Easy Book Illustrations:

Module One: Planning & Preparation

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This portion of the *Easy Book Illustration* lays the ground work for the rest of this 6-part series. In this training, you will be shown a number of different methods to use in producing illustrations for your books. These methods can also be applied to any other facet where illustration is needed, such as creating greeting cards, t-shirts, etc. The primary focus of this training will be to create illustrations for children's books, however.

Most of the tools offered here can be used very inexpensively and some are even free. Others do cost money, but are well worth the cost. The point of this training is to provide you with an arsenal of tools that you can use in creating illustrations.

In this particular portion of the training, you will learn:

- Why it is a good idea to create illustrations from photography

- How to plan out your illustrations

- How to use storyboards and sequencing

- How to apply various formats and styles

- How to work with various colors and tones

- Much more!

This training is meant to be as simple as possible. After all, this course is called *Easy Book Illustration*. However, there is some foundational work that needs to be done first so that you can achieve the best results that you can.

Why Illustrations from Photographs?

Using Photographs…

Why Illustrations From Photographs?
- Perfect medium for telling stories.
- Most people take and use photos every day.
- ANYONE can take photos…few çan actually draw or paint.
- Will work for nearly ANY type of genre.
- Lots of options for converting to illustrations.

Easy BOOK ILLUSTRATION   Easily Create Professional-Looking Illustrations, EVEN If You Can't Draw!

Many people can draw or paint, but they are not great at it. In fact, it is likely that less than 10 percent of the people reading this can illustrate at the level needed to exemplify their own book. On the other hand, many of us have a basic talent for taking photographs. This is especially true because all of us have grown along with the evolution of cameras, digital photography, smart phones, etc. That being said, the best reasons for using photography to create illustrations include:

- Photography is a way to create illustrations and communicate ideas without having to know how to draw or paint.

- Most modern people take photographs every day. Therefore, most people can take comprehensive photographs by second nature.

- Software has really progressed over the years and now there are a number of ways that you can use photographs to create the illustrations that you need.

- Photography will work in nearly any type of genre.

- In most cases, photographs will make your illustrations a lot simpler and faster to create.

PLANNING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS...

First Things First:

- You need a story.
- Break down your story into logical sequences.
- How can you best portray each sequence visually?
- Decide on format...horizontal or vertical.

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Obviously, before you begin planning your photographs you need a story. No matter how simple the story is, it needs to be broken down into logical sequences. For example, your story may be simply about the letters of the alphabet and it begins "A is for apple. B is for balloon.", but it can still be broken down. In this case "A is for apple." would the first sequence in your story. The sequence helps define what each picture should be. Logically your first illustration will be of an apple.

Then again, the first sequence of your story may be a little more complex. "On the first day of the week, Johnny walked down to the local bus stop for his first day of school." This story is geared towards an older audience, and so the pictures may need to be a little more complex. The key thing to remember here is that as the story is broken down into different parts, illustrations should be created to represent that part of the story.

It is really important part of planning out your story is to look at large variety of children's books. This is especially true for those who have not read a lot of children's books in their lifetime. Doing this will give you a natural feel for the flow of a story, and help you to break down your own story into a logical sequence. It will also bring an overall understanding of how books are typically illustrated.

Another important part of your initial planning will be to decide on a format. In most cases it doesn't really matter whether you decide if your pictures should be horizontal or vertical in format, you just need to decide. The reason being is that you don't want to take a whole lot of horizontal pictures and then ultimately decide on a vertical format for your book. So, this is

something that you should decide upfront. If you want to publish to Kindle, typically the format will need to be vertical.

Create a Storyboard

PLANNING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS…

First Things First:

- Storyboard your shots.
- These will guide your photography.
- Don't have to be pretty.
- Include wide, medium & close shots to provide context.

Many people do not like to mind-map their story. However when creating an entire book, especially one with illustrations, it is imperative that your story is well planned out. This will help you visually think through what you want to produce for your book. You can find a storyboarding template in the member's area which can be very helpful.

It is likely that you won't be using your storyboard for anything else but for your own reference. So, feel free to create your storyboard in any way that will help you brainstorm. Many people simply sequence their story and sketch out the illustrations they want to see.

Take our story about Johnny going to the bus stop for example. Our story first begins with Johnny arriving at the bus stop, the second part is that he finds a nickel lying on the bus stop, the third is of the bus arriving and Johnny getting on the bus, and the fourth is Johnny arriving at school. Now, the pictures that accompany each of these sequences don't have to be perfect. Likely you will not be able to recreate the images that you have in your head anyway. All you need to do at this point is scribble out a stick figure of Johnny and a box with circles and windows for the bus. It really is that easy. Afterwards create a similar picture to represent each sequence of your story.

The process of planning your story out this way is called "pre-visualization". You have probably seen illustrators doing this on making-the-movie type films. This will help you get a clear idea in your head of what you want the reader to experience.

People naturally have a tendency to take wide-angled pictures. You have to remember, however, that object of the game here is to capture a moment with each picture. So, you will want to create context in your book by taking wide, open, and close shots. For example, think about when you walk into a restaurant:

When you first walk in, you take a look at the entire room and take in as much of the environment as you can. As you move to your table, you stop paying so much attention to the world around you and more on where you are going to sit. So, you visual begins to shift to a medium point of view. When you are finally seated, your point of view closes in. Now your attention is on your menu, the items on the table, and the people who are accompanying you. Everything going on outside of that is now insignificant.

We don't experience life from just one angle and from just one point of view. This is why it is so important to use various types of shot to get our ideas across. For example, when Johnny arrives at the bus stop you will want to take a wide-angled shot of what Johnny is noticing when he first arrives, but when he sees the nickel, his attention would be more closed in; so here you would want a more closed in shot of Johnny hand moving close in towards the nickel.

When Shooting Your Photos…

PLANNING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS…

Shooting the Photos:

• Be consistent!

• Use the Rule of Thirds.

• Use miniatures, toys and models. Watch trademarks!

• Remember that you are simplifying.

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Illustrations are a form of art, so the composition of the photos that you take is going to be really important. One thing that you will want to do is be consistent. Otherwise, your book is going to look unprofessional and like you have made a lot of mistakes. For example, if you use one form of illustration, you will want to use that form of illustration throughout the book. You will want to use the same styles, tones, and colors throughout the book as well.

You should also be sure to use the rule of thirds. The rule of thirds is a rule that is used in art and is an essential thing to understand. It has been used for centuries and has long been known to bring about a solid point of reference for composition. The rule of thirds is used by photographers as well.

The rule of thirds is fairly simple to understand. When you are looking through the camera, imagine that your point of view is gridded into thirds horizontally and vertically, so that you have 9 quadrants. Your action should take place where these lines would intersect. If you were to grid the picture of the pig and the goat above, for example, you'd notice that the eye of the goat would fall perfectly within the intersection of some of those lines. Some cameras can be set to show this grid as you take your pictures.

Have you ever noticed that the most famous pictures do not have their main image centered? This is why. If you are taking a picture of a landscape, for instance, you wouldn't want the horizon in the center of your frame. You will want it in the top third of your frame or the bottom third of your frame. If you were illustrating Johnny at the bus stop, you would want him within the right vertical quadrants or the left vertical, not centered in the picture.

If you would like, you can use models, miniatures, and even toys in creating your illustrations. Don't forget, however, that if a toy is trademarked you cannot use them in your photos. Generic ones are often useful, however. Some of the best places to find generic toys are your local dollar stores.

Another thing to realize is that the object of the game is to simplify. If you think of any illustrations that you see, you may realize that the details are usually at a minimum. On the other hand, photographs are very detailed.   When you are turning your photos into illustrations you will be simplifying them, so there is no reason to concentrate too much on little details when you are taking your photos. You'll just end up making yourself frustrated over something that won't really matter in the end.

PLANNING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS...

Shooting the Photos:
- Photographs must be well-lit.
- Use natural light when possible!
- Wide Angle vs. Telephoto vs. Macro.
- Aperture and Depth of Field.
- Using forced perspectives.
- Consider digital mattes.

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When you are taking your photos, you also want to make sure that the lighting is right. Your photos must be well lit. In other words, you want your photos to be bright and clear not dark and dingy. You also want to be consistent with the time of day and the setting that you are describing in your picture. If the scene happens in the morning, make sure that the lighting is akin to morning sunlight. If the scene happens during only one part of the day, don't show your subjects in 3 different outfits.

You should also keep in mind that the lens that you are using does matter. Luckily these days the settings are built into the camera. Even smart phones have these settings, and you can even buy attachments for them. Keep these options in mind because they can radically change the way that your photos turn out.

Finally, pay attention to your aperture. Aperture has to do with the amount of light in your photo, which can affect the depth of field in your photo. The depth of field is how much is in focus behind and in front of the subject. These aspects can make a big difference in how your photos turn out, and in turn it will affect your illustrations in the end.

Differences in Angle and Aperture
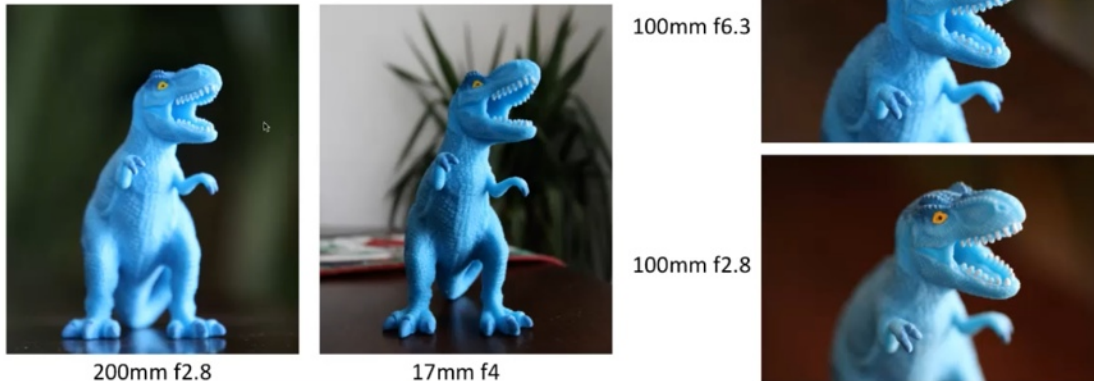
Looking at the pictures above well help you to understand how much your lenses and your aperture can affect your picture. All of the pictures above are of a rubber toy dinosaur on a table. The dinosaur on the left is shot with a 200mm lens. As you can see, in this photo the background is more blurred and the focus is on the dinosaur. This photo was taken from about four feet away.

The photo on the right/center was taken by a 17mm lens from only a few inches away. This was taken by a wide-angle lens, which brings out a broader scope; so, you can see a lot more of the background and the dinosaur's proportions are a little more distorted. This can make a lot of difference in your illustrations.

Now compare the two photos on the right. This shows the differences the aperture settings can make. The bottom photo was taken with the aperture set at f2.8. One of the first things that you might notice about the bottom photo is that the dinosaur's left hand is slightly out of focus. Also, you cannot see the table top in the background at all in this photo. In the top photo, in which the aperture is f6.3, the background and the bottom of the photo are much clearer. Most cameras will give you the option to change the aperture. Many smart phones will not, however.

Digital Mattes & Forced Perspective

"Digital Mattes" is terminology typically used by the film industry. This simply means that you use the background as a matte to place the characters into. Take the picture above for example.

The picture of the toy dinosaur was taken on a table. By using Photoshop or a similar program, you can easily take the picture of the dinosaur and place it on a new background. In this case, a picture of the Painted Desert is used as the background; now the picture looks much more realistic. You should also note that the dinosaur was placed on the left-hand side, using the rule of thirds.

PLANNING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS...

Forced Perspective:

Forced perspective is another photography trick you can use. If you look at the photographs above, you will see that the peasants look like they are far away. This is because the figurines are much smaller and are placed closely together, which makes them seem farther away to the viewer. If the photographer had used figures of a similar size to the king and queen, the peasants would have to be set a lot further back to produce the same effect.

Once the picture was taken, the images were silhouetted and then composited over a background. Tweaking the color of green slightly, made it blend in perfectly into the composited background. You will learn more of these tricks as well further on in the course.

It only took a few minutes to set the models up and take the photo, and then a few more to edit it in Photoshop. It is by no means a perfect picture, and it doesn't have to be. It suits the purpose that it is intended for, and with the detail later removed it will make a great illustration. Don't take this process too seriously, and don't make it harder than it has to be. Just have fun with it and try your best to get the end result that you want.

Finding Source Photos

PLANNING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS...

Finding Source Photos:

- In case you need other photos...
    - Visipix.com
    - Usa.gov/Topics/Graphics.shtml
    - En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain_image_resources
    - Public-domain-photos.com
    - Publicphoto.org
    - Commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:CC-PD-Mark&filefrom="KEYWORD"

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You may not have the opportunity to take pictures of the subject that you want. For example, you may need a picture of an eagle but are unable to take one in the area that you are in. That is okay, there are still options out there for you.

One option that you have is to buy the photos that you need at websites like Photos.com. There are, however, a lot of source photos available within the public domain that you can get for free. Not only can you use these photos without cost, you can use change and edit them as needed. Some websites that you can visit for free photos and illustrations include:

Visipix.com – This website is a website with 1.3 million photos and illustrations.

Usa.gov/Topics/Graphics.shtml – This page is also a goldmine. It is a page of links which will lead you to all the different graphics and photographs that the U.S. government has in the public domain.

En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain_image_resources - This is a Wikipedia website which also includes links that will lead you to other websites that offer public domain illustrations and photos.

Public-domain-photos.com – You can find over 5,000 public domain photos at this website.

Publicphoto.org – This is also a website that is very useful in finding public domain photos.
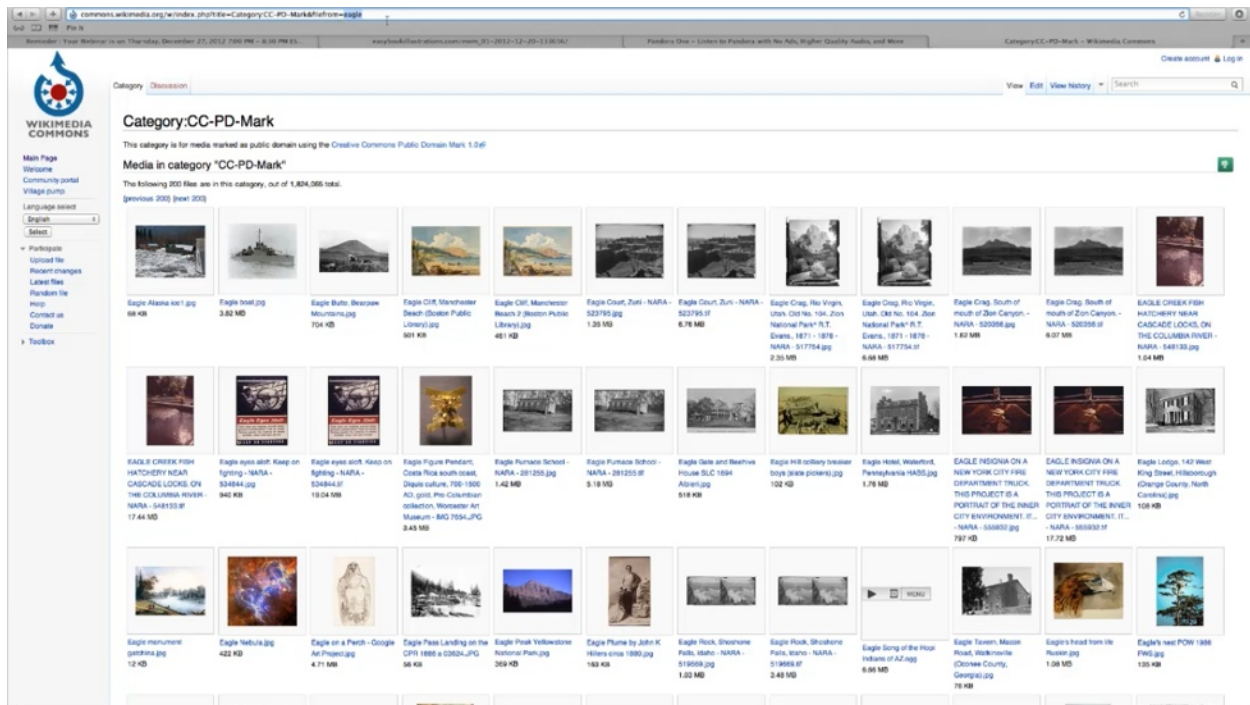
Another website that you can use to find public domain photos is Wikimedia.org, or more specifically:

Commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:CC-PD-Mark&filefrom="KEYWORD"

It isn't easy to find public domain photos in Wikimedia Commons unless you use this URL. That is why it is so long. By replacing "KEYWORD" in the link with the subject that you are looking for, the link will take you to pictures that you are interested in. In other words, if you are looking for photos of eagles, you would type the following into the address bar:
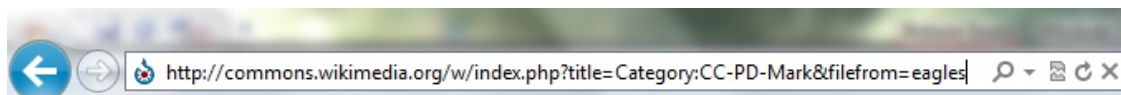
Commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:CC-PD-Mark&filefrom=eagles

If you are looking for pictures of dogs, you would type in:

Commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:CC-PD-Mark&filefrom=dog

Etc…

This listing that comes up is alphabetical. One of the problems with the website is that the results aren't always relevant, and so sometimes it takes some trial and error to find exactly what you want. However, it is a great resource at times, and you can find over 1.8 million pictures/illustrations here. You can also scour through these photos for inspiration.

Choosing a Look

COLOR AND STYLE...

Choosing a "Look":

- Color or Black & White?
- If color, what is your color palate?
- Color must be consistent throughout.
- What illustration style do you want to use?

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One of the things that you must consider as you are choosing your photos is what "look" you are going for. This can sometimes be difficult. However, you want to keep a consistency in your color and style. This is a very important aspect to illustration, especially when it comes to illustrating books. Therefore, your "look" should be one of the first things that you establish.

Therefore, one of the first questions you should ask yourself is whether or not you want your illustrations to be color or black & white. Most people will opt for color, but you should remember that there are some cases where black & white can be very powerful. Many very successful books have been made in only black & white pictures. This is a simple decision, but one that should be made early on.

If you decide to go with color illustrations, then you need to choose a color pallet as soon as possible. This doesn't seem like it is a vital decision to make, but it really is. You don't want, for example, to have 14 photos that are black and gold and then 1 that is black and red. This would look sloppy and inconsistent.

Look at the picture of the cannon above. It used to be a lot brighter, but the illustrator chose to give it a very earthy, muted color tone instead. This would work well in a book about Gettysburg, for example, because the color scheme would be consistent with the subject matter. Each following picture would have carry the same tones as well.

Preparing Your Illustrations…

Color & Tone:

Each of these pictures was taken at Gettysburg, but they were taken at different times. The illustrator could have left the pictures alone, and it still would have worked. However, using the same muted tone in each picture causes them to have a stronger visual impact. Plus, these muted tones work better with these historical-type pictures, because the mind doesn't really connect historical events with bright vibrant colors. We tend to think of the past, particularly in this era, in more earthy-colored tones.

Some people simply go with the colors that are most apparent in their pictures. This is okay, as long as the colors stay consistent. For instance, if you are writing a book about squirrels, then the pictures will probably come out with fairly consistent earthy and natural tones. However, remember that there is no rule that says that you have to stick with those natural tones. You can make these pictures more brightly colored. If you are writing this book for small children, this would both be more fitting and attention grabbing. Remember, overall you are the artist, and you can do whatever you want.

The style that you choose is also imperative. Do you want your illustrations to look like oil paintings, line drawings, or do you want your book to be filled with photographs? There are a lot of different styles to choose from. You will be shown a number of different styles to choose from further on in the course. Most people find a few that resonates with them and use it over and over. There is nothing wrong with that, just go with what you feel works best.

PREPARING YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS...

Lots of Illustration Styles:

There a large number of different styles to choose from, far more than what is shown in the picture up above. It may be hard to see the various styles because they are so small. However, you may be able to see that one looks like it has been sketched, one looks like it has been painted, one looks like it has been done with colored pencils, and one looks like a cartoon-type drawing, and so on. Further on in the course, you will have a chance to learn about these effects. You may also notice that in each picture, the detail has been heavily reduced.

FAQ

What point and shoot camera is good to use, but costs less than $300?

You can typically find good digital cameras for about $100 - $150 at Walmart or Target. A camera doesn't have to be expensive to produce good results. For this type of project you will want to find a point and shoot camera with a decent optical zoom. Look for a 10x optical zoom or greater. In most cases those cameras will also have a macro setting, which is also preferable. You should also look for a camera with a 12-14 megapixel resolution at minimum.

Is resolution or noise typically a problem?

In this process it shouldn't be. Since the detail is being reduced to turn these pictures into illustrations, most of the noise should vanish upon editing.

Should you just snap the picture fast and fix it later?

Sometimes, this is the way to do it. In some respects this work is kind of like planning out a movie, but in a lot simpler way. You are simply trying to visually tell your story. So it takes some forethought, but you don't need to take it all too seriously. There aren't many mistakes that you can make when doing this that can't be fixed later.

I don't have Photoshop, will you also be training on GimpShop?

Yes, there will be an entire module devoted to editing in GimpShop.

What Adobe program should we work with?

A lot of this course is going to involve Photoshop, however, a few things will also be shown in Illustrator. This training is meant to be sensitive to people who don't have the money for more expensive programs, but at the same time will accommodate those who need to use higher-end programs. So, the training will be approached in as many different angles as possible.

It is expensive to get a full-color book printed on-demand in CreateSpace. Is there a cheaper way?

CreateSpace is probably the cheapest way to do so. Publishing in full-color can be very expensive. However, at CreateSpace 76 page full-colored book will usually cost $6.00. That is very low. Compared to other options out there, CreateSpace is really one of the best ways to go if you are going to print in color.

Can wrap-around copy be used with these illustrations?

The sky is the limit, and you don't have to have all of these illustrations full-page or boxed in. There are lots of ways to style your illustrations and have them interact with the text. The goal of this course is to show as many different approaches and styles in illustration as possible. This way everyone won't be locked into all of their books looking the same.

Can this be done with Paint, or do you absolutely have to use GimpShop or Photoshop?

Paint.net has many of the same features of these other programs. Any program that supports layers should allow you to achieve the same results as those presented here.

What is a Macro Setting?

A macro setting is a lens or a setting on your camera that allows you to focus more closely. For example, the closest you could typically be to take the picture of the dinosaur seen above is about three feet. With a macro lens, however, you could take the picture at about an inch away. So, essentially a macro lens or a macro setting will allow you to get closer to your subject, which means that you can make the image bigger in the view finder.

How to get your photos to at least 300 dpi? CreateSpace requires this in order to produce a good quality book.

If you are taking with at least a 12 megapixel camera, your source image will have plenty of resolution to work with. If you find a low resolution picture, don't worry. In some cases, it is best to actually start off with a low-resolution picture. You will find that a lot of the editing that we will do will actually increase the resolution of your pictures.

I have a Lego train set under my tree? I have been thinking about taking some pictures of Gumby and Pokey and building a story around them. I take it that there may be trademark issues in doing this. Is that true?

Yes, probably so. There is a potential for trademark problems there. Any identifiable characters are best to steer clear of. In other words, you want to stay away from trademarked characters such as G.I. Joe and Disney character. You can take pictures of some products without any legal problems though. A way to make sure you are safe doing this is by searching specific objects like a train or a camera on stock photo sites.

They have to have legal clearance before they can post these pictures, and to do this they will remove trademark logos. Since there is no identifying trademark on there, they can get away with it. So, there are ways to get around some things, the exception being trademarked characters.

If you take shots of real people in public and apply cartoon-like filters, can you use them in a book without the permission of the subject?

Absolutely. The reason is that there are laws in place that protect photographers when shooting in public. The only way that they can stop you from using their photo (if you took it in public) is to come up and ask you specifically not to use it. Unless they do this they cannot sue you or anything like that. Now, if you wanted to sell that photo on a stock photo site, you couldn't do that without a model release.

I have Paintshop Pro. Would that work for some of these effects?

Absolutely.

Will you show us how to get the photos into Photoshop?

Definitely. The effects that were showed in the promo webinar will be shown again because there is more to those than what was previously shown.

How long does it is usually take a professional to illustrate a book? How long would it generally take a beginner?

There are, of course, a number of variables such as how many illustrations are going to be used. One thing that we are trying to do in this course is to track the steps, so that you can repeat them very quickly. You will also learn how to edit a photo, and then follow the exact same process to do a number of other photos at the same time, saving you a lot of time.

How do you achieve the best dpi to be used for Kindle illustrations?

I believe Amazon recommends 1600 pixels wide. If you go for this, it really doesn't matter whether it is 72 dpi or 150. There is really no need to use more resolution than what is necessary.

Is Photoshop necessary to create these illustrations?

In some cases yes, and in some cases no. Again, a lot of different approaches will be used, and many of them will be independent of Photoshop.

Will Photoshop CS 5.5 work with these illustration methods?

Yes.

Have you worked at all with SnapSeat?

Yes. You can use this and other apps to do some of the illustration techniques that we are covering. Unfortunately, we will not have time to cover a lot of apps in this webinar, however.

Are there any of these products that can be purchased by subscription?

Adobe Creative Cloud is a good program to use. When you purchase this, you will have access to all of the Adobe software including Photoshop. Also, doing this will give you access to all of the latest products and updates available. You can purchase this for as low as $30 a month, which is no more expensive than a few cups of Starbucks coffee a week.

In many children's books, illustrations carry more pastel colors. Can Photoshop accommodate these?

Yes, and we will be covering how to do this.

It is rumored that there is going to be a program available for searching public domain photos. Is this true?

It is true that this may soon be available, but right now it is not ready for purchase.

What is the URL for the member's area?

It is the same URL that you used when you registered for the webinar. Therefore, you should be able to click on 'Show History' and find the pages that you have previously been to, even if it was a few weeks back.

Will the PowerPoint files of these lessons be available in the member's area?

Yes.

Is there anything that members should do in preparation to next week's training?

Yes. It would be helpful for you to share some of the ideas that you are working on. This way the training can be based on some of your ideas. This will make these lessons easier to make and more helpful to you.

What is your photography course called?

There are actually two. One is called Camera Cash Strategies. It is at Cameracashstrategies.com. The larger course is called Photo Profit Secrets, which can be found at photoprofitsecrets.com. This course covers a lot of photography method and technique as well as how to make profits with your camera.

Do the laws that protect photographers also apply in the UK?

There are probably some differences. One way you can you can find out about them is to get in touch with local photographers societies and affiliations. They should be able to help you with any specifics.

Does Photoshop Elements have some of the same features that will be used here?

For this process Photoshop Elements should have everything you need as well.

How do you recommend practicing and learning to use PhotoShop?

Adobe itself has videos which will help you to learn to use PhotoShop. You can also visit Lynda.com to find PhotoShop tutorials. YouTube has a ton of tutorials on how to do specific things on PhotoShop as well.

How do you access the Facebook group?

Go to the download page and you will find a link to join the Facebook Group.

If you find a public domain photo and edit it, do you have to give credit to the original author?

No. You are free of having to give credit if you edit it.

Could I use pictures of Monster High Dolls to illustrate my book?

No, these will be trademarked. If you find generic products, they are usually not protected. You can also build your own models too.