“I Believe in Faking”: the dilemma of photographic realism at the dawn of photojournalism

**Reading Guide**

Numbers listed before questions indicate the page or page range in the paper. Answering these questions as you read the paper is helpful for later answering broader questions and understanding key points.

1 Note: Academic articles begin with an Abstract, which is like a summary.

1 We begin at approximately what year/era in history? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1 "\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is always complicated, however; and even at this high tide of Americans' romance with realism, opinions varied widely about the best way to represent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."

1-2 What is the difference between the "information mode" and the "story mode" in newspapers? Which was associated with "yellow" journalism?

2 Why were photographs rarely seen in newspapers in the 1880s and 1890s?

**Newspaper faking, 1880s-90s**

This section is all about journalism in general at the time, not specific to photography.

2-3 At that time, what did "fake" mean to journalists who were writing stories?

3 A handbook for young journalists in 1894 said: "\_\_\_\_\_\_ in essentials, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in nonessentials, is considered a legitimate rule of action in every office."

3 By the end of the 19th century, was the "fake" still acceptable in newsrooms?

4 "... the mechanistic new mode was intended to assure readers that they were receiving \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ — facts that had been gathered through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, had been recorded with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and were unadulterated by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or any other merely human quality."

**Photography and the "literal truth"**

This section is about photography broadly, both in journalism at the time and other forms of photography.

4 Did the debate about "fakes" come to photography before or after the debate in written journalism?

4 "...they too were attempting to justify a range of tactics whose main goal was not to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not to make an exact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but to bestow on their customers a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, one they could and would appreciate."

4 What did one photographer mean when speaking against the "falseness of ultra-realism"?

4-6 Did people at the time believe staged photographs showing ghosts or fairytale characters were actually real?

6 "Just as they did with the nineteenth-century newspaper, therefore, people had a complicated and contingent understanding of the relationship between a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Photographs could be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; they could \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; they could reveal the spirit hovering over your shoulder or conceal the birthmark spreading over your cheek."

6 Did people during the Victorian era understand photography in similar ways to how we understand photography today, or mostly different?

**"News" photographs before photojournalism**

This section is about how photographers who were not journalists began to take documentary photographs of news events.

8 The paper says some historians use the "anachronistic" term photojournalism to describe photographs of current events in the 1800s. What does "anachronistic" mean? Why does the author of this paper say those photographs, such as one showing a man trapped at Niagara Falls, were not really photojournalism?

9 "The daily newspaper, which was the dominant form of American journalism in the nineteenth century, came almost entirely in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And while the words about current events in a newspaper were generally \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, explicit, contextualized, systematically \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and widely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a photograph in the hand or on the wall was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."

9 "Whether driven by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or all three, photographers worked in good faith to document current events and breaking news, but they often did so by employing exactly the same kind of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ routinely used by their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ colleagues."

9 What is one example of a photograph listed that showed a news event in a manipulated way? (Search for the image online to see it)

9-10 The author writes: "Camera images of current events functioned more like things than like journalism." What does this mean?

10-11 Why did readers and editors in the late 1800s prefer artists' engravings in the daily newspaper, instead of photographs?

11 "...the photographer's raw material was strictly confined to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."

**Photography embraces faking**

This section is about how the term "fake" and the idea behind it shaped early ideas about retouching and editing photos.

12 "Even as newspaper journalism was staking its identity upon its repudiation of the \_\_\_\_\_, and as the term took on its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the general discourse, many commercial and artistic photographers kept its old \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ spirit alive among themselves by applying it to a similarly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and relatively \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ range of principles."

12 What is the argument that "faking" was beneficial for consumers?

12 What are some other terms that were used at the time to describe small adjustments to improve photos?

12 What did one photography editor mean that "everybody 'fakes'"?

12-13 Why did professional photographers want to be seen more as artists than technicians?

13 "For many commercial and artistic photographers, the fake had become the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_." What does this mean?

**The news photographer confronts the fake**

This section is about the emergence of photojournalism as a profession, and how photojournalists differentiates themselves from other photographers.

14 What were some of the technological developments that allowed photographers to start taking more life-like images?

14 In 1900, a writer for the American Annual of Photography argued that illustrations were being replaced: "the newspapers are sending photographers to gather the news with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as well as with pen. These \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ young men are now recognized as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and their work is known as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."

14 Why did writers start describing photography as more truthful than illustrations?

15 What type of reputation did news photographers have, and how was this different from news writers at the time?

15-16 How did the emerging profession of photojournalism benefit from pointing out and exposing fake images that sometimes appeared in newspapers?

16 "The \_\_\_\_, then, was still the measure of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but where once it was the professional photographers (and before them the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) who assured the public that they alone had the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to fake, now it was the professionals who were assuring the public that they alone could be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."

16-17 What is one example of how the debate about "faking" continues in photojournalism today?

**Overall Comprehension Questions**

1. How was the debate about retouching news photos around 1900 similar to modern debates about Photoshopping images? How was it different?
2. Why was “faking” seen as a good thing for consumers? Why did photographers want to be associated with this skill?
3. Photography started becoming common by the mid-1800s, so why was there no profession of “news photographer” until around 1900?
4. How did news photographers differentiate themselves from other types of photographers, and what type of reputation did they want to have? Does that reputation still exist today (like in the readings from Week 1)?
5. News photographers can only capture what happens directly in front of their camera lens. How did attitudes shift from considering this a limitation to considering it a unique virtue?
6. Journalists today still balance the technical and artistic sides of their work. What qualities and skills do you think are most important for modern photojournalists?