

30 Photos That Changed the World

1. General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner in Saigon; Eddie Adams, 1968
AP photographer Eddie Adams captured this shot of a South Vietnamese general executing a Viet Cong officer in the Tet Offensive, and it became one of the most iconic shots of the Vietnam War. Sadly, Adams would come to lament the damage the Pulitzer-winning photo did to Nguyen and his family, claiming that the man had killed a “so-called bad guy” and been demonized by people who didn’t understand the scope of the situation.



2. Migrant Mother; Dorothea Lange, 1936

This image of a working woman who had just sold her cars tires to feed her seven children came to represent the Depression and the Dust Bowl in the popular imagination.



3. Kent State; John Paul Filo, 1970

The Kent State protest in Ohio at the news that President Nixon was sending troops into Cambodia drew the presence of the Ohio National Guard, who turned on the crowd and fired, killing four. The horrible image of a young woman crying in anger over the dead body of a student won a Pulitzer Prize for John Filo. The event inspired Neil Young to write the protest song [“Ohio.”](#)



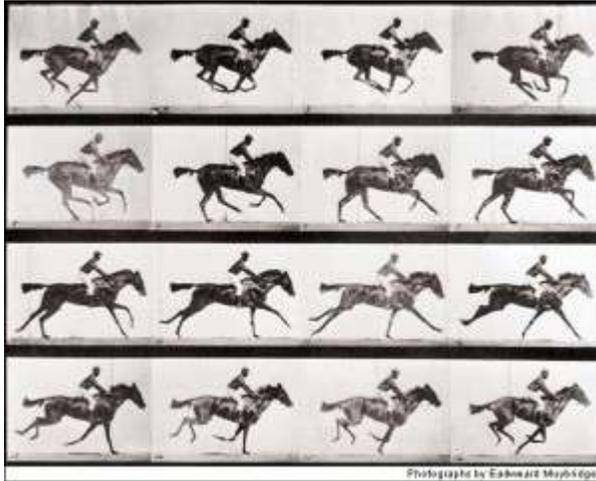
4. Tianenmen Square; Jeff Widener, 1989

Shooting the Chinese protests for the Associated Press, Jeff Widener captured this shot of “the unknown rebel” standing in front of a line of tanks. The man was shortly led away and never seen again, but his act of nonviolent protest was a vital moment in world history.



5. Galloping Horse; Eadweard Muybridge, 1878

This series of 12 photos was a biological landmark because it proved that there is indeed a point in a horse's stride when all its hooves leave the ground.



6. Elizabeth Eckford and Hazel Massery; Will Counts, 1957

Elizabeth Eckford was one of the first black students admitted to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. This photo shows her grueling walk to class while being shouted at by white student Hazel Massery. Although Massery would later express regret for her actions, the photo showed the nation and the world the heated strife in the Southern United States.



7. How Life Begins; Lennart Nilsson, 1965

Lennart Nilsson began taking pictures of developing fetuses with an endoscope in 1957, and the 1965 publication of his photos in Life Magazine was a breakthrough in showing people where we all came from.



8. Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima; Joe Rosenthal, 1945

One of the most indelible images of World War II as well as a Pulitzer winner, this photo of U.S. Marines raising their flag atop Mount Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima is widely used as a tribute to American heroism. Of the six men in the shot, three died in the battle. The image was used to create the USMC War Memorial near Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.



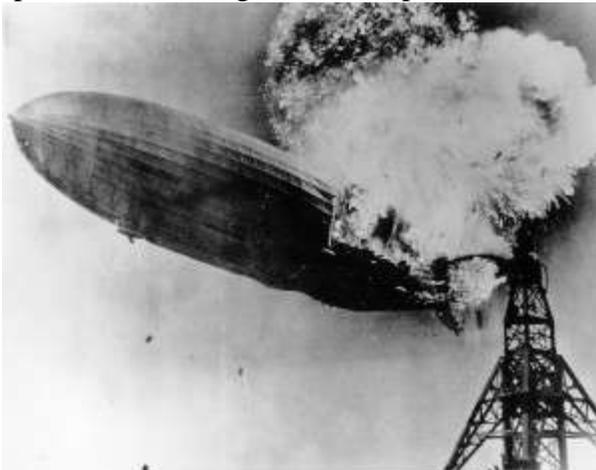
9. Muhammad Ali vs. Sonny Liston; AP, 1965

The rematch between Muhammad Ali and Sonny Liston remains controversial because of the way Liston went down halfway through the first round, seemingly out of nowhere. This shot of Ali standing over his prey became one of the many iconic shots of the man known as “the greatest.”



10. The Hindenburg disaster; UPI, 1937

The stirring image of the Hindenburg zeppelin going down in flames helped galvanize public opinion on the dangers of airships and end their era once and for all.



11. Earthrise; William Anders, 1968

Apollo 8 astronaut Bill Anders snapped this shot of the Earth rising over the Moon's horizon as he and Frank Borman orbited the Moon. The shot changed the way we think of our planet and its place in the cosmos.



12. President Johnson Sworn In Aboard Air Force One; Cecil W. Stoughton, 1963

Cecil Stoughton was President Kennedy's photographer, and he captured this heartbreaking image of Jackie Kennedy standing with the newly sworn-in President Johnson mere hours after Kennedy was shot.



13. V-J Day in Times Square; Alfred Eisenstaedt, 1945

No image said more about the relief Americans felt at the end of World War II than this classic image of a sailor sweeping a nurse into his arms for a kiss when hearing the war had ended.



15. Hurricane Katrina aftermath; 2005

This stunning image of an abandoned home in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina reminded people how badly the city of New Orleans had suffered through one of the biggest natural disasters in American history.



16. Wounded Soldier at Home; Eugene Richards, 2008

Eugene Richards' "War Is Personal" documents the human cost of the Iraq War, as seen in this photo of a soldier who survived a brutal attack that took part of his head.



17. The 9/11 attacks; New York Times, 2001

There are many haunting images of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, but this one of a person standing in a gaping hole of wreckage, with no exit or hope of rescue, is one of the most wrenching.



18. Birmingham beatings; Charles Moore, 1963

Birmingham, Alabama, was one of the focal points of the civil rights movement, and black residents and protestors faced near-constant torment as they struggled for equality. This image of young people being assaulted with a fire hose showed the lengths their attackers would go to in order to fight the changing tides.



19. The Terror of War; Huynh Cong Ut, 1973

A naked girl runs with a group of other children after the napalm bombing of a Vietnamese village. She survived by removing her clothes. This was one of the many award-winning images that brought the atrocity of the war into Americans' homes.



20. “Dewey Defeats Truman”; 1948

Perhaps the most famous incorrect headline in history, the Chicago Tribune printed early editions of that day’s issue saying that Harry Truman had lost the presidential election in order to make their deadlines. Their Washington correspondent, as well as conventional wisdom, assumed Truman would lose. However, Truman pulled ahead and won, making the papers inaccurate and leading to this classic image of a newly minted president showing the dangers of sloppy journalism.



22. Omaha Beach; Robert Capa, 1944

One of the few surviving images from D-Day, Robert Capa’s haunting, blurry image was a brief glimpse for many people into a world of war they might not otherwise understand.



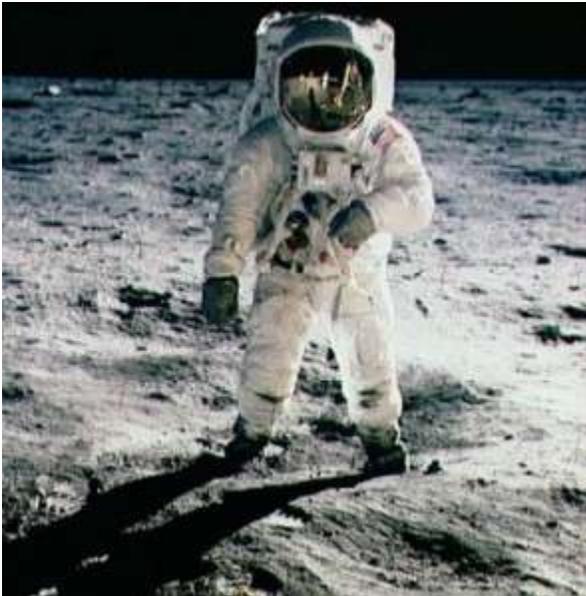
23. Burning Monk; Malcolm W. Browne, 1963

Vietnamese monk Thich Quang Duc set himself on fire to protest the government's persecution of Buddhists, and the resulting photo captured millions of people's attention.



24. Man Walks on the Moon; Neil Armstrong, 1969

Neil Armstrong snapped this image of fellow astronaut Buzz Aldrin during the first human trip to land on the Moon. It became a testament to American innovation and dedication.



25. Afghan Girl; Steve McCurry, 1984

Known only as the Afghan girl — her real identity unknown until she was rediscovered in 2002 — Sharbat Gula's face became one of the most iconic National Geographic covers of all time, and a symbol of the struggle of refugees everywhere.



26. *Abbey Road* cover; Iain Macmillan, 1969

The final album recorded by The Beatles before their breakup, the cover of *Abbey Road* featured a shot of the four men crossing the road almost in lock-step, except for Paul McCartney, whose off-balance stride spurred the urban legend that he was dead.



27. Martin Luther King, Jr.; 1963

Martin Luther King, Jr. raised his arms as he addressed the crowd in his “I Have a Dream” speech in August 1963. His performance there, and the subsequent photos of the crowds and his address, were a turning point in the blossoming civil rights movement.



28. “Tear down this wall”; 1987

Speaking in front of the Brandenburg Gate in 1987, President Reagan bluntly exhorted Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.” It was the beginning of the end, as the wall would fall in 1989. The site of Reagan in front of the gate is a key one in 20th century history.



29. Federal Dead on the Field of Battle of First Day, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Mathew Brady, 1863

One of the earliest war photographs, this sobering look at the war ravaging America remains one of the most important war images of all time.



30. Tetons and the Snake River; Ansel Adams, 1942

Ansel Adams is a legend among photographers, and his 1942 “Tetons and the Snake River” is a prime example of the stark nature photography that he elevated to fine art. It was also one of the 115 pictures embedded on the golden record and sent on the Voyager spacecraft. The picture also fueled an environmental protection movement that lasts to this day.



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