

Adding Rays of Sunshine

Sequoia High School

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Class: Photo

A Few Tips To Get Started: If you've ever walked down a path and seen beautiful rays of dappled sunshine spilling through the trees or breaking through the clouds then you have encountered a phenomenon known as "God's Rays." While we are not all lucky enough to capture such moments on film, we can, via Photoshop, bring them to life in your own photos in post-production. Here are a few tips for taking and selecting your photographs. Try to take photos use complex intricate patterns of light and dark. Start by using the light coming through the branches of a tree. The more light and dark patches you have, the more rays of sunlight you will have. Consider working in black and white. Try shooting into your light source. Avoid overly simple photos with lots of empty space and similar tones and colors. For this assignment you will need to have taken at least 3 photos: at least one of them should utilize a tree.




1) Open Your Image:

Open your file in Photoshop by double clicking on the Photoshop icon and then going to ***File*** and then to ***Open***. Find the file you wish to use and click ***Open***.

2) Crop Away Unwanted Areas:

Crop away any unwanted areas before you begin

by clicking on the crop tool  or click ***C*** on your keyboard. Drag the white handles in the corners to trim away any excess areas or large empty spaces in your photo. Press ***Return*** or ***Enter*** on your keyboard to finalize your crop.



3) Flatten Your Image:

If you have edited your photo by using adjustment layers (i.e. levels, hue & saturation, vibrance, etc.) you will need to flatten your image before you begin. Go to **Layer** on the top menu bar and **Flatten Image**. You will notice that all of the adjustment layers in your Layers palette have merged into one final layer.

Layer	Type
New	
Merge Layers	
Merge Visible	
Flatten Image	

4) Duplicate Your Background:

Go to **Layer** on the menu bar and click on **Duplicate Layer**. When a window pops up asking to rename the layer as **Background Copy**, click **Okay**.



5) Find the Color Channel with the Highest Contrast

Next to the Layers Palette you will find a tab that says **Channels**, click on it. When only one Channel is turned on at a time, the image will appear in black and white. Click the eyeballs on and off next to each channel to determine which channel has the highest amount of contrast (in other words, the most extreme amount of black and white).

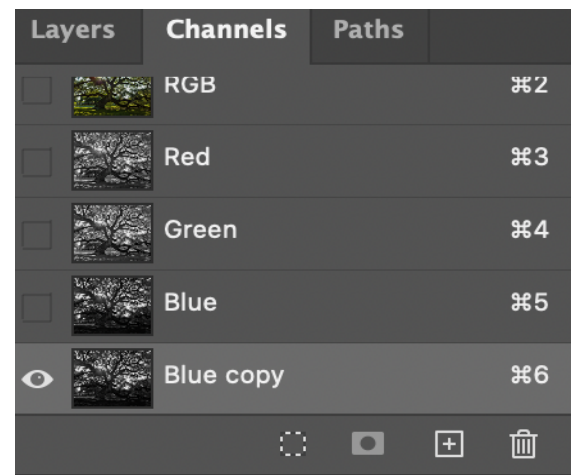
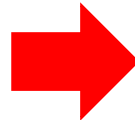
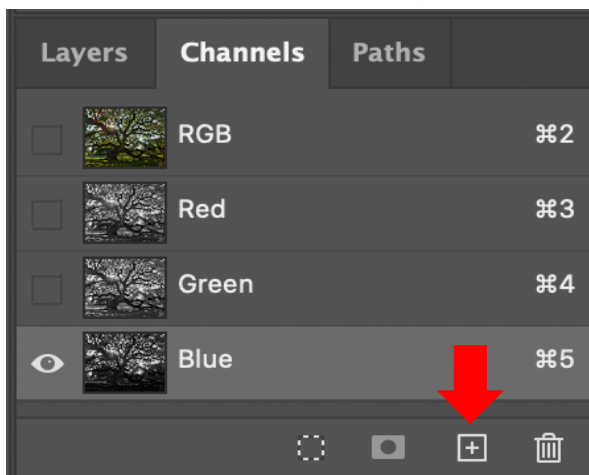


6) Make a Copy of the Channel

We will need to make a copy of the channel. To do that, click on the channel you thought had the highest contrast and drag it over to the New Channel Icon.

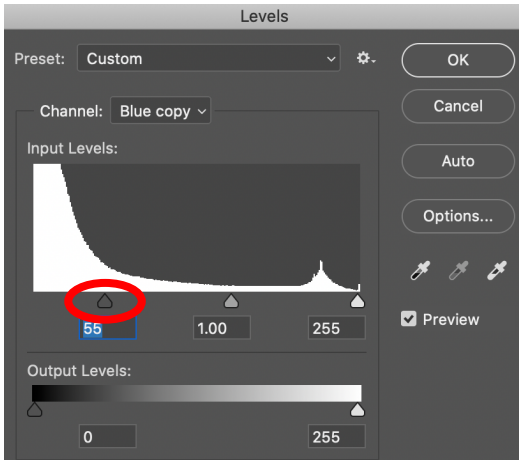
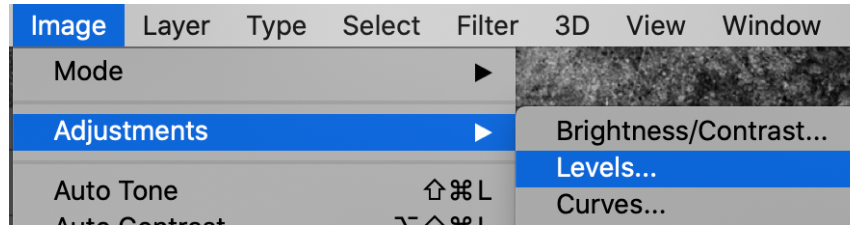


7) Increase the Darkness of the Dark Areas with the



8) Levels Command

We need to increase the contrast in our copied channel so that the dark areas are completely black. Go to *Image* on main menu bar then select *Adjustments* and finally *Levels*.



Grab the small black triangle slider on the left side and move it along until all of the dark areas are filled in black and the sky is nice and bright. Then click *Okay*.

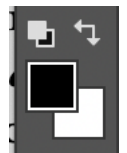
9) Paint Over the Ground

If, even after darkening the image, you have a lot of light spots still showing through on the ground in your image you will need to darken them by hand. You only want bright spots in the sky or in the direction your light source is. Click *B* on your

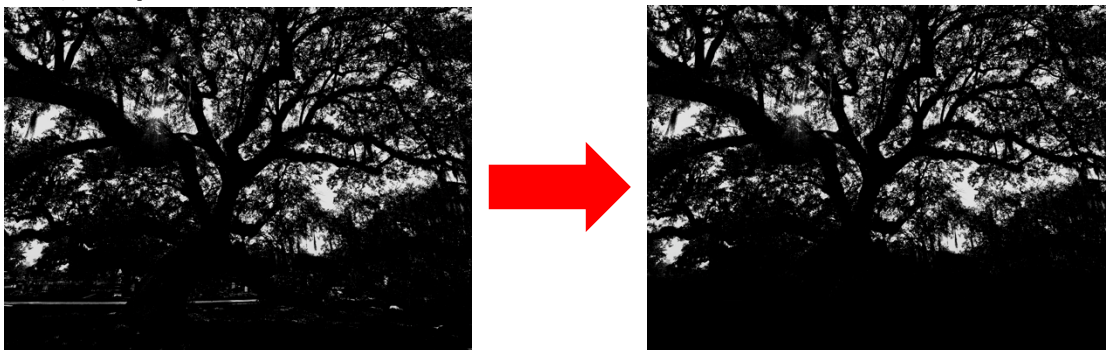
keyboard, or click the *Brush Tool* in the *Toolbar*.



Set your brush to paint with black by pressing *D* on your keyboard (this will restore your paint colors to the default white and black, but with white on top). Then press *X* on your keyboard, this will make black your foreground color and thus the one you paint with.



Adjust the size of your brush using the *Left Bracket Key* (*[*) to make it smaller and the *Right Bracket Key* (*]*) to make it bigger. Now *paint over any bright spots on the ground in your photo*.



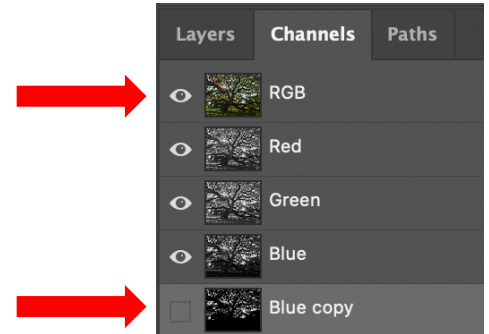
10) Load the Channel as a Selection

Now we need to turn our channel into a selection. To do that hold down the **Command Button** on your keyboard and **click directly on the channel we were just editing**. You'll know you have done it correctly when it looks like little marching ants have surrounded your bright spots.



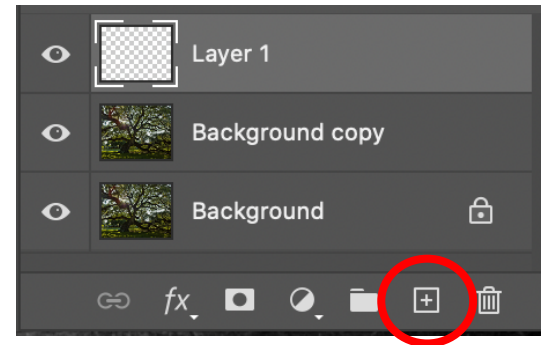
11) Restore the RGB Channel

We need to restore the original colors to our image before we continue, so click on the eyeball for the **RGB Channel** to add back the color. Next click off the channel that says **Copy** next to it to remove the red overlay on the image.



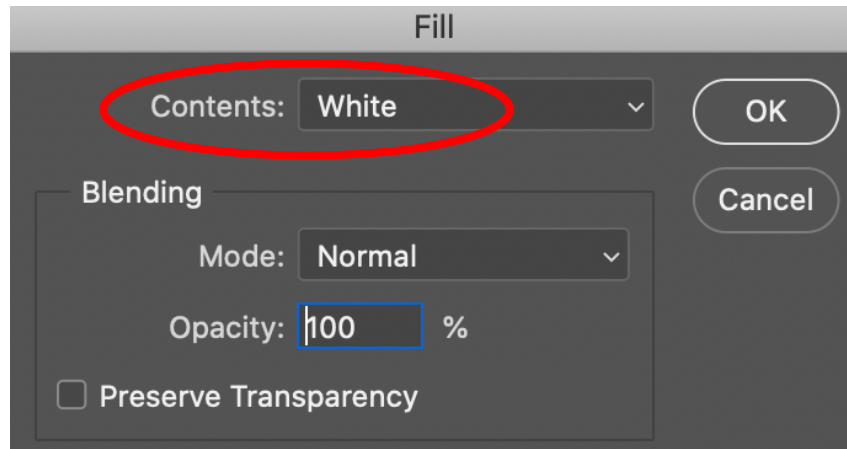
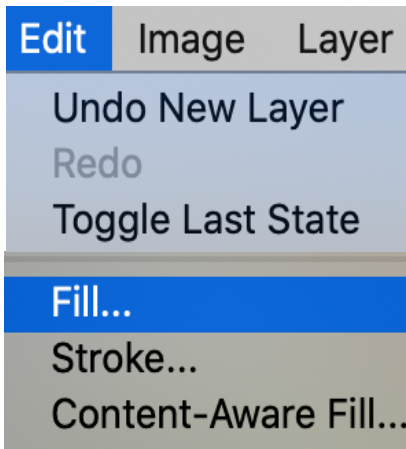
12) Add a New Layer

Click back on your **Layers Tab** so that your **Layers Palette** shows up. Then click on the **New Layer Icon**. A new blank layer will appear above your **Background Copy** called Layer 1.



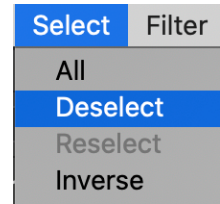
13) Fill the Selection with White

We need to fill our selection on our new layer with white. Go to **Edit** on the top menu bar and choose **Fill** from the dropdown menu. A new dialog box will open up. Change **Contents** to **White** and make sure the **Mode** is set to **Normal** and the **Opacity** is at **100%** then click **Okay**.



14) *Get Rid of the Marching Ants!*

Deselect your selection by going to *Select* and choosing *Deselect*. The marching ants should disappear.

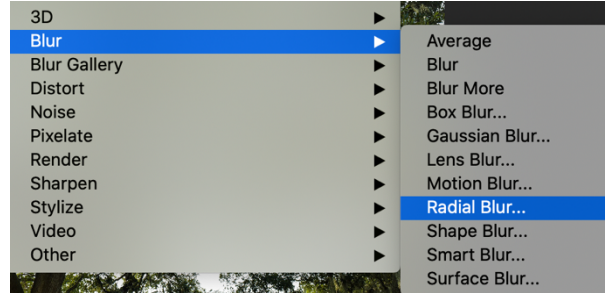


15) *Duplicate the New Layer*

Go to *Layer* on the menu bar and click on *Duplicate Layer*. When a window pops up asking to rename the layer as *Layer 1 Copy*, click *Okay*.

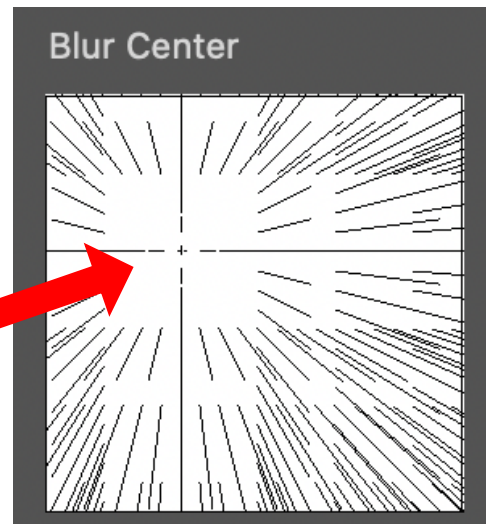
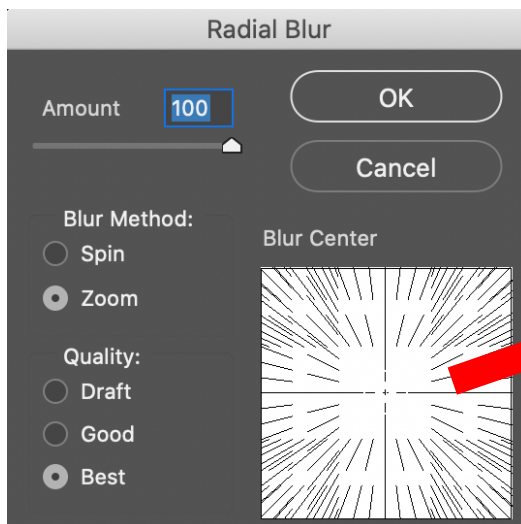
16) *Apply a Radial Blur*

To create the sunbeams we will add a radial blur to the *Layer 1 Copy*. Select *Filter* from the top menu bar, choose *Blur* from the dropdown menu, and then select *Radial Blur*.



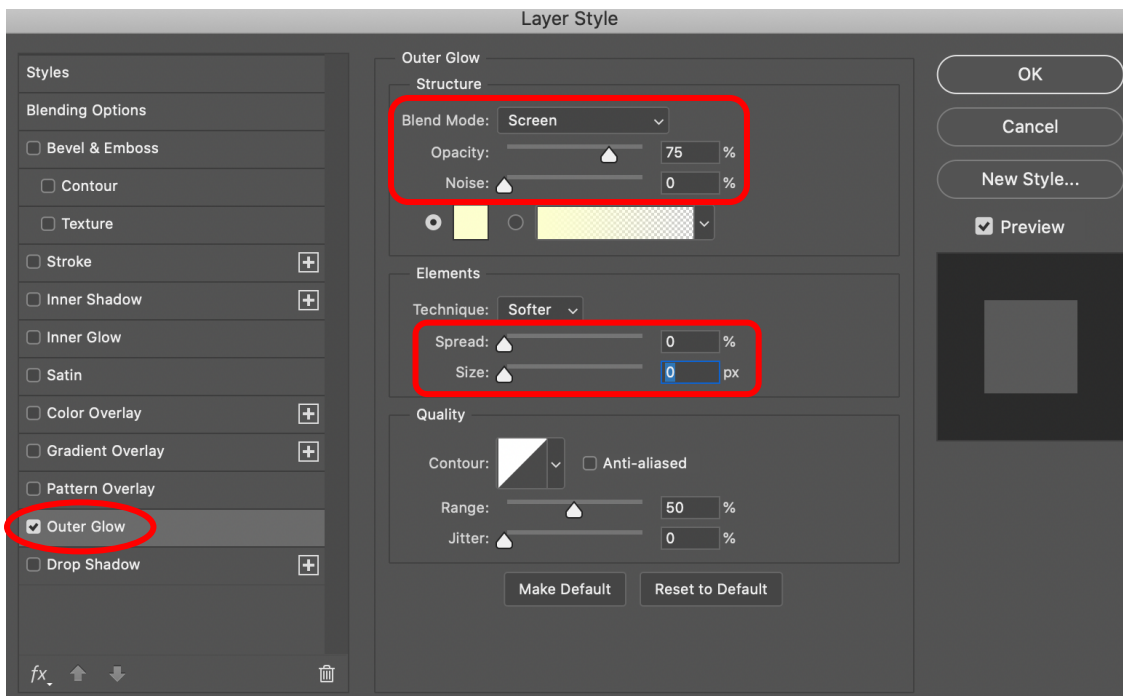
A dialogue box will appear. Drag the *Amount* slider all the way to *100*. Under *Blur Method* choose *Zoom* and under *Quality* select *Best*.

The tricky part is deciding where you want the sunbeams to start from. You want the rays of light to look like they are radiating out from the light source or sun in your photo. *Drag the blur center to the same/similar location as your light source or sun.* (If this doesn't work the first time then you might have to undo and then redo this step until you have the center of the sunbeams where you want them.



17) *Add an Outer Glow Layer Style*

Now you should be able to see a hint of sunbeams on your photo, but at the moment they're not very bright. We are about to fix this. Double click on your top layer, **Layer Copy 1**. A dialog box will appear called **Layer Styles**. Click on the **Outer Glow**. Make sure that your **Blend Mode** is set to **Screen**, **Opacity** is set to **75%**, **Spread** is set to **0%**, and **Size** is set to **0**. (You may want to play a bit with the Spread and Size setting to get the desired effect. Remember that you'll be able to preview your changes on your photos as you make adjustments to your taste.) Click **Okay**.

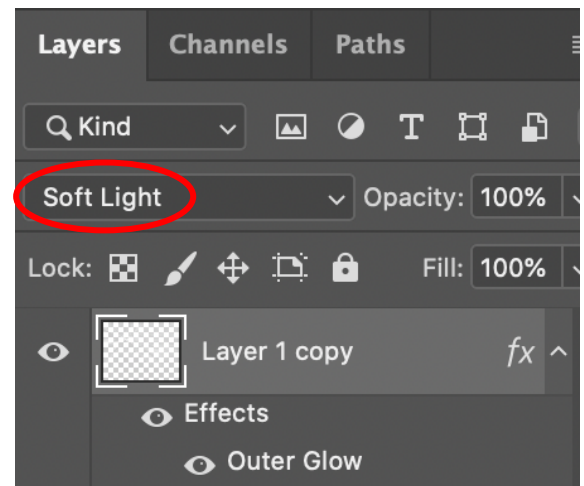


18) *Change the Blend Mode*

On the **Layers Palette** change the **Blend Mode** to **Soft Light** using the dropdown menu.

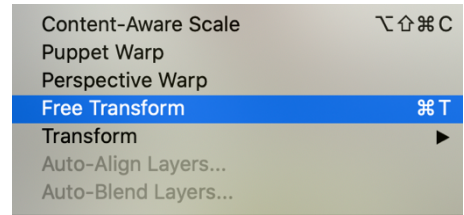
19) *Duplicate the Top Layer*

Go to **Layer** on the menu bar and click on **Duplicate Layer**. You should now have two layers of sunbeams.



20) *Lengthen the Sunbeams with Free Transform Command*

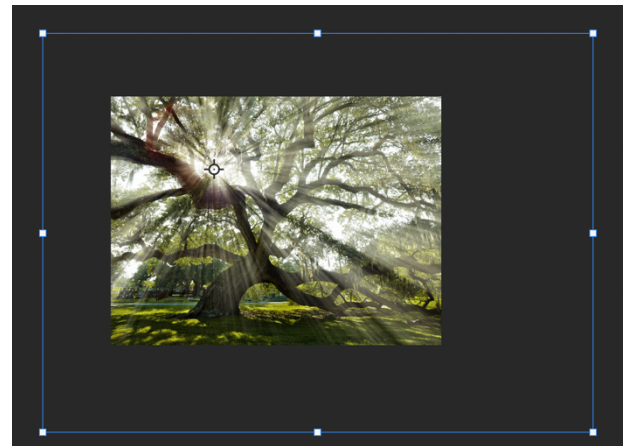
We are now going to lengthen our sunbeams by using Free Transform. Go up to **Edit** on the top menu bar and select **Free Transform** from the dropdown menu. You will notice a blue box appears around the sunbeams.



Click the **Target Icon** symbol option on the **Tool Bar**. Click on the **Target Icon** that appears and drag it to center of your light rays, the spot where the light is coming from.

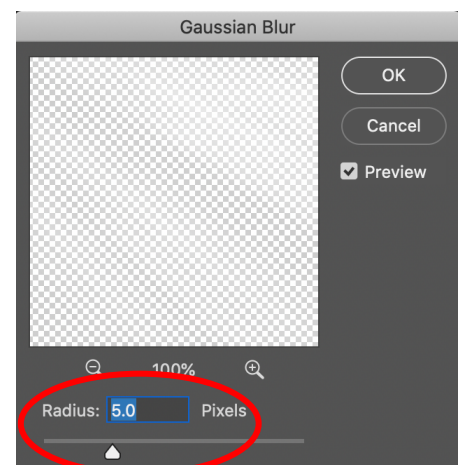


Hold down **Option** on your keyboard and click on the corner handles of the blue box. You will notice that the box (and the sunbeams with it) increase in size, but the center point of the sunbeams remains the same. (If you are struggling to pull the sunbeams outside the edges of the photograph you may want to zoom out by pressing **Command Z** on your keyboard to make your whole image a wee bit smaller.) When you are happy with the end result press **Return** or **Enter** on your keyboard.



21) *Soften the Harsh Lines in the Rays*

Let's soften the look of our sunbeams a bit so they look more believable. Go up to **Filter** on the top menu bar and then choose **Blur**, and then **Gaussian Blur**. A box will appear that allows you to change the radius of pixels that are blurred. I'd recommend choosing a number that suits your image somewhere between 5 and 25.



22) *Finalize Your Image & Turn It In!*

If you haven't done so already, go to **File > Save As**. **Crop** your photo to **8 x 10** and check your **Resolution** is at **300 DPI**. Be sure to save your image as **TIFF** and to include your **Last Name** followed by your **First Initial**. Update your file by going to **File > Save**. Now you're ready to turn it in!