

# Colour, light and effects

## Black and white or colour?

Photos can be black and white (B&W) or colourful. Shooting **black and white photos** today is a deliberate choice that transmits an idea of **intimacy** and **nostalgia**. Not only they remind viewers of old photos and the beginning of cinema, but they also show forms, shades and tonalities of the subject chosen, giving more power to the image.

With film-based<sup>1</sup> photographic cameras, the photographer has to choose beforehand if taking the shot in B&W or colour because the film is different. With digital cameras, on the other hand, there is no need to take a shot in black and white; you can take a photo, copy it and then turn it into black and white on the computer.

The effects of a colour photo and a B&W photo are very different because B&W is based on contrasts. A red flower on a green field in colour when turned into B&W becomes insignificant with its different tones of grey.

## Light and shadow

**Light** and **shadow** are key elements when describing a photograph. The way they are set in relation to the frame of a photograph, what areas of the photograph are most highlighted, if the photograph allows you to guess the time of the day, if the light is natural or artificial – all these elements contribute to the message of the photograph. In interpreting a work of art, we must also ask why the photographer has chosen that particular strategy.

## Effects

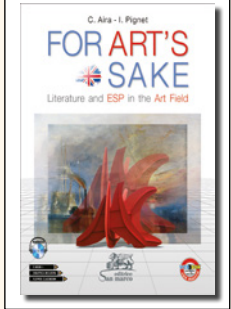
Final effects such as contrast, saturation and vibrancy can be applied while developing the film or while editing a digital photo.

**Contrast** is the strong visual difference between light and dark. High contrast photos show a wide range of tones from black to white, with bright highlights and dark shadows. Colours will be bold and strong and textures will be emphasized, thus resulting in deep and interesting images.

Low contrast images, on the other hand, won't show a high degree of differentiation between light and dark, and as a consequence, might result in being flat or dull. Photos taken in a fog or mist are perfect examples of low contrast images.

**Vibrant, saturated** colours are energetic, interesting and active, while **pale colours** are calming, comforting and soothing.

In digital photography, final effects can be applied in a studio after shooting; this is called **postproduction**.



**ACTIVITIES**

**Reading comprehension**

1 *Decide whether the following subjects are more effective if shot in black and white B&V or in colour COL and explain why.*

- 1 A winter landscape                    **B&V**  **COL**
- 2 Christmas decorations            **B&V**  **COL**
- 3 Human faces                         **B&V**  **COL**
- 4 A city landscape                    **B&V**  **COL**
- 5 Flowers                                **B&V**  **COL**
- 6 Dawns and sunsets                **B&V**  **COL**
- 7 Night visions                        **B&V**  **COL**
- 8 Modern architecture              **B&V**  **COL**

2 *Complete the descriptions of the two photos with the words given below in scrambled order.*  
shades – uniqueness – comfortable – atmosphere – landscapes – contrast – majestic – canyons – realistic – autumn

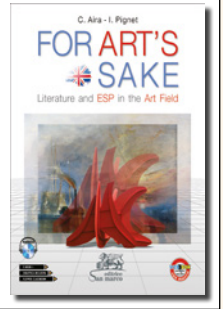
**BLACK AND WHITE VERSUS COLOUR LANDSCAPE**

Both photos depict natural **1** ..... The colour photo is more effective and **2** ..... because it emphasizes the colours of the season, probably **3** ....., thus giving an accurate idea of the time of the year it was shot in. Nature is abundant and rich, and the house does not appear abandoned or solitary, but warm and **4** .....

The B&W photo better suggests the **5** ..... created by the **6** ..... between the clouds and the canyon. **7** ..... and deserts are often shot in colour, because in this kind of landscape nature offers spectacular **8** ..... and tones that have an emotional effect on the viewer.

The photographer probably wanted to convey the idea of solitude and **9** ..... grandeur, stressing the desolation and timeless **10** ..... of the land and the vastness of the sky.





## Speaking

3 Describe the use of colour in the photos below.

