

Grade  
Level:  
Adaptable,  
grades 6-12

# Photographing Like Fannie Lou

Art, Media Production, Communication, Journalism

*This is a three-day unit that can be taught in approximately one-hour segments.*

## Learning Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of basic digital camera functions
- To learn filmmaking fundamentals
- To consider how visual images can help make abstract concepts tangible
- To gain practice using a digital camera to take photos that visually share information about an idea or concept
- To gain experience presenting conceptual art
- To gain experience providing analysis and feedback regarding conceptual art

## Necessary Materials:

- One digital camera per group (Phone camera and iPad cameras will also work)
- Smartboard, projection equipment, or class Flickr or Google Photo account for sharing photographs

## Provided Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer [Image Gallery](#), compiled by Alicia Ervin-Rawls and Maegan Parker Brooks
- National Archives, [“Analyzing a Photograph”](#)
- Fannie Lou Hamer’s America, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Find Your Voice, available for free on the Find Your Voice website
- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode, available for free on the Find Your Voice website

## Background Knowledge:

To enhance your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this [brief biographical sketch](#). To enhance your knowledge of filmmaking, you may wish to consider this [Filmmaking 101: Camera Shot Types](#) guide.

## Day One

### Instruction Steps

#### Anticipatory Set

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**Step One:** If this is your class’s first introduction to Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to assign the biographical sketch about her for homework. You may also wish to begin this lesson by asking students to recount how and why she is a significant historical figure. You can also pique student interest in Fannie Lou Hamer by showing them her [1964 Democratic National Convention speech](#) and/or playing a song from the [Songs My Mother Taught Me](#) album.

#### Guided Practice

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**Step Two:** Show students sample photographs from the Fannie Lou Hamer [Image Gallery](#) or from sources like [CNN’s Civil Rights Movement in Photos](#) collection, the [TIME Civil Rights Movement in Photographs](#) collection, or [TIME the Most Influential Images of All Time collection](#).

**Step Three:** Share the “Analyzing a Photograph” guide with the students. You may wish to refer to this teacher’s [guide](#) also from the Library of Congress as you lead them in a discussion of photography analysis.

#### Teacher Input

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**Step Four:** Introduce students to the rule-of-thirds, extreme close-up, close up, medium shot, and long shots.

#### Homework

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**Step Five:** Assign the film Fannie Lou Hamer’s America, available for free on the Find Your Voice website, for homework or screen the short film Find Your Voice in class. Ask students to find examples within the film of the different shots you covered in class and come ready to discuss those on Day 2.

\*Consider setting up an out of class/community screening of the films. You can also find a discussion guide for the film Fannie Lou Hamer's America on the Find Your Voice website.

## Day Two

### Anticipatory Set

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**Step One:** Screen the short BrainPOP Fannie Lou Hamer episode and review the concepts from Filmmaking 101. Review the core aspects of Hamer's life the class learned about during the previous lesson; these include oppression, struggle, and resilience.

**Step Two:** Introduce the photography assignment for the day, which encourages students to use this medium to capture feelings and document oppression, struggle, and resilience in their own lives.

### Group Work

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**Step Three:** Split the students into small groups of three or four and encourage them to brainstorm how a concrete image from their own lives could convey the more abstract concepts and experiences of oppression, struggle, and resilience.

Direct the groups to work collaboratively to plan their own own shots within the perimeters you define—is it possible for the students to go outside or to a public area? Or will they remain within the classroom/building? How long will they have to shoot?

**Step Four:** Demonstrate how to upload the photos the students took throughout the class period to a class Flickr or Google Photo account. Each photo should be labeled with the group name and the technique illustrated.

## Day Three

### Anticipatory Set

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**Step one:** Begin today's lesson talking about trial, error, and perseverance by drawing upon specific events from Fannie Lou Hamer's life for inspiration. For instance, you could mention how Hamer and the integrated

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party fought to be seated in the place of the segregated delegation sent from Mississippi to the 1964 Democratic National Convention. The MFDP was not officially seated or recognized by the DNC, instead they were offered a meager compromise of two at large seats—but the Democratic party did vow to never again seat a segregated delegation.

You might also mention that Hamer ran for public office several times and never won. Or even that she, Annie

Devine, and Victoria Gray Adams fought to unseat the US Congressmen sent to the House of Representatives from their state in 1965. As representatives of the MFDP, Devine, Gray, and Hamer argued that Black people had been barred from voting across Mississippi and therefore the representatives did not truly represent their state. Hamer lost this challenge too. Nevertheless, she persisted—fighting for voting rights and

fair representation until her death.

This frame connects to the focus of today, which is providing analysis and suggestions for improvement based upon the photos taken by groups during the previous day's session.

### Group Work

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**Step Two:** Have students return to their groups and plan out brief presentations for the class. These presentations should focus on how their photos demonstrate each of the required concepts, as well as how they used a particular image to convey the more abstract experiences of oppression, struggle, and/or resilience.

### Presentations and Feedback

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**Step Three:** Each group will take turns presenting their photos and the rest of the class will gain practice sharing constructive comments and engaging in analysis of their peers' photos.

## Find Your Voice Highlights

Students recognize how images have been used in American History and today. Students are inspired by examples of images to relay emotions and concepts and are encouraged to use photography to capture feelings and document oppression, struggle, and resiliency in their own lives. Students are encouraged to find their own voices by capturing photos which highlight their personal stories.

Questions to help guide conversation include:

- Does the image represent the required concept?
- If not, how could the image be adjusted to better fit the concept?
- How does the image make you feel?
- What is the focus of the image?
- What unique qualities do you see in the image?

## Closure

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**Step Four:** Return to the [Fannie Lou Hamer Image Gallery](#). Encourage students to reflect individually about one image, revisiting similar questions asked throughout the unit (it would be helpful to write these questions on the board): which photo speaks to them

the most and why? How does the image make them feel? Why is it important historically? What is its focus? Unique qualities? What type of shot does it represent? Encourage each student to share a brief summary of their written reflections with the class.

**Assessment of Student Learning:** Student learning will be assessed through a scavenger hunt assignment where students will work individually or in small groups to take photos representative of the required concepts. Students will present their photography to the class and share how their photo represents the required concept.

## Lesson Plan Author: Dr. Pablo Correa

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Dr. Pablo Correa is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Civic Communication and Media department at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. Correa specializes in digital media and documentary film, with a special focus on the interests of minorities, especially Black and Hispanic people in America. His work highlights racial relations, stories of tension, as well as stories of perseverance and success. Correa has worked on an award-winning documentary highlighting civil rights in Florida, as well as projects commemorating Emmett Till and documenting the racial reconciliation movement in the Mississippi Delta, including the Till Memory Project. Correa is currently working on the Fannie Lou Hamer's America team as webmaster, assistant cameraman for the film, and co-instructor for the Young Filmmaker's Workshop which instructs and empowers Mississippi Delta high school students to tell their own stories through digital media.

