

September Assignment: Black and White Photography

To be shown at the **October general meeting**

By Mike Whitmore

Black and White photography has been a source of inspiration to many of us. It has been and continues to be an essential art form in photography. It is an alternate way to see reality and can be a powerful tool to express mood and feeling. Black and white is about shape and form, texture and tones, composition and perspective, shadow and light. The absence of color reduces our image to these fundamental considerations. We rely on these fundamentals to express ourselves and tell our story. We use these fundamentals to create impact.

Understanding how color is rendered in black and white is essential to being able to control the process of making a digital black and white image. For example, it is important to know what tonal difference to expect between red and green to determine how a subject will stand out or blend in with background. Film black and white photography relied on this knowledge and the use of colored filters to control the tonal results. We could use a red filter, for example, to render the blue sky dark.

You can set your camera to shoot in B&W jpeg and it will render a reasonable B&W image depending on how the manufacturer sets up the in-camera processing. However, most photographers shoot in RAW and then convert the images to black and white during processing. You can get much better results by shooting in RAW, capturing maximum information and color gradation, which gives you total control, and then processing it the way you choose to.

Digital image processing makes this tonal work easier and can be done effectively by some trial and error in processing. Lightroom has sliders to enable us to vary separate colors to create the same effect that we were able to achieve with filters in film photography. You can move the slider back and forth and see how the tone of that color changes in the image. See the Digital-Photography School article referenced below for the how-to. You can learn quickly by experimenting with the sliders. Be sure to experiment on a virtual copy. This tutorial follows some procedures similar to those we learned from Barry Evans at the July LENS meeting.

There are many excellent choices available for processing software. The ones that I use most are Lightroom and Nik Silver Efex-Pro. These tutorial links may give you some helpful ideas. I suggest that you take a few minutes to read them.

1. [Digital-photography-school.com/digital-photography-school.com/tips-shooting-processing-better-black-and-white-photographs/](http://digital-photography-school.com/digital-photography-school.com/tips-shooting-processing-better-black-and-white-photographs/) Tips for Shooting and Processing Better Black and White Photographs
2. amateurphotographer.com/technique/photo_editing/best-software-for-black-white-editing/
Best software for black and white editing - Amateur Photographer
3. [Lightroomkillertips.com/lightroomkillertips.com/the-best-software-for-black-white-editing/](http://lightroomkillertips.com/lightroomkillertips.com/the-best-software-for-black-white-editing/)
The Best Software for Black & White Editing - Lightroom Killer Tips

The August 31 field trip is the Civil War Reenactment, which will provide many black and white possibilities. Here are some I have taken in the past.

