

# A picture definition essay sample



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BUSTER**

According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, a picture is a visual representation or image (of an object or scene or person or abstraction) painted, drawn, photographed, or otherwise rendered on a flat surface. That said, we could say that pictures convey stories, and because they do, they are effective instruments among “the press”, or in other words, the media. In essence, the media uses pictures to aid in telling the stories, but you could say that through time, pictures have evolved into something else, like an effective medium in telling stories according to self-regarding interests, not the REAL story itself, taking for instance those stories that they think would “sell” or the stories that would favor “contacts” so as not to negatively impact future reporting or maybe even their career.

In this study, the picture is a photographed image or representation of a specific scene – a scene which basically comprises President Bush, grinning, a group of children and women, most of them smiling and laughing as well, and a couple of men in the background. Without having to look at the picture and just by reading how I have described the photo above, I guess we could stop at Bush and right away deem this picture as political as it pertains to an affair of government. I am asked to analyze this photograph using six different perspectives – personal, historical, technical, ethical, cultural, critical – and in doing so, I am able to delve into different viewpoints and factors that influence the totality of this picture and the scene that it represents.

### Personal Perspective

This is just one of those snapshots of the President in one of his usual political affairs which the media assiduously exhibit in newspapers, the television magazines, and the likes. This is the first thing that came into my mind. I find that there is nothing special to it except that I'm supposed to study it. According to Professor (insert last name), this is actually a photograph of President Bush at Pass Christian, Mississippi on 2005. Through my regular citizen glasses, I basically see President Bush and a group of children and women in broad daylight. It looks like a simple community visit to me and it also looks like this took place outside a certain building, nothing out of the ordinary. I didn't see the men at the background at first, but since I have to do a grave scrutiny of this picture, I considered including them in my study. Still, it comes up as a conventional media snapshot to me – nothing more, nothing less.

That said, primary words that come up would be Bush, the children, the women, the smiles and the laughter, the white t-shirts, and the men. Having mentioned Bush, politics obviously comes to mind. Here, Bush is smiling. It could be that he is happy to see this group of people smiling at him, it could be because he is in front of the camera or simply because a man of his position is supposed to smile under such circumstances. So it could be natural or it could be obligatory. There are a lot of associative words that I could link with the words “ Bush smiling”, like “ politician” and “ image consciousness”.

The image of children always stands up for innocence, peace and hope for me, so those would be the associative words for it. They could be smiling because that's what, I believe, children normally do when they meet a

bigger-than-life personality in person. The women for me symbolize gentleness, understanding, optimism, and inner strength.

The t-shirts that these women are wearing have the color white and I have always associated white with purity and glory. In my opinion, these mentioned elements put into the frame with a smiling Bush under broad daylight brings about a positive feel to this image, invoking positive reaction from the audience, and in effect, a positive impression on the main subject - the President. So my firsthand opinion is that the image maker is trying to conjure a positive image of the President or it could also be that he is trying to capture if not enhance the wholesomeness of this said event. In doing so, it has effectively downplayed the group of somewhat indifferent men at the background. In my opinion, men can be associated with the words guarded, critical, if not cynical.

I couldn't blame them if they don't look too happy. After all, these - the men, the children, and the women - are the people who were victims to what is known so far to be the worst natural disaster of our nation's history - Hurricane Katrina.

#### Historical Perspective

This photo is taken from the official website of the National Organization for Women. According to the website, this woman is a survivor of Hurricane Katrina. In an article on the BBC News website written August 28 of last year, it is reported that " about 1, 500 people died when the storm struck Mississippi and Louisiana on 29 August, and thousands became homeless.

The White House was harshly criticized for what was seen as a slow response to the country's worst natural disaster.”

This woman is not alone. The nation feels her. She is a victim of poor federal response during Hurricane Katrina and so are these children and women in the picture. They were once partly under water like she was and there they were on the photo with the President smiling and laughing. The snapshot under our study was taken two years ago when Bush was doing his initial post-Katrina visits for rebuilding efforts on Pass Christian, Mississippi. These people HAD hope. If they still do, that I don't know of. Further research brought me into reading Rick Jervis' article in USA Today on Hurricane Katrina's Second Anniversary August of this year, after almost two years of rebuilding efforts:

“ A feel-good visit is great,” New Orleans Councilwoman Shelley Midura said. “ But he should be here a lot more than what he is. And not just a meeting at a restaurant or a photo opportunity at a school, but doing the hard work with people on the front lines.” When a bigger-than-life image is tarnished, images like this help “ untarnish” it a little bit. If anything, this image was a great tool in telling us all to keep believing, that the wheels were in motion and that if these children and women were smiling, maybe they really were.

#### Technical Perspective

As someone interested in photography, I have always believed that form and content work hand-in-hand in achieving the real beauty of a shot and in effect achieving the meaning that it holds or the story that it dramatically represents. I particularly loved that natural daylight was used for this image

as it helps in giving this image a “ happy” feeling. Additionally, I have noticed how the light came from the top left and shone brilliantly on the children and the women, thereby, putting more attention or focus on their smiles and laughter, apparently done to evoke more positive reaction than negative from the audience to an extent that the few indifferent men at the background will catch little or no attention at all. Having mentioned the group of men, the image maker could have left them out of the picture from the very beginning because they somehow contrast the beauty that this shot is trying to capture in this scene. If he did, the shot could have looked something like the picture above. If you ask me, I think it would have looked more “ positive”. But then again, we have one more perspective coming up.

### Ethical Perspective

In an essay entitled “ The Elements of Image Construction” posted at the [Transparencynow.com](http://Transparencynow.com) website, it says that a communicator has one of three options. Firstly, he can construct an image that is intended to be viewed with negative regard by audiences in order “ attack” or “ discredit” the person or recipient of the image instruction. Secondly, he can construct an image that is intended to be viewed with positive regard by audiences. And thirdly, he can construct an image that is intended to be viewed with positive regard by audiences or is intending to be viewed as more positive or less negative than other acts of image construction in order to defend the image. These latter two possibilities, which involve enhancing or defending, will be referred to as efforts to “ credit” an image.”

In this case, with the “ post-Katrina hangover” that Bush has went through, this picture could be intended for personal gain, and it could also be for the greater good because hope inspires and hope is what’s in the eyes of those children and women. Ethically speaking, I don’t have anything against the image maker.

### Cultural Perspective

Two sets of people emerged from under water after Hurricane Katrina. I came up with that because I stumbled upon a certain page on the USA Today official website which shows a forum on Katrina issues. Someone with the username Rocosmiff stated: The countrys leaders... They could care less. 5 days for FEMA to get water to the Superdome?.. we get supplies overseas faster... the whole situation is a sad testament to the lack of priorities plaguing this great country. This is just one rant among others. With that, I say there are those people who just couldn’t forget how horrific Hurricane Katrina was, those who couldn’t stop regretting, on mulling over what could have done and griping over the administration’s missteps. On the other hand, there are those people like Annabelle (not sure if that’s her real name) who said:

I think I am going to use the second anniversary of Katrina as my emancipation... there will never be enough words to explain the loss... that those of us who experienced Katrina felt... But I can’t waste any more time looking back... I think if those children and women could come out of that picture and talk, they would have said the same things she said. They also went through the loss of a home, a school, a loved one, but they held on to

what was left with them and chose to move forward. My opinion is those men at the background symbolize those who keep on looking back on the mistakes and sighing over the loss. Those children and women meanwhile symbolize those who choose to spear ahead. And Bush, well, he just wants to go with those who want to move on, because he obviously needs to.

### Critical Perspective

The deeper I go with my research, the more beautiful this image turns out to be for me. I am aware that politicians always do ways to get their credits and polish their image and I'm also aware that the image makers or communicators don't always have "hope" and "purity" in mind when they make the pictures. Nevertheless whatever the real intention is behind it, one thing is just so beautiful that it overshadows everything else negative in this picture and in its making – the spirit of these children and women in Pass Christian, Mississippi. They didn't let the flood wash it away from them. The President needs them as much as they do him. In the end, we really are all elements in the same picture of life.

### Conclusion

A picture shows a lot, is attractive, and, hence, it is influential. But then again, a picture is merely a scene – a section, a division, a part of a story. It is NOT the whole story. Well depending on how it is technically prepared, with the right elements included or "put into the frame" and organized within the picture itself, it could tell you the whole story. This is not at all times, though, and with how the media has evolved throughout history, and with the questionable interests of the image makers themselves, we should



take into account that what we don't see in a picture is as important as what we see in it.

It is our right to know if the images that image makers and the media lay before us are truthful and accurate and it is our right to fully understand the story that they are trying to convey or NOT trying to convey. To get started, image analysis is one of the ways we can exercise this right. Doing an image analysis is a journey, because every image is part of a story, and in every image, more stories. And at the end of that journey, we then decide if it's worth the shot.

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