

Lighting the Mood

Pictures create moods and communicate feelings. Strong sunlight produces hard, bright contrasting highlights. Clouds and shade produce diffused light with soft shadows. You can use hard light and soft light to communicate feelings.



Strong sunlight produces hard details, with bright highlights and dark shadows...



...while subdued sunlight tends to soften shades and blend shadows.

Photo by Doyle Gates, 4-H Photo Volunteer

Photo Shoot

Take photos for hard light and soft light results. Compare hard light from mid-day and soft light from pre-dawn or early morning hours. Choose from these subjects.

- lakes, rivers, or landscapes
- buildings, monuments
- people or still life
- close-ups for detail

Learner Outcomes

Photography Skill: Capturing hard and soft light to create moods

Life Skill: Communicating with others—Communicates non-verbal messages

Educational Standard: NA-VA.K-4.1—Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes

Success Indicator: Communicates feelings through hard and soft light in photos

Background

Many things determine what makes a great photo. You have learned that the colors, shadows, and textures in your photo depend on the kind of light you have—whether it is hard or soft. The quality of light in a scene can also affect how the viewer *feels* about your photograph. Lighting and mood can be just as important as technical aspects.

How do photographers use light quality to suggest mood? There are many ways. For example, a cloudy, foggy day can show a dreary mood much better than a bright sunny one. Midday sunshine can create a lively mood for sports and outdoor action photos. The long shadows and warm colors created by a setting sun can suggest a mellow or sad mood.

Don't let bad weather keep you from going outside and taking pictures. Get in the habit of making the most of whatever kind of weather you have—it can help you create the mood you want. Some of the most famous photos ever shot were taken when the weather was less than perfect!

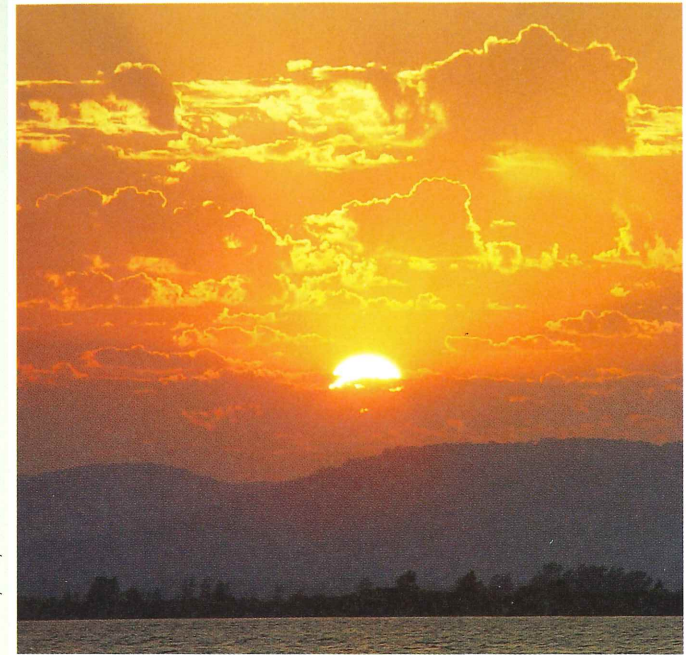


Photo by Doyle Gates, 4-H Photo Volunteer

The soft light and warm color from the sunset create a calm and peaceful mood.

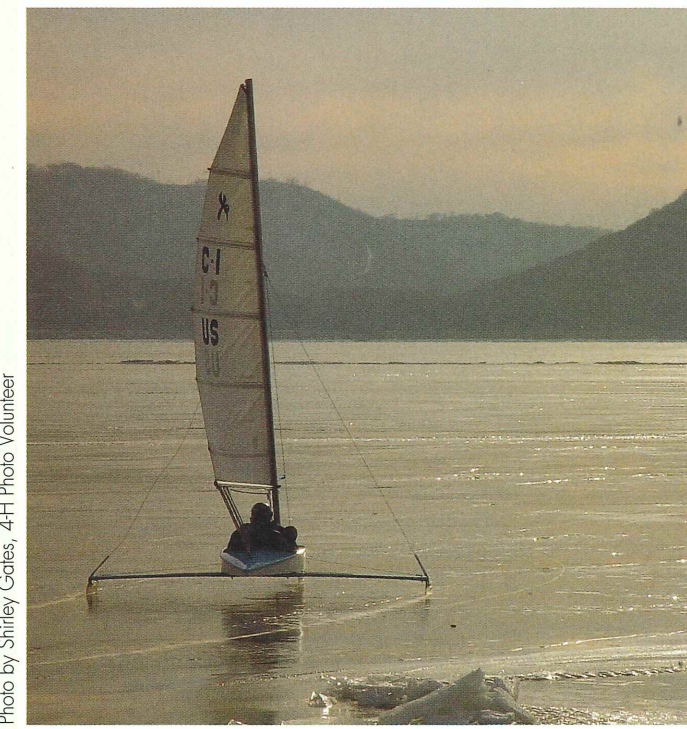


Photo by Shirley Gates, 4-H Photo Volunteer

Very soft shadows were created by diffused light.

More Challenges

- Make a friend look powerful. Choose a camera angle and hard lighting for the portrait.
- Show texture in sharp detail and flat detail. Try close-ups using rough, smooth, and shiny surfaces. Experiment with hard and soft light for best results.
- At the end of a day, when shadows are at their longest, photograph a subject or scene that gives a feeling of loneliness, isolation, or sadness.



Fast Facts
www.4-HPhotography.org

Advance the Sunset