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Essay 2

English 1101 (Professor Scanlan)

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Views of the World

Every time a photographer takes a photo, there is a purpose behind it. While there are times when the viewer may be able to see the photographers purpose, there are times when the message is hidden in the photograph and only the photographer knows what it is. To support this claim, I will share some of my photos and tell the meaning that they have to me.

The first photo was taken on a Circle Line cruise on the Hudson River with my family. In the photo all you can really see is that water and the sky. The photo is centered, and the water takes up a lit more than two-thirds of the picture. The sky looks clear and it is a sunny day. The water looks clam, meaning that there isn’t much wind causing the boat to remain stable. The water is a dark blue color, darker than how it looks from the West Side Highway. In the moment when the picture was taken, we were almost at sea and turning to head back to the pier. This photo was taken at a moment when I felt joy. Many things in my life felt like they were falling into place and I was feeling happy. My joy felt as infinite as the water in the picture.

The second photo was taken at Bear Mountain State Park, in Rockland County, on the west side of the Hudson River. My church takes a trip up to Bear mountain every year. We started taken these trips about 5 years ago. Although we usually go in August, we went at the beginning of October. We almost canceled the trip because one of the musicians in our church had passed away at the beginning of August, due to cancer. The widow insisted that we’d still go because her husband wouldn’t have wanted us to cancel our annual trip for him, so although a little hesitant, my dad decided that we would still go. When we got there, the guys took all the things out the cars while we looked for a place big enough to fit everyone and making sure the little kids don’t get lost. Once everyone had settled down, some of us decided to take a hike around the park. My friends and I went towards the tallest mountain in that area of the park and decided to climb it. The view once we reached the top was beautiful, so beautiful I had to capture the moment. In the photograph, you can see 7 cars parked in the lower part, a river in the middle surrounded by land and a clear, blue sky at the top. While I was taking this picture, my best friend and I were talking about some sad moments in our lives and at that moment we were talking about a dark moment that I was currently going through. This view at the top of the mountain made feel so big in comparison to everything else, like the problems that I was going though were so small and I could overcome them. This photo will always be a symbol of the moment that I decided that I should never allow myself to feel as low as I did at that very moment.

The meaning that these two pictures have some similarities and some differences. The first photo represents one of the happiest periods in my life. Although, at first, I did not want to go on this trip, it ended up being fun. This photograph would be considered an art photo rather than a documentary photo because of the way it was taken I purposely took it so that the water took up most of the photo. A John Berger said in “Understanding a Photograph”, “Photographs bear witness to a human choice being exercised in a given situation”. The photo was taken because I felt like it had a meaning to my life at that very moment. The viewer doesn’t know why I took the photo until I tell them. The second photo, . Berger says, relevant to taking a photo, that the "choice is not between photographing x and y: but between photographing at x moment or at y moment." When you see the photo, all you can see is land and water and sky. I see thst same photo and remember what was going on around me at that exact moment, the feeling of power that I felt at that very moment. I could have easily taken a picture before climbing the mountain and the view would have been clearer, but it would have had no meaning to me. This photo I would consider an= documentary photo because it only has meaning to me, the reader cannot see the significance it has to me when just looking at the photo. The meaning in both of my photos is hidden for only the photographer to see.

In conclusion, not all photos have a clear message for everyone to see, Although the viewer can interpret a message when seeing the picture, they cannot be sure that that was the photographers intention when taking the photo.

Work Cited:

Berger, John. "Understanding a Photograph." *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by Alan Trachtenberg, Leete's Island Books,1980, pp. 291-294.