

Indiana Farm Security Photographs



Writing a Shooting Script

Roy Stryker was extremely good at getting the best out of his photographers. Before going out on assignments, each photographer was encouraged to learn as much about the area as possible. They consulted J. Russell's socio-economic geography book *North America*, maps, government pamphlets, and magazines such as *Look*, *Life*, *Harper's* and *Atlantic*. While Stryker did not tell his photographers how to shoot their photos, he did give them lists of themes, such as meeting places, small towns, industry, etc. He briefed them on their assignments before sending them out, giving them detailed instructions, or so called "shooting "scripts." He also wrote many letters, memos, and notes to his photographers. For example, on Jan. 14, 1936, Stryker wrote to Dorothea Lange the following:

"As you are driving along through the agricultural area and if you can do it without much extra effort, would you take a few shots of various types of farm activities such as your picture showing the lettuce workers? I think Dr. Tugwell would be very appreciative of photographs of this sort to be used as illustrative material for some things which the Department of Agriculture is working on. I would not want you to take much time to do this, but of the various types of agricultural activity in the area I think it would be very much worthwhile."

Students can examine the shooting scripts Stryker wrote and write their own detailed shooting scripts. If they were sending photographers out to capture America now, what would they include in their shooting scripts and memos?

There are other examples shooting scripts in the Curriculum Guide, "*This Great Nation Will Endure*": *Photographs of the Great Depression*, produced by the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum. You can download a PDF of this guide from the FDR Presidential Library and Museum at <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/pdfs/fsa.pdf>.