

## Ansel Adams



*Oak Tree, Sunset City*, 1962  
gelatin silver print, 10 ¼ x 12 in.  
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento



*Self-Portrait in Victorian Mirror*, 1936  
gelatin silver print  
Center for Creative Photography

## The Artist

### Ansel Adams

Born in San Francisco 1902; died in Monterey, California 1984

As a child, he found great joy in nature, which is evident in his life's work. In 1919, he joined the Sierra Club and spent the first of four summers in Yosemite Valley, as "keeper" of the club's LeConte Memorial Lodge. His first published photographs and writings appeared in the club's 1922 Bulletin, and he had his first one-man exhibition in 1928 at the club's San Francisco headquarters. Adams began to pursue "straight photography," in which the clarity of the lens was emphasized, and the final print gave no appearance of being manipulated in the camera or the darkroom. He also developed the famous and highly complex "zone system" of controlling and relating exposure and development, enabling photographers to creatively visualize an image and produce a photograph that matched and expressed that visualization. Adams' images became the symbols, of wild America. He created a sense of the sublime magnificence of nature that infused the viewer with the emotional equivalent of wilderness, often more powerful than the actual thing. During his lifetime, Adams received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Hasselblad Award, the Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Arts, and the Sierra Club John Muir Award.

## Art Movement

### Nature Photography

Ansel Adams is known for his striking black-and-white landscape photographs, especially those he took in Yosemite National Park.

## The Artwork

### *Oak Tree, Sunset City*

This photograph of a California oak tree was taken as part of a commission to photograph the rolling hills and open pastures outside Sacramento, California.

## Discussion Suggestions

### The Photograph Discussion:

- *What is going on in this picture?*
- *What do you see that makes you say that?*
- *What more can you find?*
- *Where do you think this photograph was taken? Why?*
- *Have you ever seen a place that is similar to the one in the photograph? Where was that place? Were you actually there or did you see it in a photograph, TV, movie, etc.?*
- *Would you like to visit the place in the photograph? Why or why not?*

## Activity Idea

### Expressive Painting:

- Begin a discussion with the students about photography: What is photography? Where have you seen photographs? Who has used a camera before? What do you like to take pictures of? Why do people take photographs? Define the term 'Photography' and write it on the board.
- Introduce the phrase 'Elements of Art' to the students. Explain the definition. Have the students read aloud the different Elements of Art. Show the students Ansel Adam's photograph provided with this kit.
- Explain to the students that they are going to create a landscape similar to one they saw in the photographs. This photograph can be an interpretation of one of the photographs, a landscape they have seen in real life, or an imaginary landscape.
- Hand out the paper and art materials.
- Once the students have finished their landscapes, have each write a sentence/paragraph describing the landscape.

### Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Colored Pencils, crayons, markers, or paint
- Elements of Art Worksheet (Provided in Blue Folder)
- Glossary Terms: color, elements of art, line, pattern, photography, shape, texture