

Show & Tell

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TWO YEARS AGO, when I was eight years old, my dad asked me if I wanted to work on a project with him. He had an idea that I could write about some of his pictures for a book. I said I would try, but I wasn't really sure how the project would turn out or even how we would begin.

We started by talking about the kind of things that you can see in a photograph and how a picture can mean something to you. Things like shadows showing the time of day and leafless trees telling the time of year. That if you look hard enough you can discover things that add to the meaning of a picture.

Then my dad gave me a stack of pictures that I could select from. I looked through them all and chose one. I wasn't sure what to write, so I tried to think of a starting sentence to give the reader an open door to what I felt the picture was about. And from that point on, that's what I did. I'd usually start with an observation, then I would look at the picture and write my thoughts. When I'm writing, it's like digging. I start at the top and end way deep down.

My dad would keep changing the stack so I would have a bigger selection. I might choose a picture because I was in a certain phase, or because of the state of mind I was in. When I saw a picture that I wanted to write about, I would feel excited. Usually it was because I could relate to something in the picture—either something specific like baseball or maybe because there was something that reminded me of something I care about.

Looking at art gives me a hungry, choked up feeling. I get it because I'm looking at other people's lives and it's a mystery. I try to think of what might be going on in their lives and try to understand them from my own experiences.

I began writing this book in January 2000 and wrote the final piece in December 2000. Looking back, I think my dad wanted me to see the world through his eyes from my perspective and write about it. And that's what I did. While writing this book, I have experienced many different feelings: love, loss, happiness, loneliness, caring, and wanting. And I learned about how my dad saw unusual, usual, meaningful, ordinary things.

I feel as if my dad created a world for me by taking pictures. And while I was writing about a picture, I was living in that world. I hope you can come too. —G. R.



A Shared Moment

This baby looks like he is really connected to his father. It is a special moment that they have together because dads usually have to go to work a lot. There is one thing that only dads can give—a scratchy face. The baby is teething on his daddy's chin and is feeling his dad's mustache with his nose. I still like the feeling of rubbing against my dad's face before he shaves. The pool in the background gives you a sense of gentle peacefulness. I like the way the houses peek out just over the fences as if they're watching over them.

Both the dad and the son must be enjoying this moment. I think that because both their eyes are closed. They look so dreamy in this picture that it must be a very loving moment. The baby looks tiny in his dad's strong hands. I'm sure it makes the baby feel safe and comforted. They have a connection that can never be broken.



High Noon Car

The car in this picture looks like it has been through some tough times or even an accident or two. It's summer, but no one is outside because it's lunchtime—everyone is inside eating. You can tell it's noon because the shadow is directly under the car, which only happens at noon when the sun is straight overhead.

The car must belong to the people who live in the house behind it. It seems from the condition of the house that they care more about their house than their car.

I like how everything is placed in this picture—the car centered, with the line between the car doors going up to the line between the houses. And I like how the leaves on the tree are bunched up. They look beautiful the way they stretch over the roofs.

Looking at this car in the hot sun, battered and alone, makes me feel a sense of loneliness. But after lunch when the kids come outside, everything will be different. Since I live on a block where all the houses are connected, I would like a chance to play tag games or hide-and-seek with them in the driveways between the houses.



Find the Dog

When I first looked at this picture, I asked myself why was it taken? Then I looked harder and I realized why. There is a dog poking his head through the fence. I didn't see him at first because the dog looked like part of the vine. His muzzle and his ears look like leaves. It's lovely and funny at the same time. This picture reminds me that things aren't always what they appear to be when you first see them. And if you take your time and focus, you can discover the beauty in things.