



focus on photography

# Black and white tone is powerful



MONTE NAGLER

Taking photographs in black and white can be a very rewarding experience.

Most people wouldn't think of putting anything but color film in their cameras. Undoubtedly this is because they want

their photographs to record the way they remember a scene.

Yet the lack of color in a black and white photograph can make a far more striking interpretation of a scene. And since black and white is an interpretation rather than a documentation of a subject, the onus is on the photographer to create a picture through the use of textures and tones.

Textures and tones are considerations in color photography, but in black and white they are all-important. You may say that color photographs are analogous to seeing a movie while black and white photographs are like reading the book.

If you have two cameras, try loading one with color and the other with black and white. Take a shot of the same sub-

ject. When you compare your prints, you may be surprised at the power of the black and white image.

Portraiture in black and white can be very effective indeed. Look at some good black and white portraits, study them carefully, and you'll see the impact they possess. I've always felt that color portraits show the likeness of a person while black and white brings out the character of the face.

The tonal range from black through various shades of gray to white is known as the gray scale. By using these tones in an interpretive way, a photographer can truly express himself or herself through photography.

A black and white print using the extremes of the scale (no mid-tones) is referred to as a high-contrast print. Just the opposite, an all mid-tone print is called low-contrast.

If the tones are toward the white end of the scale, it's called a high-key picture. A photo where most of the tones are near the black end is low-key. One that uses the full range of tones is called a full-tone print.

By using the tones creatively and effectively, a photographer is able to "make a statement" through his or her pictures.

**Character study:**  
Monte Nagler took this picture in black and white so that he could better show the character of this delightful woman from Frigillana, Spain.



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