

ADDING A LIGHT SOURCE

By Kent DuFault



<https://unsplash.com/photos/544ZtgLDJ98>

Priscilla Du Preez – Canon EOS 6D, 105mm lens, f/4, 1/50th, ISO 25,600

The cornerstone of creating photographs is the availability of light. Without some level of light, there is no photo.

That might make the idea of photography at night as being somewhat of a paradox.

But fortunately for us photographers, there is light almost everywhere – even in the dead of night.

In this set of Creativity Prompts, we will explore night photography and how to work with light at night.

First off, we will start with adding a light source to a nighttime scene.

Examine the opening photo (above). The inclusion of a simple lantern not only saved

this photo from disappearing into a black abyss, but it also added mood and story!



Assignment:

Pick a light source similar to the lantern above. It could be your version of a lantern, a flashlight, a candle, a headlamp, or a light coming from a vehicle. Once you've chosen your light source, plan a nighttime photoshoot around it as the added light source. Think about your subject, props, and background. Create an emotional story that will touch the hearts of your viewers.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/DdoXpQXobQs>

Aron Visuals – Nikon Coolpix L810, 125mm lens, f/5.9, 1/250th, ISO 200

A favorite additional light source for nighttime photographers is the moon.

Important!

- 1 The moon is brighter than you think. Check your exposures.
- 2 In order to capture the moon displaying any size within the frame, you will need a telephoto lens of 200mm or longer.
- 3 Remember that the moon is moving. Keep your exposure at 1/60th or faster.
- 4 The best time to capture a bright moon over a landscape or cityscape is in the final moments of the Blue Hour, just before the sky goes completely black.



Assignment:

Go out and photograph various night scenes while including the moon as your secondary light source. A full moon works best. However, you can also try a waxing or a waning moon to learn how your setup procedure might change. Keep your shutter speed above 1/60th or faster. Raise the ISO setting if you must. Try photographing subjects in silhouette, such as the above example. If you don't have a telephoto lens, consider purchasing some telephoto filters or a 1.5 lens extender.



https://unsplash.com/photos/6J_qm8DJWnY

Matheus Kohler – No EXIF

Here is another variation on the lantern creativity prompt. In our first assignment, we used the lantern (or another type of light) as a source of illumination and as a prop.

In this version, the lantern light source **is** the subject. Using the lantern in this manner forces us to think through our storytelling with a different mindset. Our sample photo creates the subject story of an outdoor party without clearly depicting people.



Assignment:

Using the same light source as your first assignment, set up another nighttime photoshoot while using the light as your subject. Again, focus your attention on creating a story. Lead the viewer to come to some conclusions about your setting. Be a bit mysterious.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-wearing-red-dress-holding-turned-on-string-lights-1854129/>

Jorge Fakhouri - Canon EOS 6D, 35mm lens, f/1.4, no shutter EXIF, ISO 320

On Amazon, or in virtually every craft or home repair type of store, you can find strings of LED lights that are battery operated.

The example photo shows the type of whimsical nighttime photos that can be created with these strings of lights.



Assignment:

Acquire a string of battery or rechargeable LED lights and set up some whimsical nighttime photos. Keep in mind as you complete these creativity prompts that the story element is crucial to your success, even if the story is simple (as is the included example photo). Avoid the temptation to merely place the lights somewhere and photograph them.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-sitting-under-a-tree-reading-a-book-during-night-time-4256852/>

Josh Hild – Canon EOS 6D, 35mm lens, f/2.2, No shutter speed given, ISO 500

Another helpful light source for your night photography is a portable flash.

All electronic flash units have a manual mechanism for firing the unit. This is sometimes referred to as the 'Test Button.' In this example photo, the man holds a portable flash in his hidden hand. The nighttime exposure is long, so the shutter is released, and during the long exposure the flash was manually fired to create a lighting effect on the subject.



Assignment:

Photograph several nighttime scenes using a long shutter exposure. Make sure the shutter speed is at least four seconds or longer. You will need a tripod or some other form of support for the camera. While the shutter is open, illuminate some part or parts of your frame by manually firing your flash with the test button. Use the widest aperture on your lens. If your electronic flash offers an auto setting, set it to match your f/stop. If it does not provide an auto setting, set the manual power to 1/64th and adjust as necessary.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/HKh1V-xuJoU>

Erwan Hesry – Sony ILCE-6300, 16mm lens, f/1.4, 1/125th, ISO 2000

One of my favorite additional light sources for nighttime photography is a vehicle. Any vehicle can add dramatic lighting to your pictures.

This is one situation where bad weather can also be your friend by creating drama.

This example photo presents an exciting story. What do you perceive as the subject? The fact that it is nighttime? Or that it's winter. Perhaps it's the vehicle at work?



Assignment:

Create a portfolio of nighttime photography images where the story revolves around a vehicle with its lights turned on. Try to create as many different dramatic stories as you can.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/gm3M-CsuynI>

Tim Zankert – Nikon D7100, 60mm setting on a zoom lens, f/3.2, 1/160th, ISO 640

Many folks aren't too keen on fireworks. However, everyone loves sparklers because they are safe, and they don't go boom.

They also make a fantastic additional light source for night photography.



Assignment:

Gather up some sparklers and see how many different ways you can use them as an additional light source in your night photography. Think outside the box. Don't think of light painting specifically; you have another Creativity Prompt for that. But instead, use the sparklers as a source of illumination for some other subject.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/palm-trees-near-projection-screen-during-nighttime-3131971/>

Roberto Nickson – iPhone, no other EXIF provided

This TV is a super cool use of an additional light source for a nighttime photo. It adds so much visual interest that would be missing without it.

When you put your mind to it, there are so many different light sources that you can utilize to add zip to your nighttime shots!



Assignment:

Now it's up to you. Come up with some additional light sources that I haven't mentioned and create some stunning artwork!