
UNDERSTANDING COLOR
SRQ
photoschool.com

What is color?

Wikipedia: All languages that have two “basic” color names distinguishing dark/cool colors from bright/warm colors. The next colors to be distinguished are usually red and then yellow or green. All languages with six “basic” colors include black, white, red, green, blue, and yellow.

Crayola: Color is the aspect of things that is caused by differing qualities of light being reflected or emitted by them. To see color, you have to have light. When light shines on an object some colors bounce off the object and others are absorbed by it. Our eyes only see the colors that are bounced off or reflected.

Why should we care about color?

Color contributes to what our images say, what emotions they convey and to what it evokes in the people who view them....

As much a part of visual communication as composition and light but rarely discussed, in fact most photographers including professionals have very little understanding of color at all....

Many photographers view color as an afterthought and that's what I'm here today to discuss....



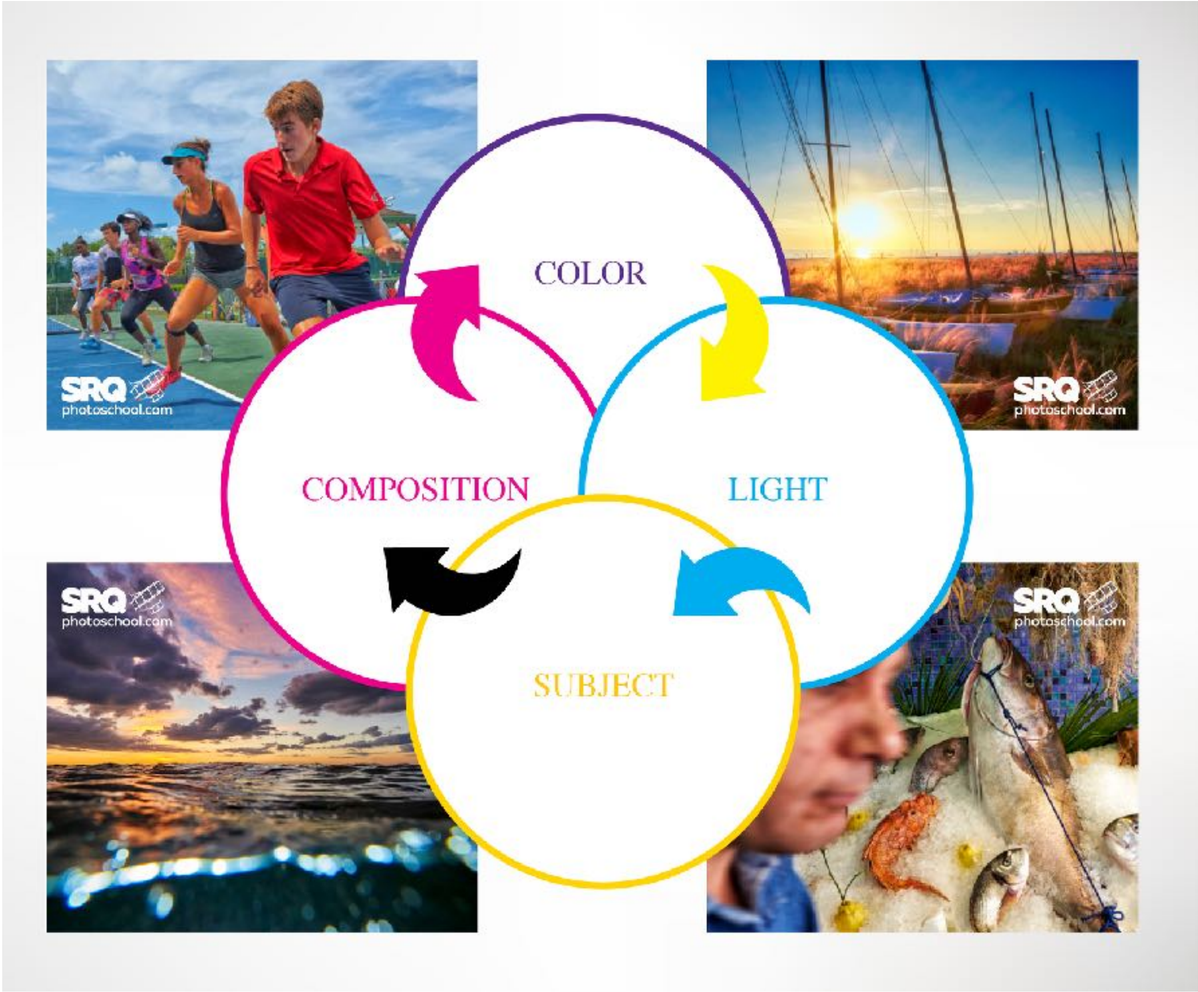
WHAT MAKES A COMPELLING IMAGE?

Taking the ordinary and presenting it in an extraordinary way…

My background in marketing and advertising over the past 25 years has presented some enormous challenges as I was tasked to market products and services in some very competitive fields.

Photography has been and probably will be the primary vehicle to quickly and compellingly tell a story or communicate a message to an audience.

I've discovered that there are 4 ingredients to a great image. As you can see these are all non-technical attributes of a photograph. Most modern cameras and even phones are capable of capturing a reasonably good image without you needing much understanding of whats going on.



THINKDIFFERENT

Approach your photography with these 4 concepts quickly running through your mind. Each scene or situation will have one (or more if you are lucky) present. If not, leave your camera on your shoulder and wait for the next opportunity. The more selective you are those images you do capture will be far superior to those of the past. As we are learning today **COLOR** is the component on top of my list that I look for prior to anything else.

USING COLOR EFFECTIVELY: first steps

AWARENESS...

The very first step towards dealing with color creatively and effectively is to simply be aware of it and to be aware that whatever color enters the frame will have an impact on the photograph!

PURPOSE AND INTENT...

The same as composition and light, we need to take control as much as possible over the color that ends up within the frame and we have to be conscious of whether it serves the overall purpose of the image or not.

DEVELOPING SENSIBILITY...

Having photographic sensibility towards color basically means having a deep understanding of how the colors in any given scene will work within the frame. This is developed over time and the first step is to look at some of the masters of color. The second is to begin to look at other images with color in mind.

Paul Nicklen (wildlife) www.paulnicklen.com

Steve McCurry (travel) www.stevemccurry.com

David Muench (landscape) www.muenchphotography.com

Jill Greenberg (landscape) www.jillgreenberg.com

Pete McBride (all) www.petemcbride.com

IDEAS & THEORIES ABOUT COLOR

VISUAL WEIGHT

The main premise behind the idea of visual weight is that in each photograph some elements will demand or grab our attention more than others – or another way of putting it is to say that some elements will be more “visually heavy” than others.




OLD
RESTER





EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Color is strongly associated with feelings, moods and sensations.

Subject matter and composition also play their part in shaping the emotional impact of a photograph, color is the quintessential element which has the capacity to add a whole new dimension and to make that emotional impact truly powerful. The reason for this is quite simple:

> “color is strongly associated with feelings, moods and sensations”

Many color theories are too subjective, culture specific and questionable to base an approach on. There are, however, those associations which have pretty much been ingrained in our minds, probably because they are influenced by nature and aspects of life common to everybody.

These associations are what we need to remember when intending to convey moods and emotions through color.

More generally speaking, dark colors set a mysterious mood – the association with the unknown.
Dull colors create a sombre mood, while bright and vivid colors are associated with energy, joy, hope, life and excitement.

Let's look at some more...





RED

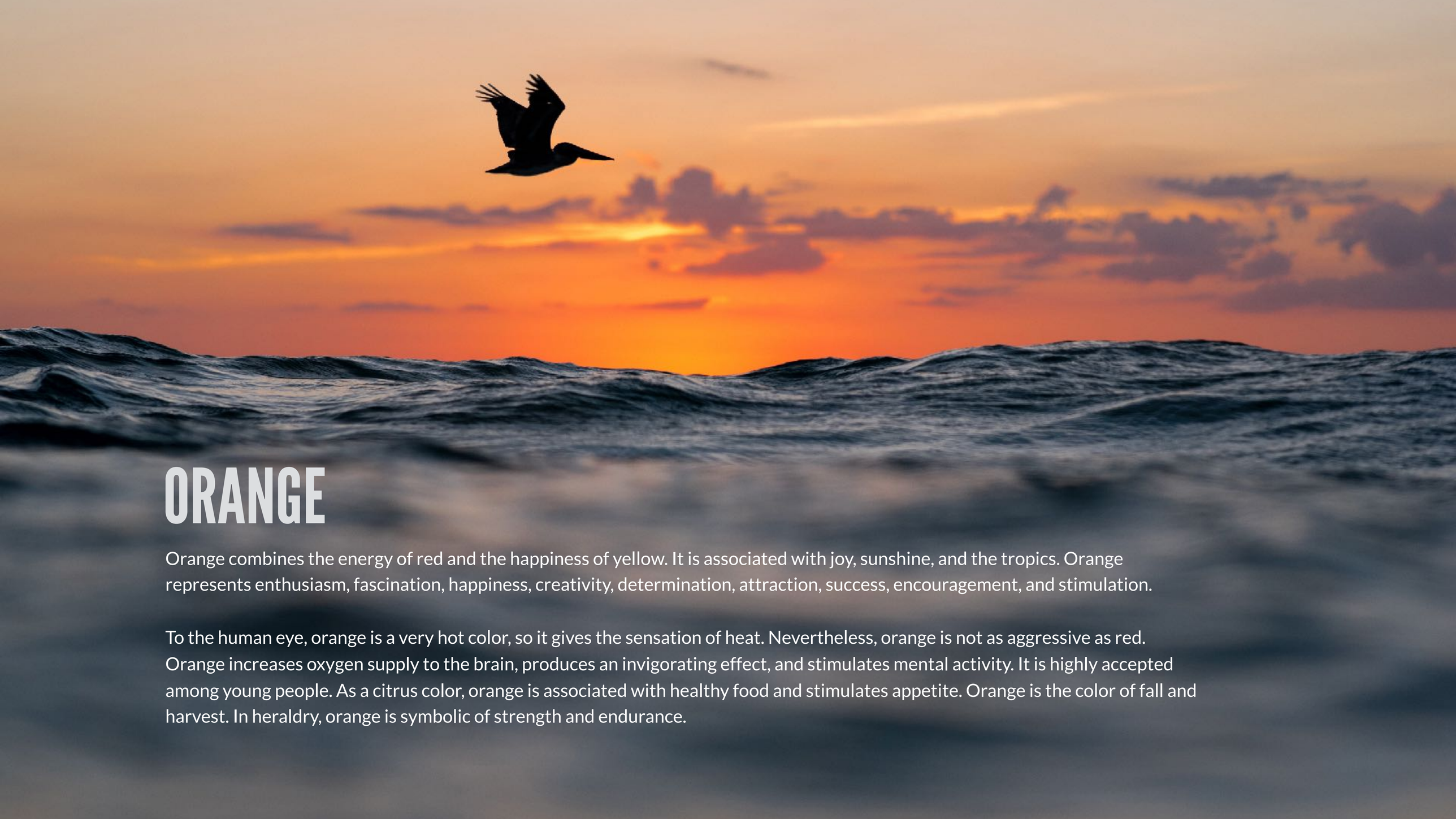


Red is the color of fire and blood, so it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, power, determination as well as passion, desire, and love. It is also a well known fact that the color red, along with it's triadic partner yellow (more about that later) triggers hunger.

Red is a very emotionally intense color. It enhances human metabolism, increases respiration rate, and raises blood pressure. It has very high visibility, which is why stop signs, stoplights, and fire equipment are usually painted red. In heraldry, red is used to indicate courage. It is a color found in many national flags.

Red is widely used to indicate danger (high voltage signs, traffic lights). This color is also commonly associated with energy.

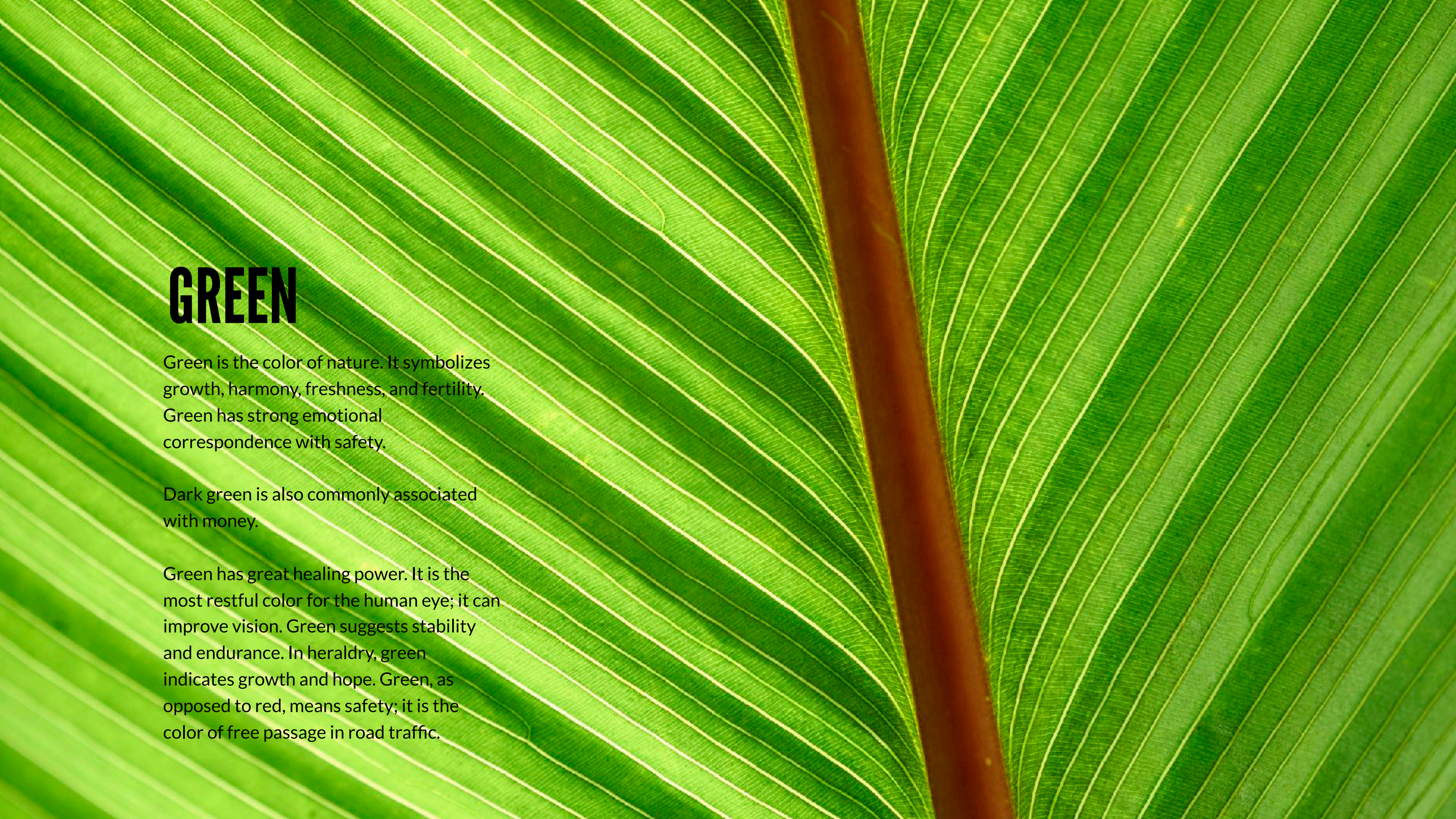




ORANGE

Orange combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow. It is associated with joy, sunshine, and the tropics. Orange represents enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, creativity, determination, attraction, success, encouragement, and stimulation.

To the human eye, orange is a very hot color, so it gives the sensation of heat. Nevertheless, orange is not as aggressive as red. Orange increases oxygen supply to the brain, produces an invigorating effect, and stimulates mental activity. It is highly accepted among young people. As a citrus color, orange is associated with healthy food and stimulates appetite. Orange is the color of fall and harvest. In heraldry, orange is symbolic of strength and endurance.



GREEN

Green is the color of nature. It symbolizes growth, harmony, freshness, and fertility. Green has strong emotional correspondence with safety.

Dark green is also commonly associated with money.

Green has great healing power. It is the most restful color for the human eye; it can improve vision. Green suggests stability and endurance. In heraldry, green indicates growth and hope. Green, as opposed to red, means safety; it is the color of free passage in road traffic.

BLUE

Blue is the color of the sky and sea. It is often associated with depth and stability. It symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth, and heaven.

Blue is considered beneficial to the mind and body. It slows human metabolism and produces a calming effect. Blue is strongly associated with tranquility and calmness.

Blue is a masculine color; according to studies, it is highly accepted among males. Dark blue is associated with depth, expertise, and stability; it is a preferred color for corporate America.



YELLOW

Yellow is the color of sunshine. It’s associated with joy, happiness, intellect, and energy.

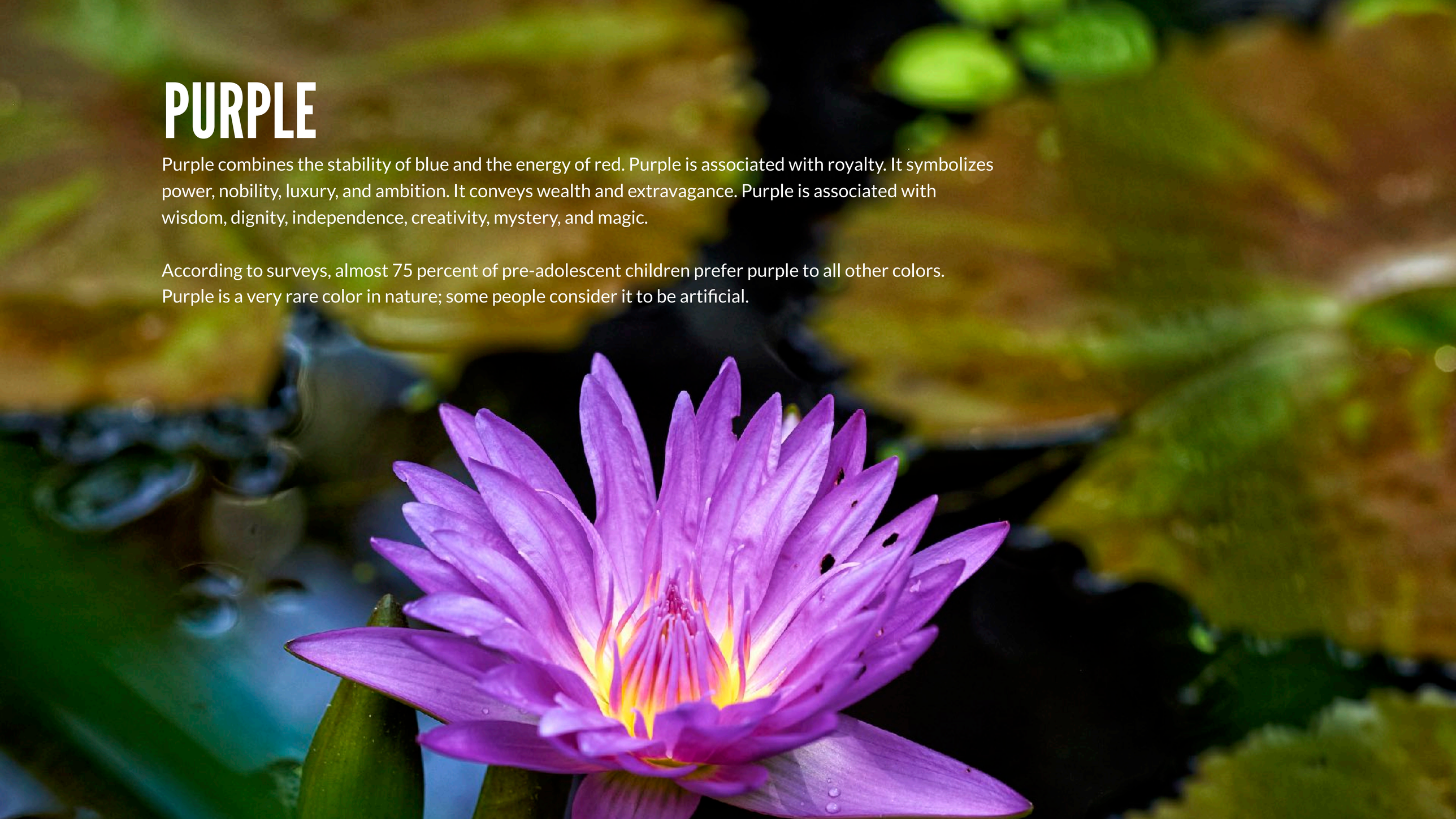
Yellow produces a warming effect, arouses cheerfulness, stimulates mental activity, and generates muscle energy. Yellow is often associated with food. Bright, pure yellow is an attention getter, which is the reason taxicabs are painted this color. When overused, yellow may have a disturbing effect; it is known that babies cry more in yellow rooms. Yellow is seen before other colors when placed against black; this combination is often used to issue a warning. In heraldry, yellow indicates honor and loyalty.



PURPLE

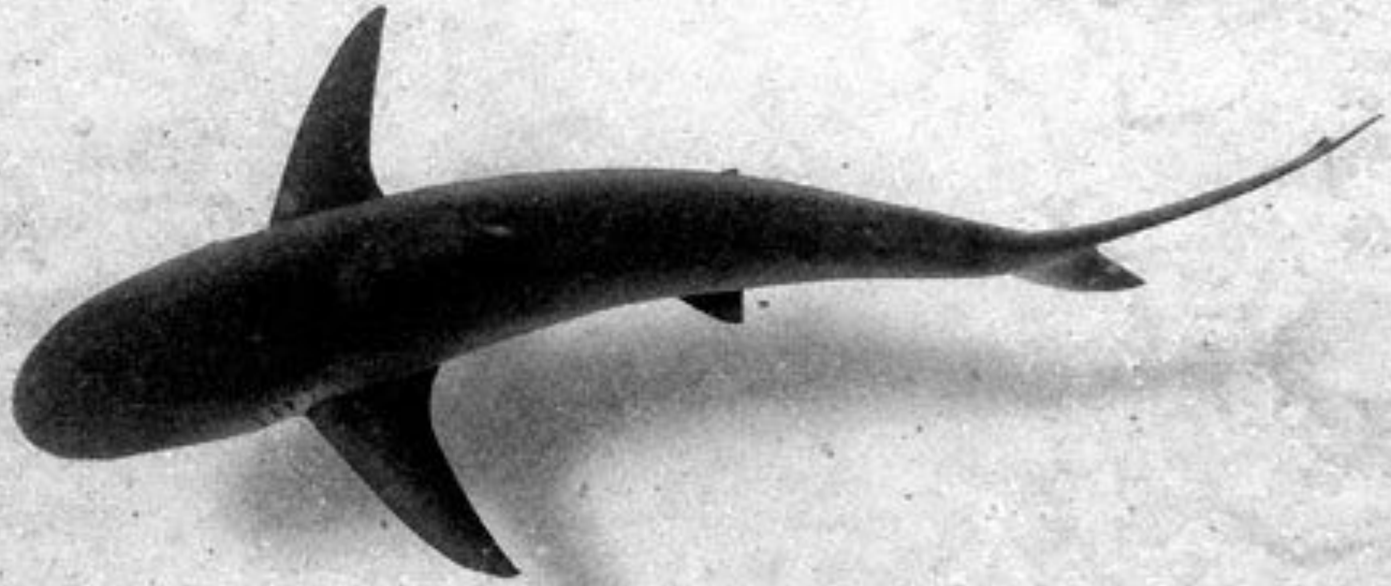
Purple combines the stability of blue and the energy of red. Purple is associated with royalty. It symbolizes power, nobility, luxury, and ambition. It conveys wealth and extravagance. Purple is associated with wisdom, dignity, independence, creativity, mystery, and magic.

According to surveys, almost 75 percent of pre-adolescent children prefer purple to all other colors. Purple is a very rare color in nature; some people consider it to be artificial.



BLACK

Black is associated with power, elegance, formality, death, evil, and mystery. Black is a mysterious color associated with fear and the unknown (black holes). It usually has a negative connotation (blacklist, black humor, ‘black death’). Black denotes strength and authority; it is considered to be a very formal, elegant, and prestigious color (black tie, black Mercedes). In heraldry, black is the symbol of grief.





TIP:

Like salt, a little color goes a long way…

Most of the world’s most powerful images have very few distinct colors competing for your attention. You’ll notice this concept in all forms of both motion and still photography as well as advertising, movies, arts, fashion and decor.

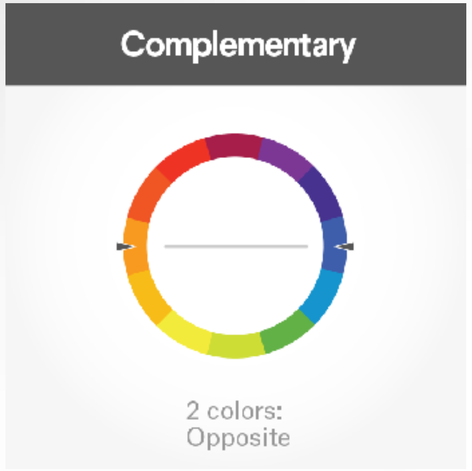


So why is the color wheel important and choosing the right colors for your image?

The first color wheel was designed by Sir Isaac Newton in 1666 so it absolutely predates your introduction to it in kindergarten. Artists and designers still use it to develop color harmonies, mixing and palettes.

The color wheel consists of three primary colors (red, yellow, blue), three secondary colors (colors created when primary colors are mixed: green, orange, purple) and six tertiary colors (colors made from primary and secondary colors, such as blue-green or red-violet).

Draw a line through the center of the wheel, and you'll separate the warm colors (reds, oranges, yellows) from cool colors (blues, greens, purples).

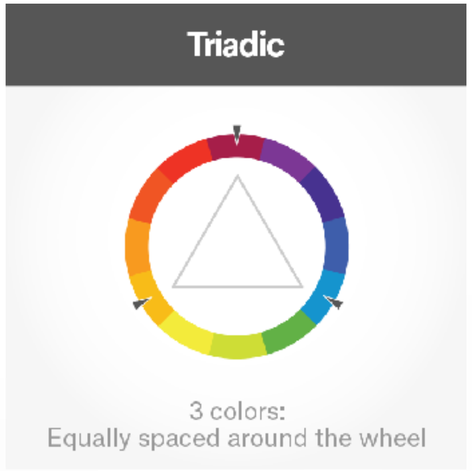




Complementary colors are opposites on the color wheel—red and green, for example. Because there's a sharp contrast between the two colors, they can really make imagery pop, but overusing them can get tiresome. Think any shopping mall in December. That being said, using a complementary color scheme in your image makes for a powerful statement especially if your composition is simple

Analogous colors sit next to one another on the color wheel—red, orange and yellow, for example. When creating an analogous color scheme, one color will dominate, one will support and another will accent. Analogous color schemes are very calming and I like to use them when my subject or composition are particularly strong and I don't want to distract the viewer by having too much color compete with the overall message.

Triadic colors are evenly spaced around the color wheel and tend to be very bright and dynamic. Using a triadic color scheme in your image creates visual contrast and harmony simultaneously, making each object in your composition stand out while making the overall message pop.





LIGHT EFFECTS COLOR

Selective Focus

Direction of Light

Controlling Light

Post Production Lighting

Post Production Color

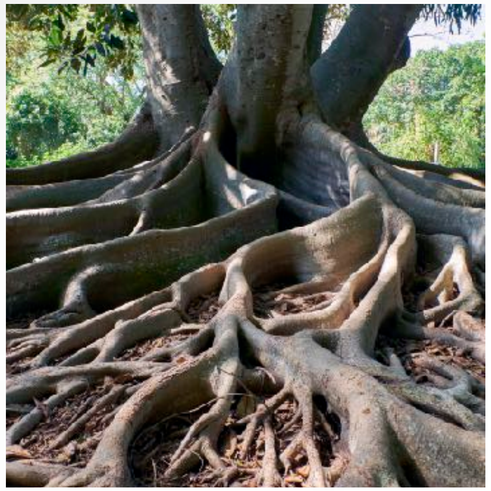
COLOR

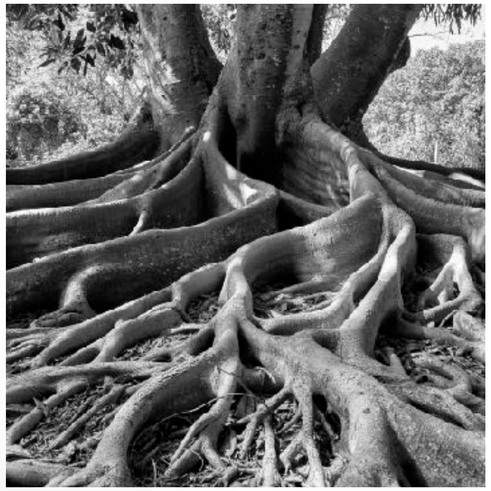


BW

Think shapes, forms and textures







Color photography is the strongest when trying to accurately reproduce a scene because it captures the full spectrum of color present.

“Black and white photography focuses on tone, texture and shape”

The difficulty is deciding which one takes precedence in a color vs. black and white — and how you capture it.

Shoot in Color allows you to capture the light in three different channels: red, blue, and green.

ISO No Longer Matters - a lot of grain in an image which looks especially bad in brown area of color photos.

Composition - more important in black and white because the difference between shades and tones is greater accentuated; you'll need to re-think much of your composition

Texture - any image with strong textures but weak color is best seen in black and white; the differences in the greyscale is much more noticeable.

Color Difference - photos with very small changes in color should be shot in black and white.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Perry Johnson, Photographer, Graphic Designer, Marketing Strategist



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"A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn in no other way."

— Mark Twain

SRQ Photo School was founded on Perry's love to share knowledge with others. Photography has become quite a solitary occupation in recent years with the ever increasing emphasis on post processing and edits. Teaching somehow clarifies the ever evolving industry and in many ways helps to keep it simple by breaking it down to its most basic elements.

SRQ Photo School presents private photography instruction and custom photography workshops, like the one here today on a variety of topics. All are intended to simplify and clarify photography and designed to inspire you creativity and passion for this most noble art.

SRQ photoschool.com