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 Essay 1: My photo essay
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Japanese Summer Festival

		
<p>"Festival lottery prize"</p>	<p>"Festival Mikoshi"</p>	<p>"Eating Takoyaki Alone at the Festival"</p>

The summer festival is the time when we as people want to go to experience the festivals' cultures, see the vibrant colors that hit our eyes, and the shape of the food that we eat. With all of these experiences, we want to be able to capture these moments so we can remember them as we get older. While we can save the photos and have them stored, what factors determine which photos we save? This brings us to John Berger's (2013) statement that, "Photographs bear witness to a human choice being exercised in a given situation. A photograph is a result of the photographer's decision that it is worth recording that this particular event or this particular object has been seen"(18). He explains how we deliberately chose the photos, what we witnessed then, and what significance it has on us. To illustrate Berger's point, I will be using three photos "Festival Lottery Prize", "Festival Mikoshi",

and "Eating Takoyaki Alone at the Festival" to illustrate how they all are deliberately chosen to tell how they connect to the theme of the festival with help of Teju Cole and Susan Sontag.

Starting with our first portrait photo "Festival Lottery Prize" has the dominant impression of me the person in the picture holding an anime figure box as the main focus. Its position uses the rule of thirds to have it in between the four corners. This photo tells the story of the emotions I felt as I won my first anime figure from the Japanese marble lottery that's to the right as it is out of frame by getting the corresponding marble color. In the background of it there is a shelf of possible prizes with anime merchandise like Pokémon dolls and at the bottom are anime figures. These items are significant as they build up the cultural aspect of the festival as these items of collectibles of beloved characters that kids have grown up to watch. These descriptions of the surroundings are supposed to certify the experience that I have at that moment in time. As stated by Susan Sontag (2013), "A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it - by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic" (534). Sontag explains that when you take a picture, you are mainly focusing on getting a good shot than enjoying the experience. While my selfie with the surroundings supposedly limited my full experience at that time, the image is undeniable proof that I was there. The Proof that I was at the festival and how the festival has brought colors to my eyes.

Speaking of colors, in the second photo "Festival Mikoshi" the decisive moment for taking that photo at that time was its colors. Decisive moments explained by Teju Cole (2015), "The success of certain pictures that makes the viewer say "Damn it," and wonder how such things are possible- comes from a combination of tutored intuition and good luck"(4) Cole's explanation of decisive moments is how it

requires luck and intuition to take a photo of a masterpiece. I can't say how lucky I was to be able to take the photo with pure luck, I can say how I had the intuition to take it due to its color. The red color of the tablecloth stands out since the color red sometimes represents life and this helps make the shrine's yellow and gold stand out for display. The colors Yellow and gold two colors stand out for the portable shrine as in Japanese culture these colors are supposed to bring divine presence and ward off evil in Japanese culture. These colors along with the angle shot of the portable shrine make it unique as it was that decisive moment that I felt some Sort of blessing there as I was at the festival.

While "Festival Mikoshi" shows the moments with its color, "Eating Takoyaki Alone at the Festival" shows a glimpse of the festival's food. The punctum of this photo was that I was exhausted from going around the festival and was starving at that time. This was when I ordered a takoyaki to eat at the table. The taste of it was creamy, soft, and hot since it just came out covered with Takoyaki sauce, Japanese mayonnaise, and fish flakes. Takoyaki with its taste helps bring you into the festival's setting of being energetic. If you look closely you can see the light refracting the table to show the dirtiness of it. This tells us how the festival had so many people that there wasn't enough time for the staff to clean it. The dirtiness of the table didn't contrast with the festival's atmosphere of being fun as it complements it since having a messy table means people were enjoying themselves.

Ultimately, I would like to reflect on the three points that I have made, experience, color, and taste, and how each of them relates to Berger's statement. Berger's idea is that we choose what we want to show and how they are connected. "Festival lottery prize" was first selected as that was the starting point of the festival, being able to enjoy winning a prize there. "Festival Mikoshi" brings out the colors that

I see as I pass the portable shrine and it hits me how colorful the festival was. "Eating Takoyaki Alone at the Festival" allowed me to enjoy the festival's food and see the surroundings around me as I munched on the Takoyaki. By choosing each of these photos, I could show how although they are different, they tell a story of my experience during the festival.

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Citations and References

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