



Image Credit: Kathryn Tucker Windham, The Long Wait, 1972, gelatin silver print, #assession-number

# A Ghostly Tale: Art Meets the Written Word

## OVERVIEW

This lesson will use student’s knowledge for storytelling to create a unique narrative or poem from a personal black and white photograph.

## STANDARDS

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can we weave a story around a black and white photograph?

### STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students Will:

- Learn how to compose a photograph using the Rule of Thirds
- Take a black and white photograph on a phone or computer or edit a color photograph into a black and white photograph
- Write a narrative or a poem based off of their own photograph

### STANDARDS: THIRD THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE | ART AND ELA

3rd Grade | VISUAL ARTS 2, 14 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) R3, 33

4th Grade | VISUAL ARTS 4, 5 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) R5, 35

5th Grade | VISUAL ARTS 3, 14 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) R5, 34

6th Grade | VISUAL ARTS 12, 14 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

(ELA) 7a, 19

7th Grade | VISUAL ARTS 2, 6 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) 7a, 21

8th Grade | VISUAL ARTS 5, 11 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) 8a, 20

9th Grade | VISUAL ARTS (Novice) 2 | VISUAL ARTS (Intermediate) 2 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) 9a, 19a

10th Grade | VISUAL ARTS (Novice) 2 | VISUAL ARTS (Intermediate) 2 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) 9a, 19a

11th Grade | VISUAL ARTS(Novice) 2 | VISUAL ARTS (Intermediate) 2 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) 11a, 22a

12th Grade | VISUAL ARTS (Novice) 2 | VISUAL ARTS (Intermediate) 2 | ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) 11a, 22a

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## ART DISCUSSION

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Describe the photograph. What is the overall mood Windham captured? What story might it tell?
- Does this look like a photograph you would take today? If it is different, how so?

- What do you think motivated Windham to stop and take this photograph? What could have drawn her to this location?

The house was on the road between Selma and Camden, a road I traveled often. There was little to set it apart from hundreds of other deteriorating tenant houses scattered through the Black Belt except that it seemed a little more desolate and lonely than most.

For a long time I thought it was unoccupied, but then I began to notice signs of life as I drove past: smoke rising from the chimney, fresh tire tracks in the littered yard, a child's plastic tricycle near the side door. Never did I see a human being on the place I watched the house for a year or more, watched its metal roof become rustier and its rough board exterior turn grayer.

"I must stop and photograph this place," I thought a dozen times. "It won't be here forever." Then one cloudy day when there were no leaves on the trees and when I expected to see smoke coming from the chimney but did not, I saw a mongrel dog, black and tan with a white chest, sitting in the yard. "Now's the time for that picture," I told myself as I pulled off the road.

The dog did not run, as I had expected he might, nor did he come toward me. He did not wag his tail nor did he snarl or bark. Except for lifting his ears slightly, he sat perfectly still and stared directly at me while I took a picture of him and of the house.

He did not move when I turned to leave. He did give me a quizzical look as though he wondered if I had come to give him news of the whereabouts of his owners or had come to take him to a new home. – Kathryn Tucker Windham

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kathryn Tucker Windham (1918-2011) was born in Selma, Alabama and grew up in Thomasville, Georgia. Her interest in Alabama began at a young age after being inspired by her father, mother, and aunt. Windham's father, James Wilson Tucker, was a banker and a gifted storyteller; her mother, Helen Gaines Tabb Tucker, was a former teacher and her aunt, Tab Forster, was the Thomasville postmistress who shared their family history and lore. Windham's family influence continued with her first step into the career of writing as a movie reviewer for the Thomasville Times, which was owned by her cousin Earl Tucker. Later that same year, she received her first Brownie camera. Her family's strong influence ensured that writing, storytelling, along with photography, would be lifelong pursuits.

Selma provided the home where Windham began writing and publishing her first of over 30 books beginning with *Treasured Alabama Recipes* in 1964 to *She: The Old Woman Who Took Over My Life* published in 2011. Alongside her written word, Windham incorporated her storytelling into radio broadcasts as a featured teller in the second National

Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee, returning more than twelve times. Beginning in 1984, her commentaries could be heard on Alabama Public Radio and on *All Things Considered* for National Public Radio.

Throughout her career, Windham has captivated audiences with her diverse and engaging words along with her telling photographs, both forming an expressive commentary on southern culture and customs

## CURRICULUM CONTENT

The following are excerpts from Kathryn Tucker Windham's *13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffery*. Select stories are available for students to read and explore:

- Mobile's Pipe-Smoking Sea Captain
- The Red Lady of Huntingdon College
- The Crying Spirit at the Well
- The Dancing Ghost of Grancer Harrison

Who is Jeffery? According to Windham herself,

Jeffery took up residence at the Windham home about 3 years ago. The family first became aware of his presence when they would hear someone moving around in the living room or clumping down the hall. But nobody was ever there. They might have decided sound waves were playing tricks on them had it not been for the reaction of their cat, an old and respected feline known as Hornblower; he heard the noises too. Whenever the family heard the footsteps, Hornblower would jump up (even rousing from a sound sleep), arch his back, and flex his claws. . . . Jeffery usually confines his activities to stomping up and down the hall, stirring around in the living room, shaking lamps, and setting empty chairs to rocking; but on at least two occasions he has moved objects.

Jeffery's influence on the Windham household inspired Kathryn to explore other Alabama ghosts, the stories of which are found in her book.

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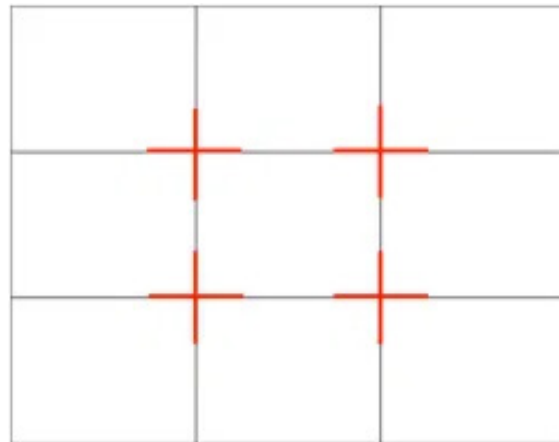
## ART INSTRUCTION

### MATERIALS

Camera (phone, tablet, or other), computer

### INSTRUCTIONS

**1** Learn about the Rule of Thirds before taking your photograph: The basic principle behind the rule of thirds is to imagine breaking an image down into thirds (both horizontally and vertically) so that you have 9 parts. As follows. As you're taking an image you would have done this in your mind through your viewfinder or in the LCD display that you use to frame your shot. With this grid in mind the 'rule of thirds' now identifies four important parts of the image that you should consider placing points of interest in as you frame your image.

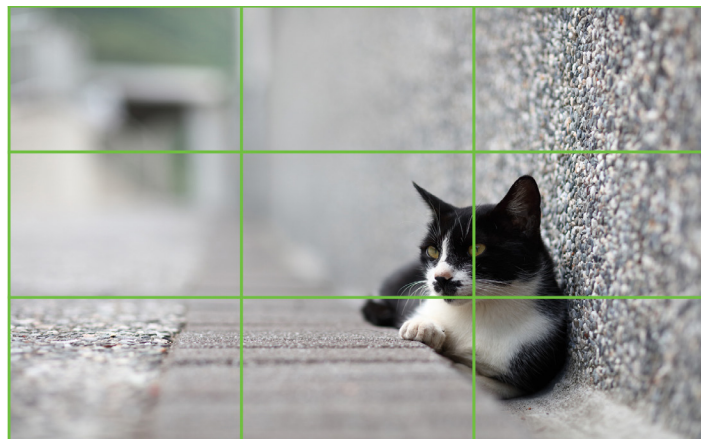
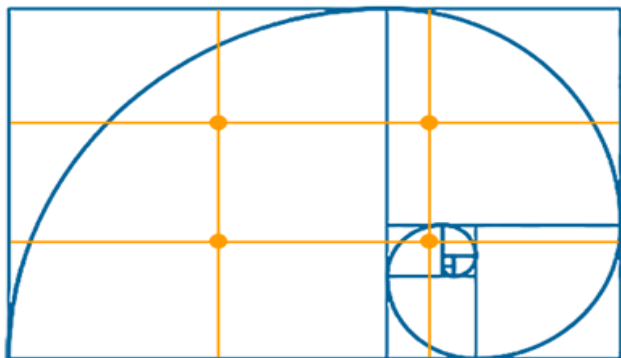


The theory is that if you place points of interest in the intersections or along the lines that your photo becomes more balanced and will enable a viewer of the image to interact with it more naturally.

Studies have shown that when viewing images that people's eyes usually go to one of the intersection points most naturally rather than the center of the shot – using the rule of thirds works with this natural way of viewing an image rather than working against it.

**2** Each student should take 2-5 photographs to have the opportunity to choose their favorite. When photographing on a phone, the filter for a black and white photograph can be added before shooting or after. Editing of a photograph can be done on a computer as well.

**3** Once the photograph is edited and selected, students will now write their narrative. Reading Windham's ghost stories will help provide framework for the



## TERMS

**RULE OF THIRDS** - the process of dividing an image into thirds, using two horizontal and two vertical lines. This imaginary grid makes nine parts with four intersection points.

**VERTICAL** - a line that runs up and down across the page

**HORIZONTAL** - a line that runs right and left across the page

**PHOTOGRAPH** - an image, or picture, that has been captured on film or some other material.

**POEM**- a piece of writing that uses imaginative words to share ideas, emotions or a story with the reader.

**NARRATIVE** - a literary term for the events that make up a story

## YOUTUBE

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## RESOURCES

Robb, Frances Osborn. "Kathryn Tucker Windham." Encyclopedia of Alabama, 30 June 2008, [www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1582](http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1582).

Windham, Kathryn Tucker., and Margaret Gillis Figh. 13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey. University of Alabama Press, 1969.

Rowse, Darren. "Rule of Thirds in Photography." Digital Photography School, 19 Sept. 2017, [digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds/](http://digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds/).

Windham, Ben. "Photography." Kathryn Tucker Windham, 1 Jan. 2010, [ktwindham.weebly.com/photography.html](http://ktwindham.weebly.com/photography.html).