

Summary of the boston photographs essay



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In the essay, *The Boston Photographs*, Nora Ephron argues that it is “irresponsible” and more “inaccurate” that newspapers show pictures of death unless they come from the Associated Press Wire (Ephron 172). *The Boston Photographs* is one of the reasons why Ephron feels that way. The Boston Photographs are a series of photographs of a fireman trying to rescue a lady and a child from a burning building.

As the fireman reaches for the rescue ladder the fire escape they were standing on collapse, which causes the lady and child to fall from the top of a five-story building. Stanley Forman, the photographer who took the pictures, captures just about everything from the fire escape breaking to nearly the lady and child hitting the ground. Unfortunately, the 19 year old Diana Bryant did not survive the horrible fall, but the child did by landing on Diana’s body. This whole incident caused quite a stir with the press.

In the United States over 400 newspapers showed the photos in their paper and the responses from the readers’ shows they were not pleased. The reader’s felt as if the photographs invaded the privacy of death. They wrote comments like “Assigning the agony of a human being in terror of imminent death to the status of a side-show act” (170). There was another comment that read “I shall try to hide my disappointment that Miss Bryant wasn’t wearing a skirt when she fell to her death.

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You could have had some award winning photographs of her underpants as her skirt billowed over her head, you voyeurs” (170). Though there were readers that were disappointed about the newspapers printing the photos in

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the paper, a lot of newspapers felt otherwise. They tried to defend the pictures by writing articles in their paper. One of the papers says that the pictures raise awareness about slumlords and how dangerous fire escapes can be.

Editors of another paper described the pictures as “ interesting, riveting, and gripping” (171). They felt as if the pictures were news and just simply showed what happened. Ephron believed that the lesson of the Boston Photographs is that pictures of death will always be censored, because of the reaction of the readers. She feels as if death is a part of life and pictures of it should be printed in the newspapers, and that the fact that readers are disturbed by it is exactly why it should be printed.