Unit 05: Digital Imagery

Content Area: **Fine Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

In this unit, students will master the foundational tools and non-destructive workflows of Adobe Photoshop, the industry standard for digital imaging and photo editing. Through guided demonstrations and hands-on projects, students will learn to efficiently build and refine complex digital artwork using layers, selection tools, masking, and color adjustments. By applying these techniques to solve creative design challenges, students will develop technical precision and a strong understanding of visual communication. Ultimately, this unit provides a robust foundation in digital manipulation, preparing students for real-world applications in graphic design, photography, advertising, and digital media production.

Revised: August 2026

Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

Essential Questions:

- How has Adobe Photoshop transformed the fields of graphic design, photography, advertising, and digital media production?
- In what ways has Photoshop changed how designers and photographers create, edit, and communicate visual content?
- Why are many professional photographs edited or enhanced before being published online or in print media?
- How do photo editing and digital manipulation improve the quality, effectiveness, and communication of visual imagery?
- What ethical responsibilities do designers and photographers have when altering images digitally?
- How has Photoshop influenced society's perception of beauty, reality, advertising, and social media?
- What positive and negative social impacts have resulted from the widespread use of digital image manipulation?
- How can Photoshop be used both creatively and responsibly in professional design and media industries?
- In what ways does digital editing blur the line between reality and artistic interpretation?
- How do designers use Photoshop tools to create visual storytelling, solve creative challenges, and communicate ideas effectively?
- How does the integration of artificial intelligence and generative art in Photoshop impact the authenticity of digital media and the role of the designer?

Enduring Understandings:

- Adobe Photoshop has had a transformative impact on the graphic design industry by revolutionizing the way designers create, edit, and manipulate digital imagery. It has become one of the most widely used and influential tools in visual communication, allowing designers to produce professional-quality work for advertising, photography, web design, social media, film, and print media. Photoshop has expanded creative possibilities by giving artists and designers the ability to combine images, enhance visual storytelling, and develop highly polished digital compositions with precision and efficiency.
- Photoshop is considered an essential industry-standard tool for students pursuing careers in graphic design, photography, marketing, digital media, and related creative fields. However, Photoshop is far more than simply a program used to enhance or "glamorize" photographs. It is a powerful creative platform used for image compositing, digital illustration, branding, visual effects, retouching, typography integration, and conceptual design. Professional designers use Photoshop to solve visual communication challenges, create engaging media content, and communicate ideas effectively across a wide range of industries and digital platforms.
- Understanding Photoshop allows students to develop both technical and creative problem-solving skills while gaining insight into how digital imagery influences communication, advertising, entertainment, and modern culture.

Objectives

Students Will Know:

- The wide range of applications and creative uses of Adobe Photoshop within the fields of graphic design, photography, advertising, digital media, marketing, and visual communication. Students will develop an understanding of how Photoshop is used professionally for photo editing, image compositing, digital illustration, branding, special effects, and multimedia production.
- The foundational functions and tools of Adobe Photoshop, including selections, layers, masks, adjustments, filters, transformations, retouching tools, and blending techniques. Students will learn how these tools work together to create professional-quality digital artwork and visually effective compositions.
- How to render and manipulate digital images through techniques such as color correction, image

enhancement, compositing, masking, and visual effects. Students will explore how designers and photographers use rendering and editing processes to improve image quality, create realistic visual scenes, and communicate ideas more effectively through digital media.

- How to work efficiently and professionally within the Photoshop workspace by developing organized workflows, understanding file management, utilizing keyboard shortcuts, and applying non-destructive editing techniques. Students will learn strategies that improve productivity, accuracy, and overall effectiveness while working on complex digital design projects.
- How professional designers use Photoshop as both a technical and creative problem-solving tool to transform ideas into engaging visual communication across print and digital platforms.

Students Will Be Skilled At:

- Fundamental Photoshop functions and workflows, including how to effectively work with layers to organize and build complex digital compositions. Students will learn how to create, duplicate, lock, unlock, hide, delete, rename, and rearrange layers within the Layers panel while understanding the importance of non-destructive editing techniques in professional digital design. Instruction will also introduce students to layer styles and effects, including shadows, glows, overlays, and blending options used to enhance visual communication and add depth to digital artwork.
- The use of Photoshop's selection tools and an understanding of when and why each tool is most effective within the editing process. Students will explore the Marquee Selection tools, Lasso tools, Magic Wand, Quick Selection Tool, and the Pen Tool as a precision selection method. Emphasis will be placed on accuracy, efficiency, and selecting appropriate tools based on image complexity, edge quality, and desired editing outcomes.
- Techniques for modifying and manipulating selected areas of an image, including copying, moving, transforming, rotating, resizing, recoloring, deleting, lightening, darkening, and adjusting transparency levels. Students will learn how selective editing allows designers to control composition, emphasis, visual hierarchy, and realism within digital artwork.
- An introduction to the primary tools within the Photoshop toolbar and their practical applications in digital imaging and design. Students will gain hands-on experience using tools such as the Burn and Dodge tools for tonal adjustments, the Eraser tool for image editing, the Brush tool and its customizable edge qualities for painting and retouching, the Type Tool for typography integration, the Move Tool for composition adjustments, transformation and scaling tools, the Crop Tool for image framing, and foreground/background color controls for painting and editing. Additional instruction will include the use of rulers, guides, workspace organization, and keyboard shortcuts that improve workflow efficiency and professional productivity.
- Creating realistic and visually cohesive imagery through the combination and compositing of multiple images. Students will learn how to blend photographs, adjust lighting and color consistency, refine edges, and manipulate scale and perspective in order to create believable and visually effective digital scenes. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how professional designers and digital artists use compositing techniques to create conceptual imagery, advertisements, and photo manipulations.
- Managing digital files and understanding the purpose of different file formats used in graphic design and digital media production. Students will learn how to properly save, export, and organize files in formats such as PSD, JPEG, and PDF while understanding the advantages, limitations, and professional uses of each file type in both print and digital workflows.
- Understanding pixel dimensions, image resolution, aspect ratios, and file sizes in relation to digital design and media production. Students will examine how image quality, resolution, and document setup affect the final outcome of print and screen-based projects. Instruction will also address the importance of optimizing file sizes for efficient storage, sharing, and professional production

standards.

- Editing and utilizing images sourced from the internet while discussing ethical considerations, copyright awareness, and responsible digital media practices. Students will learn how to properly incorporate external imagery into design projects while understanding the importance of image quality, attribution, and legal considerations in professional creative work.
- Developing efficient workflow habits and technical problem-solving skills within Photoshop through guided practice, experimentation, and creative application. Students will strengthen their ability to navigate the program confidently while applying industry-standard digital editing techniques to a variety of visual communication projects.

Learning Plan

- Introduce and review the unit's essential questions, encouraging students to make connections between digital imaging, visual communication, and creative problem-solving throughout the course of the unit. Discussions will focus on how Adobe Photoshop is used professionally in graphic design, photography, advertising, entertainment, and digital media production.
- Teacher-led daily demonstrations introducing the tools, workspace, and functions of Adobe Photoshop through interactive instruction using the classroom whiteboard and projected software demonstrations. Students will explore the purpose and application of Photoshop tools while developing an understanding of professional digital editing workflows and design techniques.
- During each instructional presentation, students will complete guided notes and handout activities designed to reinforce technical vocabulary, software navigation, and key digital imaging concepts. Students will maintain organized reference materials that can be used throughout the unit as they develop their technical proficiency.
- The instructor will introduce a focused series of Photoshop tools and features each day, gradually building student understanding and confidence with the software. Daily instruction will include demonstrations of selection tools, brushes, transforms, retouching tools, masking, blending modes, filters, adjustments, layer management, and image manipulation techniques. Following demonstrations, students will be provided structured exploration time to practice and experiment with the tools independently and at their own pace.
- Each class session will begin with a brief review of previously introduced tools and concepts before progressing to new material. These review activities will reinforce skill retention, strengthen technical understanding, and encourage students to apply previously learned techniques within new design scenarios.
- Throughout instruction, students will participate in guided, step-by-step exercises alongside the instructor. These exercises will focus on understanding the functions of layers, layer styles, adjustment layers, selections, masking, and the features available within Photoshop's top menu bar. Emphasis will be placed on non-destructive editing techniques, organization of digital files, and efficient workflow practices commonly used in professional design environments.
- Collaborative class activities and discussions will support problem-solving and creative experimentation using Photoshop tools and techniques. Students will analyze how digital editing choices affect composition, realism, visual impact, and communication within a design.
- As a class, students will participate in an extended guided project lasting approximately one to two weeks in which they collaboratively create a digital scene using the Photoshop skills and tools

introduced throughout the unit. This structured, step-by-step process will allow students to apply and reinforce their understanding of selections, layers, blending, transformations, effects, and compositing techniques within a realistic design scenario. The project will demonstrate how individual Photoshop tools work together to create cohesive and visually effective digital artwork.

- Following the guided class project, students will independently create their own original digital scene from concept to completion. Students will be encouraged to apply as many Photoshop tools and techniques as possible while demonstrating creativity, technical proficiency, and effective visual communication. Emphasis will be placed on experimentation, problem-solving, and the ability to independently utilize digital editing tools within a professional design process.
- During project development, students will engage in peer discussions and collaborative critiques in which they explain their editing processes, demonstrate how they achieved specific manipulations and effects, and reflect on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement within their work. These discussions will encourage the use of professional design vocabulary while strengthening critical thinking and communication skills.
- The unit will include a variety of creative and technical projects designed to develop student understanding of digital image manipulation and visual storytelling. Projects may include, but are not limited to:
    - CD or Album Jacket Design
    - Movie Poster Design
    - Visual Pun Compositions
    - Facial Manipulation and Retouching
    - Greeting Card Design
    - Impossible Scenario Compositions
    - Space and Environment Creation
    - Cross-Animal Manipulation and Hybrid Creatures
- These projects will provide students with opportunities to apply Photoshop techniques in increasingly complex and creative ways while exploring composition, typography, color correction, image blending, photo realism, and conceptual design.
- Ongoing teacher facilitation, individualized instruction, and technical support will be provided throughout the unit to address varying student ability levels and encourage both artistic growth and mastery of industry-standard digital imaging software.
- Student work will be evaluated through teacher assessment, peer critique, and student self-assessment using rubrics aligned with unit objectives, creativity, craftsmanship, technical skill development, and effectiveness of visual communication.

Assessment

Formative

Students will be evaluated through daily exit tickets, quizzes on design principles and Adobe Illustrator, and participation in guided discussions. Additionally, they will engage in peer critiques and instructor conferences to refine their logo concepts and demonstrate their overall understanding.

Summative

Design and create a comprehensive digital portfolio piece accompanied by an artist statement detailing the Photoshop techniques (layers, masks, blending modes) utilized in the final

composition.

Benchmark assessments: Midterm Exam/Final Exam

Alternative Assessment

Present the project to peers and/or the community.

Complete writing prompt: Complete writing prompt: Analyze a professional advertising campaign and write a critique detailing the likely digital manipulation techniques used and the ethical implications of the final image.

Materials

-
    - Online design examples, tutorials, and step-by-step instructional guides demonstrating the use of Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop tools, design techniques, and professional graphic design practices.
    - Teacher-created demonstrations and instructional presentations modeling design concepts, software techniques, creative problem-solving, and project expectations.
    - Former student examples showcasing successful projects, logo designs, layouts, and applications of the elements and principles of design to provide students with reference points and inspiration.
    - Professional graphic design samples from advertisements, logos, branding materials, websites, posters, packaging, and digital media used for analysis and discussion.
    - Printed and digital handouts covering Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop tools, keyboard shortcuts, vocabulary, design terminology, project guidelines, and design process strategies.
    - Class notes and guided lecture materials related to the elements and principles of design, typography, color theory, composition, branding, and visual communication.
    - Instructional reference sheets and design process organizers to support brainstorming, sketching, concept development, and project planning.
    - Assessment rubrics outlining project expectations, grading criteria, technical skills, creativity, craftsmanship, and participation requirements.
    - Critique guides and peer review worksheets to support constructive feedback, reflection, and discussion during the design process.
    - Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop software for creating digital illustrations, logos, compositions, and design projects.
    - Computers or laptops capable of running Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop and supporting digital design work.
    - Digital projector or interactive display for teacher demonstrations, presentations, and group critiques.
    - Sketchbooks, drawing paper, or brainstorming worksheets for thumbnail sketches, concept development, and planning activities.

Standards

1.5.12prof.Cr	Creating
	Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed. Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative art-making goals.
1.5.12prof.Cr1a	Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.
1.5.12prof.Cr1b	Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art and design.
1.5.12prof.Cr2a	Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.
1.5.12prof.Cr2c	Collaboratively develop a proposal for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place.
TECH.K-12.1.4	Innovative Designer
	Students use a variety of technologies within a design process to identify and solve problems by creating new, useful or imaginative solutions.
TECH.K-12.1.4.a	know and use a deliberate design process for generating ideas, testing theories, creating innovative artifacts or solving authentic problems.
TECH.K-12.1.4.b	select and use digital tools to plan and manage a design process that considers design constraints and calculated risks.
TECH.K-12.1.4.c	develop, test and refine prototypes as part of a cyclical design process.
1.5.12prof.Pr4a	Analyze, select and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation.
1.5.12prof.Pr5a	Analyze and evaluate the reasons and ways an exhibition is presented.
1.5.12prof.Pr6a	Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural or political beliefs and understandings.
1.5.12prof.Re7a	Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
1.5.12prof.Re7b	Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual arts.
1.5.12prof.Re8	Interpreting intent and meaning.
1.5.12prof.Re8a	Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.
1.5.12prof.Re9a	Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.
1.5.12prof.Cn	Connecting
1.5.12prof.Cn10a	Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.
1.5.12prof.Cn11a	Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions and history may influence personal responses to art.
1.5.12prof.Cn11b	Describe how knowledge of global issues, including climate change, may influence personal responses to art.
I	Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.
I.A.2	Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.
I.B.1	Using evidence to investigate questions.
I.B.2	Devising and implementing a plan to fill knowledge gaps.

V	Explore: Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.
IV.B	Learners gather information appropriate to the task by:
IV.C	Learners exchange information resources within and beyond their learning community by:
III	Collaborate: Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.

Integrated Accommodation and Modifications, Special Education students, English Language Learners, At-Risk Students, Gifted and Talented students, Career Education, and those with 504s

Instructional Accommodations

- Provide step-by-step written and visual instructions for all design projects and software demonstrations.
- Break larger assignments into smaller, manageable tasks with interim deadlines and check-ins.
- Use modeling and teacher demonstrations before independent student work.
- Provide guided notes, vocabulary lists, and graphic organizers for lectures and presentations.
- Offer repeated directions and clarify expectations verbally and visually.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary related to graphic design, Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop tools, and design principles.
- Allow students to access recorded demonstrations or tutorial videos for review at their own pace.
- Provide exemplars and sample projects to reinforce expectations and concepts.
- Use frequent comprehension checks during instruction and demonstrations.
- Provide one-on-one or small-group instructional support when needed.

Assignment and Assessment Modifications

- Allow extended time for quizzes, projects, and class assignments.
- Reduce the number of required design variations or sketches without compromising learning objectives.
- Modify project complexity based on student ability levels while maintaining core standards.
- Allow oral explanations or presentations in place of written reflections when appropriate.
- Provide alternative assessments such as guided critiques, interviews, or portfolio conferences.
- Use simplified rubrics with clearly defined criteria and visual supports.
- Permit revisions and resubmissions after feedback and teacher conferencing.
- Grade based on individual growth, effort, and mastery of essential skills when appropriate.

Technology and Software Supports

- Provide access to assistive technology tools, including text-to-speech and speech-to-text software.
- Allow use of adaptive computer equipment, alternative mice, keyboards, or styluses if needed.
- Create keyboard shortcut reference sheets and simplified tool guides for Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop
- Provide templates, partially completed files, or scaffolded starter documents.
- Allow students to zoom in on workspaces or use accessibility settings within software programs.
- Offer digital copies of handouts and notes for organization and accessibility.

Classroom Environment Accommodations

- Preferential seating near instruction or teacher demonstrations.
- Provide a distraction-reduced environment for assessments or focused project work.
- Allow movement breaks or flexible seating options as needed.
- Maintain consistent classroom routines and clearly posted daily objectives.
- Use visual schedules and checklists to support organization and task completion.
- Provide additional time for transitions between activities or software tasks.

Organizational and Executive Function Supports

- Assist students with project planning, time management, and organization of digital files.
- Provide project timelines with checkpoints and reminders.
- Use task checklists and progress-monitoring sheets during long-term projects.
- Help students organize digital folders and save work appropriately.
- Encourage use of planners, calendars, or digital reminders for assignment deadlines.

Social-Emotional and Communication Supports

- Encourage participation in peer critiques using structured sentence starters and guided feedback forms.
- Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement throughout the creative process.
- Allow students to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways.
- Support student self-advocacy by encouraging questions and clarification requests.
- Create opportunities for collaborative learning with supportive peer partners or groups.
- Foster a classroom culture that values creativity, effort, revision, and individual growth.

Fine Motor and Processing Accommodations

- Allow additional time for precise digital design work requiring fine motor control.
- Provide alternative methods for sketching or brainstorming, including digital sketch tools.
- Reduce repetitive drawing or tracing requirements if they create unnecessary barriers.
- Allow students to verbally explain concepts before translating ideas into digital formats.

English Language Learner and Reading Supports (when applicable)

- Pair visual examples with written directions.
- Simplify complex reading materials and provide audio or translated supports when available.
- Reinforce concepts through demonstrations and hands-on learning opportunities.
- Provide sentence frames for critiques, reflections, and project discussions.

Collaboration with Support Staff

- Coordinate with special education teachers, case managers, counselors, and related service providers to ensure accommodations are consistently implemented.
- Maintain ongoing communication regarding student progress, challenges, and successful strategies.
- Adjust instructional pacing and supports based on individual student needs and documented accommodations.