do you think the essay will have?
2. What ideas do you think will appear in the body paragraphs?
WRITING TASK

GOAL In this lesson, you are going to write an essay on the following topic:
Choose an example of a visual art form (e.g., a painting, a photograph, a piece of sculpture) and evaluate it using aesthetic criteria.

A Choose a type of visual art (painting, drawing, photography, sculpture). Think of three criteria to judge it.

Type of art: __________________

Criteria:
1. __________________
2. __________________
3. __________________

Now pick one example of your chosen type of visual art. Describe it, and evaluate it based on your criteria.

Name of piece of art: __________________

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B Follow the steps to make notes for your essay.

Step 1 In the outline on the next page, write a thesis statement and note some ideas for your introduction.

Step 2 Write a topic sentence and two or three details for each body paragraph.

Step 3 Note some ideas for your conclusion.
What makes a work of architecture great? Most people would say that aesthetics are most important. For example, many people agree that the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Blue Mosque in Istanbul are beautiful structures. It is true that aesthetics are important; however, according to the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, there are two additional principles that we should consider when judging a structure. They are durability—how strong and long-lasting a structure is designed to be—and function—how well the structure serves its intended purpose. The new Rostonville Library in my city is a good example of Vitruvius's principles because it is durable, functional, and aesthetically pleasing.

The Rostonville Library which is built entirely of granite—a hard and very tough stone—is an example of durability. Granite is likely to remain strong and unaffected by environmental pollution. Granite structures are stable and resistant to vibrations, so the Rostonville Library will likely be able to withstand an earthquake. The Rostonville Library is also durable in terms of sustainability, because it uses solar energy for heating, and a rooftop garden provides insulation that keeps the building cool in hot weather.

Designed to provide free access for members of the community to a variety of print and digital information, the Rostonville Library is also an example of Vitruvius’s principle of functionality. The Rostonville Library conveys a feeling of openness and accessibility. Furthermore, the entire library is on one level, and it has an open design—there are no interior walls or dividers. In addition, large windows let in plenty of natural light, so it’s easy to see and get to each department within the library.

Finally, the Rostonville Library is beautiful. Aesthetically pleasing details make it attractive, both inside and out. The large windows are framed in copper. Growth from the rooftop garden, that cascades down the sides of the building, adds to the aesthetics of the building. It softens the lines of the structure and helps it to blend into its natural surroundings. The library was built on the edge of the city park, which was designed using only native plants.

Durability, functionality, and beauty make the Rostonville Library a great structure. Architects and designers who follow Vitruvius’s principles help to make urban environments more pleasant places to live. Structures that exemplify these criteria provide peace of mind as well as beauty for the people who use them.
EDITING PRACTICE

Read the information below. Then find and correct one mistake with nonrestrictive adjective clauses in each of the sentences (1–4).

When using nonrestrictive adjective clauses, remember to:
• use one comma before a nonrestrictive adjective clause that appears at the end of a sentence. Use two commas, one before and one after, when the nonrestrictive adjective clause appears in the middle of a sentence.
• use which (not that) for objects in nonrestrictive adjective clauses.

1. This image is an excellent example of composition which is the way objects are arranged in a photograph.
2. That photograph, that I like best of all, is Berenice Abbott’s Pennsylvania Station.
3. Another important element is light, that illuminates the objects in a photograph.
4. Moment which captures time in a photograph helps to tell the image’s story.

FINAL DRAFT

Follow the steps to write a final draft.

1. Check your revised draft for mistakes with adjective clauses.
2. Now use the checklist on page 246 to write a final draft. Make any other necessary changes.

UNIT REVIEW

Answer the following questions.

1. What are three important elements of a good photograph?

2. What do you think is the most important element in a beautiful photograph?

3. What is the purpose of a nonrestrictive clause?

4. Do you remember the meanings of these words? Check (X) the ones you know. Look back at the unit and review the ones you don’t know.
   - balance
   - composition
   - context
   - crucial
   - depression
   - ethics
   - expose to
   - geometric
   - imperfect
   - insight
   - notion
   - principle
   - proportion
   - pursue
   - violate
   - depression
   - proportion
   - pursue
   - violate