

Personal

From an emotional perspective, when looking at this photo I feel sad. Sad of what this family went through, a family that once was five; now only four. They had to live in small tents in California's summer and winter. In the caption, it says that they wouldn't leave until they got so hungry that they could barely do anything; that quote shocks me. This family probably came from the midwest, and will only stop working until they starve themselves to the brink. They must have all worked, even the children, picking peas, fruits, anything. They all look hungry; the mother is the leanest. You can see that their tent is held up by sticks, so with the dust bowl, it must have been horrible. Especially looking at their surroundings, it looks like dirt for miles. During the dust bowl, they still must have had to work through the winds. This is really astonishing to me because I could never imagine working all day in a field, only making a few dollars, if not a few cents.

Composition

This photo was positioned with the rule of thirds in mind. The way that your eyes go straight to the family, but especially the women. The eye is drawn to her because she has a mostly blank background, so she's the focus. Once you start to look harder, you notice the two children, and the man. At first glance I didn't even notice the man, because he blended into the tent. The intent of the photo was also to show how simply people were living. Out in the middle of a desert, with a small tent to "protect" them from the elements. This photo was definitely posed; looking at the photo it looks like the man maybe didn't want to be photographed. From what I can see, the children don't look too happy; but I can't say that I would be as well. The lighting is obviously naturally lit, and since it's in black and white, the man completely blends in. He is also casting a shadow on his son, which camouflages him as well.

The Family of Four By Dorothea Lange



Subject

The subject of this photo to me is the women, but also just their life. I think Dorothea was trying to capture a migrant's families basic life. She was trying to show how simple they lived; living in tents, even with small children. It shows what struggles many people had. You can tell even with the background; it's blank with dirt for miles. At first glance, the woman definitely stands out to me. Her patterned dress makes her pop out among the blank horizon. If this photo was at all staged, I think Lange put her there for a reason; to almost guide your eyes right to the mother. Another stand out is the little girl; the way the light is shining on her. The deep contrast in the background of the girl and her mother both lead your eye right to them. Whether this was intentional or not, it makes the photo more striking. The way your eyes lead to both the woman and daughter, it's like a winding road. Your eyes slowly make their way up to the highly contrasted subjects.

History of the Great Depression

The Great Depression was one of the most devastating times in history, and it all started in 1929. The lowest points in the depression lasted until 1939, and photographers, like Dorothea Lange, were there to capture it all. Many factory workers' jobs were lost, so they traveled to California looking for work. When the Dust Bowl hit in the 1930's, drought struck America. This forced migrant workers to move from place to place, working for any kind of money. Most had families, of which some didn't make it through the journey. This photo and caption show just one of the many cases of a family member not making it. This family lost their two year old son during the winter in California. Around 7,000 people including children died during the Dust Bowl; one of the main causes was dust pneumonia, which was from being exposed to dust storms. Living in weak tents didn't help with this growing problem, which was a big hardship during the Great Depression.

Gender

Since the beginning of time, our world has taught us that men have the upperhand in life. That they get certain rights that women don't. Even the name "women" has the word "men" in it. With that being said, lots of Dorothea Lange's photography has a woman as the subject/s. In the photo I chose, the woman is the one standing out the most. I think that this was intentional, first off because lots of Lange's photos have a strong female lead; secondly, the man is almost hidden. This could have been intentional or not, but in my opinion Lange's photo style is very striking. At such an early stage in the evolution of equality, Dorothea was making a statement with her photos, which is being realized now. Especially now, since men and women are more equal, it's nice to know Lange was trying to make a difference early on.