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Photo Poetry Analysis



(McCurry)

When I first saw this photograph, I was immediately overwhelmed with emotion. I could instantly tell that whoever this picturesque girl was, she must have an incredible story for her face to carry so much emotion. Evidently, this young girl’s crystal clear, green eyes are the most remarkable part of this iconic photograph. The way that she stares directly into the camera’s lens, allows us to see and feel the fear, the strength, the worry and the resiliency in her eyes. Without knowing the identity of this girl, one could infer from the worn red headscarf draped over her body and the dirt on her face that she is probably not living in the best circumstances and perhaps this photo was taken in a third world country. The pain that can be seen in her eyes makes it impossible not to connect and feel compassion for this beautiful girl. Although the meaning behind this iconic photograph may be hard to decipher, I believe that it is a breathtaking representation of a strong woman, who shows great pride and courage. It is certainly a captivating image, that tells a story of emotions through this young girl’s eyes.

Her Eyes in the Moment

Exposed

Rags flowing over her,

Covering her body,

Preserving the innocence left within.

Mistrust.

An outsider,

A man,

A foreigner, intruding.

Lonely,

Parents long since dead.

Still mourning her loses

A great distance from home.

Youthful,

Soil painted her skin with blemishes,

Chestnut hair sweeping her innocent face.

Watchful and suspicious.

Fear

Pouring out of her

Naïve and doubtlessly

Filled with worry.

Resilient,

Exuding calm strength.

Her jaw set firm,

Brows confidently questioning.

Her eyes;

They say it all.

The lenses into her life,

Her past, her future, her present

Crystal clear, piercing green eyes.

Her emerald gaze stares back at me

Locked on the frame,

Overwhelmed with emotion.

In that moment, her eyes, the story

Worth a thousand words.

One shot at perfection,

Click.

After completing my research on this captivating, iconic photo, I learned that it was taken by journalist Steve McCurry, of a young *Afghan Girl*, who was living in the Nasir Bagh refugee camp in Pakistan. The striking portrait was of 12-year-old Sharbat Gula and was soon to be the cover photo of the June 1985 issue of National Geographic magazine. Through my research I learned that she was a Pashtun orphan, who had been through a lot in her few years of life. I discovered that this photograph is arguably the most iconic picture of all time and that it has even been compared to the *Mona Lisa*. With this research, I was able to create a poem that I thought portrayed the emotions seen in the moments leading up to the journalist taking the photograph. The poem is written through the perspective of the photographer, and the first six stanzas begin with words that I thought best describes the emotions flashing through her eyes, as he captured the image. In this poem, I use Gula’s eyes as her way of communicating with the photographer and telling her story. In the last stanza, when I wrote, “Worth a thousand words”, I was alluding to the idiom “A picture is worth a thousand words”, because of how much emotion this image shares. The second to last line in the poem is saying that the photographer only has one chance to take the perfect photo, hoping to capture the complete essence of her story. Even after the photograph was taken, the identity of the girl was unknown for almost 20 years and it was a miracle that in 2002, Sharbat Gula, was discovered to be the infamous *Afghan Girl*.

# Works Cited

McCurry, Steve. *Afghan Girl*. National Geographic.

Wallis, Jake. *The Story Behind the World's most Famous Photograph*. 2 December 2016. 13 April 2019.