

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

The “Is a picture worth a thousand words?” Workshop

- I. Choose one of the photographs from the book.
- II. Spend some time observing its composition.
- III. Think about and jot some notes in answer to the following:
 1. How does light work in the image?
 2. How does contrast work?
 3. What is the image’s geometry?
 4. How are shapes arranged?
 5. How does the composition direct your gaze; that is, what do you first see and why does it stand out?
 6. If this is a picture of a person what do you notice about the face? Where is the subject’s gaze directed?
 7. What is the setting?
 8. If this is a picture of a group of people, how are they arranged in the composition? What does that convey about the relationship they might have to each other? To the photographer? To you as viewer?
 9. If this is a picture without people, or where people are just an element in the scene, what is the scene in the picture made of?
 10. Find a passage in the text that connects in some way to the picture and mark it.

Now, using your notes, write a well-developed paragraph about how the photograph makes meaning for you. Write about its composition, but also think and write about how the image fits with the whole book. Thinking about the passage you picked from the book, comment on how the picture is related to Agee’s text? How does it inform the text and how does the text inform the image?

Join your triad and read your paragraph aloud---and read what you wrote, don’t “tell” what you wrote about.

We’ll hear a few examples from brave writers.