

## PCQC Video Presentation

Fundamentals of Photography II with Joel Sartore—National Geographic

### Lesson 18: The Decisive Moment in Photography

Do you know of Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004)? He was a famous French humanist photographer who was an early adopter of 35 mm film. In 1952 he published a book entitled *Images à la sauvette* which literally means “images on the sly” or “hastily taken images.” The English translation of this book is entitled *The Decisive Moment*. A key philosophy of Henri, a thread which runs through this lesson, is: “*To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression.*”

### Lesson Takeaways

- Decisive moments occur often. They could be any event or occurrence at any moment in time that you think might never be repeated again.
- Decisive moments often occur at sporting events. Shoot down and get above the action and avoid clutter. Have you ever shot a lightning storm? What about funny moments at family reunions?
- People around the world capture thousands if not tens of thousands of decisive moments every day with their cell phones. Many document moments of momentous joy or the harsh reality of human tragedy.
- Look for repetitive action (kids jumping on a trampoline for example) as this will allow you to compose the frame, perhaps use a tripod, and experiment with shutter speeds.
- Work at framing ahead of time. Remember James Capo’s lecture last year on photographing birds? He put his camera and Speedlites on tripods, set everything on radio control, aimed through his kitchen window, put out a branch and some bird food, and waited for just the right moment to trigger his camera. The result is a beautiful portfolio of birds, some with their wings stopped in mid-flight.

### Assignment

- Practice photographing what you think are decisive moments. Keep your camera handy at all times. Use all the tools you have learned about how to make good photographs. Go to events where there may be good decisive moments. Train yourself to predict when a decisive moment may occur and be ready to snap the pic. Practice.