

End of course test

Listening 1

It was really tough to choose and I would like to have included the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson but I'm only allowed to talk about two. This means both of my top two photographers happen to be American.

Anyone who is into photography has heard of Ansel Adams. He was born in 1902 in San Francisco, California and by all accounts, he didn't exactly show great promise as a child. He was badly behaved and by the age of 12 he had been taken out of school by his parents and was being tutored at home. This led to a solitary childhood because he didn't have any brothers or sisters. However, it was one of the reasons he fell in love with nature because he spent so much of his time outside exploring and camping.

Adams also developed a love of music. He taught himself to play the piano and during his teenage years it became his passion – he even considered making a career as a pianist. But then he visited Yosemite National Park, which made such a huge impression on him that he is quoted as saying a new era had begun for him.

Yosemite is where Ansel Adams took most of his famous photos and developed his trademark style. Most of his work is in black and white which highlights the immense cliffs and mountainsides that he loved. Of course he didn't have access to any of the modern digital equipment of the 21st century but I think he would be horrified at the way we edit and alter photos these days. The Ansel Adams images we most enjoy today capture the essence of wild, natural places and demonstrate his deep understanding of natural light and how to use it to capture sharp, dramatic photos.

Moving on to my second favourite photographer, I discovered her work while I was at art college. Her name is Dorothea Lange and coincidentally she also did much of her early work in San Francisco but she's very different from Ansel Adams because her focus is on people rather than the countryside. To begin with, she took photos of wealthy people from the city and these were carefully composed studio portraits. But she soon turned her lens towards the street and began to photograph poorer people. This was during the Great Depression in the 1930s in the USA and her photography served a social purpose because it caused the government to react and send food and help to farmers and their families who were struggling. The most iconic Dorothea Lange photo is called 'Migrant mother' and shows a mother in the centre of the frame, surrounded by her children. She is staring into the camera and not smiling. In the background, you can see how they are living in very dirty and difficult conditions. It's not a happy family photo but it has influenced the photojournalists and documentary makers who work today and it's an incredibly powerful image.

End of course test Listening 2

- 1 The best thing I ever did was to choose an apprenticeship over going to university. I'm not saying it would suit everyone but going into paid employment while being able to continue formal training was more appealing to me than having to live off my parents or get a loan to fund my education.
- 2 I almost left university in my second year. It was really difficult for me to manage going to lectures, writing my dissertation and doing my part-time job. My grades were being affected. I only stayed on because my tutor was so supportive. I know now that I would have made a big mistake if I'd left because my degree has given me lots of job opportunities.
- 3 People are very negative about going to university in your home town but for me it was the most sensible option. I get on well with my parents and they didn't want me to have to get a job while I was trying to study. I still had a great social life but also benefited from surroundings I loved so it was a win-win situation. Why would I want to go anywhere else?
- 4 I'd learned to be independent while I was at university and I'd worked part-time. But nothing had prepared me for the challenges of working long hours every day with people I didn't always respect who wouldn't help me when I ran into difficulty. I found my first job an absolute nightmare.
- 5 I'm so lucky I've got this job. It was my English professor who really helped me get it. As soon as I saw the vacancy, I asked my tutor for a reference but he took so long to respond that in the end I went to Professor Magson. She advised me what to put in my covering letter and wrote me a great reference.