

Modern Marvels

Captured Light: The Invention of Still Photography

There is a camera in almost every American home today. Cameras and photography are an everyday part of our lives, something we rarely give a thought to accept when we need to buy film or get pictures developed. But the invention of still photography was monumental in the history of science and technology. For the first time, images could be transferred and saved. The role of still photography in world history and world culture is immeasurable. Because of this invention there exists images of the some of the eighteenth century and all of the twentieth century, television, motion pictures—the list is endless. *Captured Light: The Invention of Still Photography* takes a look at the invention and evolution of the art, science, and business of photography.

Captured Light: The Invention of Still Photography would be useful for classes on American History, European History, The History of Science and Technology, Cultural History and Economics. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

- [annuity](#)
- [arbitrary](#)
- [camera obscura](#)
- [charlatan](#)
- [collaboration](#)
- [cornucopia](#)
- [cumbersome](#)
- [diabolical](#)
- [diligently](#)
- [eclectic](#)
- [elusive](#)
- [embroiled](#)
- [emulsion](#)
- [impoverished](#)
- [incentive](#)
- [inverted](#)
- [lithography](#)
- [magnitude](#)
- [noxious](#)
- [obscurely](#)
- [obsessively](#)
- [optician](#)
- [paraphernalia](#)
- [pragmatic](#)
- [prolific](#)
- [prototype](#)
- [tedious](#)
- [toxic](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how still photography has enabled photographers to capture the twentieth century for future generations. How much more do we know about the twentieth century because of still photography?
2. What were the three driving forces that led to the invention and perfection of still photography?
3. How does a camera work?

4. How was the invention of the camera and still photography a combination of art and science?
5. Frenchmen Louis Daguerre and Joseph Niepce were both essential to the discovery of photography. How were these two men different? Why were they considered “a study in contrast?”
6. Joseph Niepce named his new discovery heliography. Why did he choose this name? What is the literal translation of this term?
7. Discuss some of the problems and limitations of early photography.
8. Some of the earliest photographs are of the Crimean War in Europe and the American Civil War. How did photographs provide a chronology of war and bring the harsh realities of war to the civilians at home?
9. What was the \$20,000.00 bet? What is the legacy of this wager?
10. Kodak is one of America’s most familiar companies. How did George Eastman’s company revolutionize the art, science and business of photography?

Extended Activities

1. Create a collage of your favorite photos. What “story” does your collage tell?
2. Create a timeline that illustrates the evolution of photography.
3. Discuss one or more of the great photographs of the twentieth century. How did this photograph change, alter or record history?
4. Create a late 19th century/early 20th century Kodak advertisement.