

Monthly Theme: Multi-Image Story – When One Photograph Isn't Enough

Most of our photographs are designed to tell a story in a single frame. This month's assignment challenges us to think differently.

Create a **trptych**—three photographs that work together to present a common subject, concept, mood, or visual story. While each image should stand on its own, the real success of a triptych comes from the relationship between the three images.

Think of it as creating one photograph with three chapters.

A Triptych Is More Than Three Pictures

One of the most common mistakes is selecting three unrelated photographs simply because they feature similar subjects.

Three bird photographs do not automatically tell a story.

Three flower photographs may not have any meaningful connection.

Instead, ask yourself:

"What do these three images say together that a single image cannot?"

The whole should be stronger than the individual parts.

There Are Many Ways to Tell a Story

A triptych doesn't have to show a beginning, middle, and end. It can communicate relationships in many different ways.

A Sequence

Show progression over time.

Examples:

- Bud → Bloom → Seed
- Wave approaching → Crashing → Receding
- Dragonfly landing → Resting → Taking flight
- Autumn leaves changing color

Different Perspectives

Photograph the same subject from different viewpoints.

For example:

- Wide view
- Medium view
- Close-up detail

Together they reveal more than any one photograph alone.

A Common Theme

The three images may share an idea rather than a subject.

Examples:

- Three weathered doors
- Three reflections
- Three textures
- Three abandoned objects
- Three examples of symmetry
- Three birds of similar shape

The connection should be immediately recognizable.

Visual Rhythm

Sometimes repetition creates impact.

Repeating:

- Shape
- Color
- Pattern
- Geometry
- Texture

can give the triptych a pleasing sense of harmony.

Think About the Order

The placement of each photograph matters.

Try rearranging the images before making your final layout.

Ask yourself:

- Does the eye naturally move from left to right?
- Is one image clearly the visual anchor?
- Does the sequence build interest?
- Does the final image provide a satisfying conclusion?

Changing the order can completely change the story.

Consistency Creates Unity

Although the photographs don't have to be identical, they should feel as though they belong together.

Consider maintaining consistency in:

- Lighting
- Color palette
- Contrast
- Processing style
- Framing
- Borders
- Spacing
- Aspect ratio

A unified presentation helps viewers concentrate on the story rather than on the differences between the images.

Every Panel Should Matter

Each image should contribute something unique.

Avoid repeating essentially the same photograph three times with only slight differences.

Instead, let each panel answer a different question or reveal a different aspect of the subject.

If removing one image doesn't weaken the story, that image probably isn't adding enough.

Simplicity Is Powerful

Many successful triptychs are remarkably simple.

Consider subjects such as:

- Shells
- Leaves
- Lighthouses

- Boats
- Trees
- Garden flowers
- Architectural details
- Reflections
- Ice patterns
- Driftwood
- Rocks
- Farm equipment

Simple subjects often allow viewers to appreciate the relationships between the images without unnecessary distractions.

Edit Before You Shoot

Unlike many assignments, this one rewards planning.

Before heading out with your camera, think about what story you want to tell.

Create a shot list.

Sketch possible layouts.

Imagine how each image will relate to the others.

Planning often leads to stronger storytelling than trying to assemble three unrelated photographs afterward.

Five Successful Triptych Formulas

If you're not sure where to begin, try one of these proven approaches. Each creates a clear relationship between the three images while encouraging creative storytelling.

Wide → Medium → Detail	Show the subject from three increasingly intimate perspectives.	Lighthouse, lighthouse entrance, lantern room
Beginning → Middle → End	Tell a story through progression or change over time.	Caterpillar → Chrysalis → Butterfly
Three Variations	Photograph three different examples of the same subject or object.	Three colorful doors, three old tractors, three sailboats
Shape or Color	Unite the images through a common visual element rather than a subject.	Three circular objects, three red subjects, three reflections

Mood or Season

Show the same location or concept under different conditions.

Dawn → Midday → Dusk, or
Spring → Summer → Autumn

As you assemble your triptych, ask yourself whether the relationship between the images is immediately apparent. A successful triptych should feel like a single photographic work rather than three individual photographs placed side by side.

Challenge Yourself

When your triptych is complete, cover one panel with a piece of paper.

Now ask yourself:

"Does the story become weaker?"

If the answer is yes, you've probably created a successful triptych. Each image contributes something essential, and together they become more than the sum of their parts.

This month's assignment reminds us that photography isn't only about making individual images. It's also about selecting, organizing, and presenting photographs in a way that communicates an idea with clarity and impact.

Happy shooting!

By ChatGPT