Artful Photos
Lesson 6: Photo Tips and Project Ideas (Photoshop Elements)
In this written lesson, I've included tips on choosing photos plus additional ideas using the techniques you have learned in this class.

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Tips for Choosing Photos
There are characteristics you can look for when searching for photos to use with the techniques taught in this class.

Look for photos or images that:

• Have a lot of contrast, with definite areas of light, medium, and dark tones.
• The subject or object includes a minimum of 4 colors or tones.
• Black and white or sepia photos can work as demonstrated in Lesson 2: Collaged Photo.
• Have a subject or object that is large enough to break down into the four tones to create layers that you can clip papers or textures to. For example, a thin tree branch would not be a suitable object for the techniques in this class.

Remember that even photos without the above characteristics can be used (with the exception of an object that is too small or thin) by using adjustments to alter the photo. This means there are lots of photos and elements that will work!

No - object is too thin

Yes!

Test the Photo First
Not sure about a photo, image, or element? Test it before you jump in!

By adding both a Gradient Map and Posterize adjustment layer to your image, you can check to see if it has enough areas of white, light grey, medium grey, and black. If not, you can determine whether or not it is worth modifying the tones in your image.

- Open an image, photo, or element (File > Open).
- Make a duplicate copy (File > Duplicate).
- Close the original (File > Close).
- In the Layers panel, click on the Create a New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon and choose Gradient Map. This will nondestructively convert your image to black and white.
- Click on the Create a New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon and choose Posterize. In the Adjustments panel, set the Levels to 4. This will break your photo down into four tones. Close the Adjustments panel.
- Looking at the subject or object in the photo, are the four tones (white, light grey, medium grey, and black) present?

Things to keep in mind:
  - Consider the subject or object in the photo only, not the background.
  - There doesn't need to be an equal amount of each tone in an image.
  - Adding the Unsharp Mask after converting your photo to black and white will also help with the Posterize results.
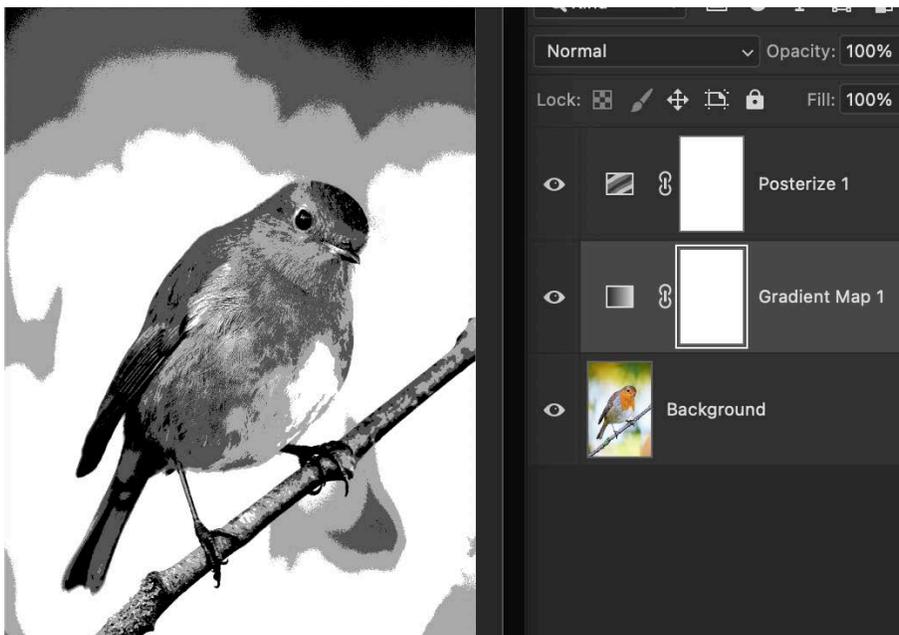

- If you choose to use the photo, extract the object (Lesson 1 or 2).
- Modify the image if needed, following any one of the adjustments listed under the heading **Modifying Tones in a Photo or Image** on the next page.

Modifying Tones in a Photo or Image

You can adjust the tones in a photo or image using:

- A Levels adjustment. See Lesson 1: Painted Portrait.
- A Gradient Map adjustment. See Lesson 2: Collaged Photo.
- The Dodge and Burn tools. See Lesson 4: Mixed-Media Masterpiece.
- A Black and White adjustment (this is a destructive technique). See Lesson 1: Painted Portrait.
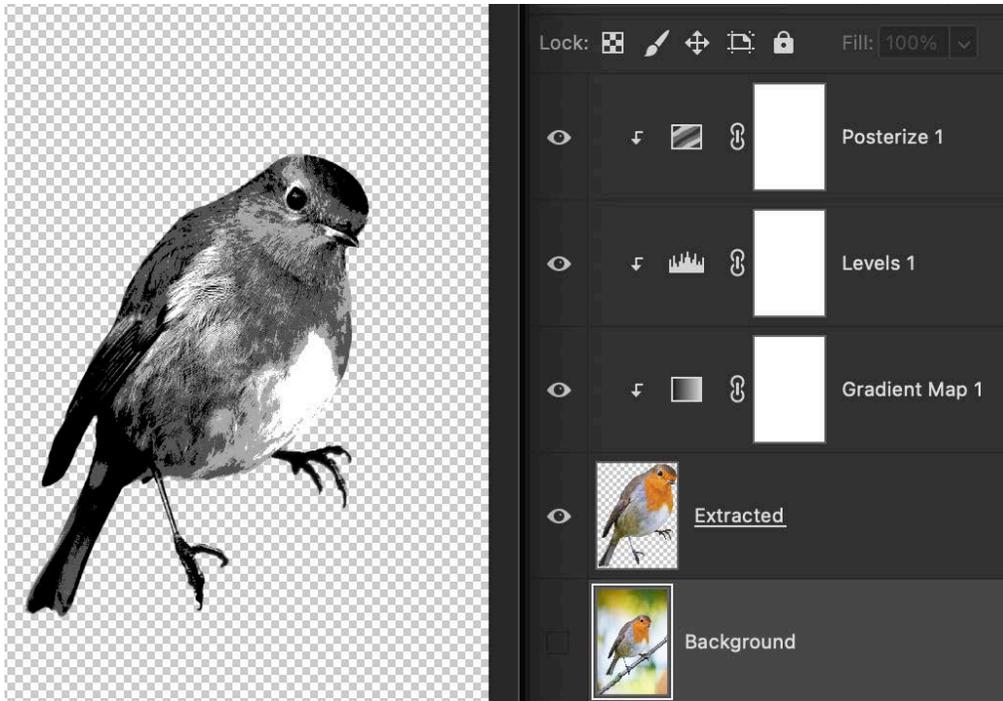
The techniques in this class are pretty forgiving, and the projects are meant to be more artistic in nature and not perfect. That's half the fun!

Photo or Image Ideas

- Use embellishments from your own stash! You can find lots of realistic elements in kits to use with these techniques.
- Photos that are not the best quality can be made into something fun and fabulous!
- Look for interesting photos on a site like Pixabay.
- Go out on a photo adventure with your camera or smartphone and take photos of interesting objects.

Papers or Texture Ideas

- Play around with the other papers and textures in the class files.
- Use papers from your own stash.
- Try using coordinating papers from a kit.
- Small designs or more solid papers may look better on the layers that have a smaller area to clip to.
- There is no tried-and true-recipe for which papers to clip to which layers; this is where you will need to try clipping different papers to the layers to see which combinations you like best. Just have fun with it!
- Don't forget you can also play with the Blend Modes of the 'Mask' layers to change the look of the papers clipped to them.
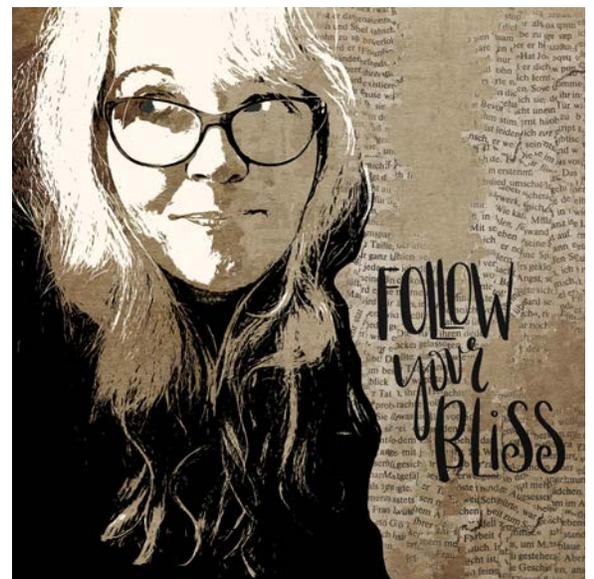
- Try clipping solid colors to the layers instead of papers or textures. See Lesson 2 on how to add a Color Fill layer.

Additional Tips

- Play with the Blend Modes on one or more of the 'mask' layers (White, Light, Medium, and Black layers).

- Turn off one or more of 'mask' layers (White, Light, Medium, and Black layers) to let the background show through and simplify the image.

Nothing is off limits!

I can't wait to see what you create!