

BPS Competition Scoring Sheet

10.27.25 - "Celestial Bodies" - Judge David Fokos

Class	Title	Score	Award	Comments
Class A	NATURE			
Ginnie Lodge	01_BPS-LodgG-N2-Sunrise_Splash	8	2	<p>The colors in this image — the salmon and the violet are not only beautiful and evocative, but they compliment each other well. The timing of the shot was spot-on, catching the sunlight in the waves at just the right moment. Compositionally I also like the repetition of horizontal bands — the water in front of the waves, the waves, the water beyond the waves, the horizon, the sky above the horizon, and the clouds above the sun. Choosing to frame the shot with the sun off center, about 1/3 the way in from the left edge of the frame was a smart choice. It makes the overall image more dynamic.</p> <p>The only recommendations I might suggest would be to consider a slightly lower exposure next time to bring a bit more drama to the clouds. With this exposure you could try adding a little pop by increasing local contrast using the clarity slider in Lightroom. (I used to do this by applying Unsharp Masking - Amount 20, Radius 50, Threshold 0). This would obviously be a personal choice depending on your intentions for this image. Speaking of sharpening... I feel that the water looks like it has been a bit oversharpened. Whether this happened in camera with the camera's sharpening settings (assuming a digital camera) or in post, you can make adjustments to dial down the sharpening a bit in the future.</p>
Ellen Zimmerman	02_BPS-ZimmE-N2-Stormlit_Dawn	6		<p>This is a beautiful, atmospheric, moody image. I might even call it cinematic. It appears to be a composite of multiple photos. When viewed as an abstract, the composition is excellent — the placement of the sun precisely following the Rule of Thirds. The exposure of the sun and dark clouds is well-executed, creating a dramatic scene and highlighting the sunlit edges of the clouds.</p> <p>My only criticism of this image is that it appears that the second photo used for this composite is a view over the ocean and the horizon at the edge of the water is wildly skewed. This slant also translates to the thin white wisp of cloud near the top of the image. I think that leveling the horizon (and subsequently the wisp of clouds as well) would create some horizontal elements that would compliment the dramatic heavy, diagonal of the dark clouds</p>
Vince Pelligrini	03_BPS-PellV-N1-Deception_Pass_Sunset	7	3	<p>There is a really beautiful painterly quality of light in this image. I love the colors, the interplay of the light and the water, and the texture of the trees on the islands. In general, I think the exposure of the sky was handled quite well. This image evokes a lovely, calm mood.</p> <p>That said, I see that the trees of the large island and the hill in the distance have been masked somewhat clumsily. Noting that the small island out in the water is quite dark, I assume the masking was done so that the trees on the two larger islands could be lightened. (note: if the two main islands were lightened, then the third island should have also been lightened for logical consistency). The resulting dark ridge of trees along the treeline looks unnatural and the masking between the trees and sky is riddled with masking errors. One other suggestion I have would be to consider cropping off 15%-20% of the bottom, and a little bit of the left edge to better emphasize the diagonal created by the three islands.</p>
Leigh Reeves	04_BPS-REEVL-N1-BILLABONG	6	HM	<p>The atmosphere here is luminous and ethereal — the mist filtering the sunlight feels dreamlike. The inclusion of the pink water lily reaching for the sun gives a delicate focal counterpoint to the overwhelming gold. The overall composition is well-balanced. The sun, the tops of the grasses, the position of the sun and the dark leaves of the big tree all conform to the Rule of Thirds.</p> <p>The scene might benefit from a little more pop to differentiate the layers of trees and fog — you could try increasing "clarity" in Lightroom. Next time, you might consider trying a darker exposure. Also, it is unfortunate that the foreground, including the water lily is out of focus.</p>

Jacqui Burke	05_BPS-BurkJ-N1-First_Light,_First_Flight	5	<p>Excellent sense of timing — the silhouettes of the birds in flight against the blazing sunrise is a classic and powerful visual. It beautifully captures movement and stillness in a single frame.</p> <p>I am seeing a few “errors” around the silhouettes of the birds. I am not sure if this is an artifact of sharpening, masking to blur the background, or whether this is a composite of two images. If it is a composite, it is very well done considering the color and quality of light in the wings of the birds. If it is a naturally occurring single capture, meaning that the background wasn’t blurred in post, then it is also remarkable for nailing the focus on the birds with such a shallow depth of field.</p> <p>There is a mysterious, distracting glow of light along the bottom edge of the image that could be darkened which would help focus attention onto the birds.</p> <p>Finally, I would prefer a less centered composition with the sun positioned to the left, balanced by the trees to the right. (see edited photo)</p>
Mia Curran	06_BPS-CurrM-N1-Hanging_by_a_Thread	5	<p>I think it is interesting to see the celestial enormity of the sun contrasting the nearly microscopic cellular-level detail of the leaves. We just barely see the sun itself but see it expressed in the backlighting of the leaves and spider’s web, and the highlighting of the edges of the branch and leaves.</p> <p>I think the shadows could be darkened slightly to make the bright threads and the cells in the leaf pop more. While I appreciate the desire to preserve detail in the branch, I don’t feel it adds much to the image. (see edited photo)</p>
Ginnie Lodge	07_BPS-LodgG-N1-Early_Birds	6	<p>This image has a lovely pastel palette and peaceful rhythm. It is well-exposed. I appreciate the waterline on the sand heading toward the corner of the frame. Compositionally, it is often a good choice to align diagonals with the corners of the frame.</p> <p>I feel that the focus of this image is the sun and the birds on the sand. I would suggest cropping the image to better highlight these elements. I feel that there is more sky than necessary at the top and more sand than necessary at the bottom. I also find the blurred bird in flight a bit distracting. Therefore, I would crop in from the right so that the sun is centered left to right. Unlike the First Flight image we looked at a short while ago, I think that this composition benefits from the sun being centered. I would crop up from the bottom so that the waterline emerges from the corner, and then crop down from the top until the horizon is 1/3 down from the top. (see edited photo)</p>
Vince Pelligrini	08_BPS-PellV-N2-A_Foggy_Morning_at_the_Pre	6	<p>Excellent use of atmospheric perspective. The warm, golden light on the path and in the grasses is very inviting. The curve of the path leading towards the sun strengthens the composition.</p> <p>My suggestion would be to consider darkening the image above the grasses. This would better balance the top and bottom. It would also bring out some of the detail in the trees and show off the clouds and fog a bit better. (see edited photo)</p>
Ellen Zimmerman	09_BPS-ZimmE-N1-Seafire	5	<p>This image has a strong mood and is a great use of color — the sun seems molten, and the silhouetted figures give scale. Exposure is excellent.</p> <p>There are some serious artifacts. The water looks very “crispy” and there are some halos around the people and the stairs that would suggest oversharpening or some jpeg artifacting. So, if you have the choice of sharpening less i would try that. I would also try a tighter crop from the top to bring more emphasis to the human silhouettes and the fiery horizon. Finally, you could also experiment with a slower shutter speed to soften the water texture for a more painterly look, if you like it. (see edited photo)</p>
Jacqui Burke	10_BPS-BurkJ-N2-Solitude_at_Sunrise	4	<p>I might crop a hair off the top of this image, and I also wish the bird was a smidge more to the right, but otherwise I think the composition of this image is pretty good. Since there is not much in the way of midtown detail here — this image is primarily light and silhouette, The light on the mudflats is a bit blown out so I would suggest trying a darker exposure next time.</p>

Mia Curran	11_BPS-CurrM-N2-Moon_over_the_Pines	3		Upon seeing this image, my first thought was that some undersea monster was reaching up for the moon! I understand the intention here, but I feel that the composition could be improved to better emphasize the moon. The silhouette of the pine trees overwhelms this image so I would suggest cropping out most of the image to better frame the moon. It's a shame because you then lose some of those lovely salmon-colored clouds. I also see that there must have been a lot of noise in this image and that you attempted to mask out the sky and apply noise reduction. The masking could have been handled a bit better. However, all said, the exposure of the moon is perfect. (see edited photo)
Leigh Reeves	12_BPS-REEVL-N2-SPOUT	8	1	This is an incredible moment captured—the whale's breath illuminated by the golden light is very dramatic. The sun's highlights are quite intense. Reducing exposure, or using HDR might preserve some detail in the sun's edges and clouds. Darkening the sky and clouds would also bring more attention to the whale spout. (see edited photo)
Class A	PICTORIAL			
Ellen Zimmerman	01_BPS-ZimmE-P1-Nocturnal_Landscape	1		disqualified - This is a daring experimental image. One thing I often tell people is show me something I haven't seen before and I feel this image hits that mark. As I try to make sense of its painterly abstraction, I see some grasses or reeds — multiple overlapping images of the same exposure. The glowing orb suggests a celestial energy rather than literal depiction. As an abstract image, the composition is pretty good. Unfortunately, though interesting, the image fails to meet the criteria for this competition as the celestial body is not clearly identifiable as such.
Mia Curran	02_BPS-CurrM-P2-Sunset_on_Bethel	5		This is a lovely, well-exposed image. Good job balancing the brightness of the sun shining directly into the lens with the detail of the fence in shadow. I love the warm colors and the light on the grasses. Here again is an image that I feel would benefit from a bit of asymmetry. I think it is a bit more interesting to frame the sun asymmetrically between the fence posts as well as cropping the image asymmetrically to balance the sun with the fence post on the right. (see edited photo)
Jacqui Burke	03_BPS-BurkJ-P1-The_Watcher's_Moon	7	HM	This is a lovely, well-exposed image. Good job balancing the brightness of the sun shining directly into the lens with the detail of the fence in shadow. I love the warm colors and the light on the grasses. Here again is an image that I feel would benefit from a bit of asymmetry. I think it is a bit more interesting to frame the sun asymmetrically between the fence posts as well as cropping the image asymmetrically to balance the sun with the fence post on the right. (see edited photo)
Ginnie Lodge	04_BPS-LodgG-P1-Sundown_at_the_Shore	7	2	I've spent many, many years photographing ocean scenes along the east coast, so this is a very familiar scene to me. The warm orange sunset contrasting the cool blue of twilight creates a classic sunset drama. The exposure is perfect, though you could consider opening up the shadows a touch in the foreground dune and fence. Personally, I like it the way it is. I feel that the composition is quite good — the undulating dunes balancing the setting sun and lighthouse. My only suggestion here would be to crop down from the top a bit. I understand that would mean cutting off the tops of the delicate grasses you carefully included in the frame at the right, but I feel it's still a smart choice. I might also consider a touch of sharpening overall. (see edited photo)

Vince Pelligrini	05_BPS-PellV-P1-Sunset_Illusion	7	3	This is a creative approach—the layering creates a surreal, dreamlike interpretation of the celestial theme. The overlay technique adds a painterly, introspective mood. The repetition of trees within trees feels like memory or time layered over itself. It looks to me that the different images were captured at different times of the year — with leaves and without. I appreciate how this creates a single image that represents different seasons. Compositionally, the image is well-balanced in thirds. Exposure is good. It is not something I've seen before which I like. So overall, good job!
Leigh Reeves	06_BPS-REEVL-P1-untitled	6		This is a dramatic apocalyptic image. Is the city burning? Has a nuclear bomb just been set off at the far edge of the city? Or is it just a beautiful, dramatic sunset? Unfortunately, there is no clearly identifiable celestial body visible within the image so I can't say for sure. However, I do think that cropping down from the top would strengthen the composition by centering the bright glow and giving proper weight to the city. The city then becomes a partner in the scene rather than just a bystander, if that makes sense. Excellent exposure, however. (see edited photo)
Mia Curran	07_BPS-CurrM-P1-Big_Dipper	3		I like the idea of seeing the constellation above the silhouetted trees. While I understand the desire to create some depth to this image by featuring the fence in the foreground, I find that as depicted it makes the composition a bit awkward. Perhaps the fence could work if you stepped back a bit to show more of the bottom of the fence, or got closer for a more dramatic angle. However, this in-between angle doesn't quite work. Also, for me, the green tint of the fence, likely caused by a fluorescent light source is a bit off-putting. Perhaps color correcting it might help. And lastly a few technical observations: the horizon is not quite level, the focus of the entire image is soft, and on my monitor I am getting banding in the sky though perhaps this is on my end.
Ellen Zimmerman	08_BPS-ZimmE-P2-Ghostly	1		disqualified - Here is another mysterious, layered, conceptual exploration of celestial imagery. This image evokes all sorts of creepy Halloween and Shroud of Turin vibes. Is that teeth I see in the center of the frame? The orb on the left looks like a menacing jack-o-lantern in profile. The composition is interesting and feels well balanced, but again I'd have to say that the image fails to meet the criteria for this competition as the celestial body is not clearly identifiable as such. I assume the yellow orbs may be the sun, but they could just as well be bokeh of any light source. Still, an interesting image that conjures a lot of questions.
Leigh Reeves	09_BPS-REEVL-P2-WAITING_FOR_THE_FISH	8	1	This is a beautiful, moody image that is very much on-theme for this competition. I love the interplay of the golden light and the water, and the silhouetted fishermen. Compositionally, it is pretty good, but I think it could be improved — a clockwise rotation to level the horizon, and cropping down from the top of the frame a little bit would help. Also, I would have asked the woman with the coffee mug to step out of the frame. She draws attention away from the fishermen and she looks like a tourist on vacation. (see edited photo)
Ginnie Lodge	10_BPS-LodgG-P2-Crescent_Moon_Rising	5		This is a dramatic, but somewhat unbalanced image. The size of the moon feels unnatural, and its position directly above the pagoda, skimming its roofline throws far too much weight onto the right side of this image. Perhaps a different angle to offset the moon and the pagoda could have helped. The flag at the left side of the frame does not have enough compositional weight to offset the mass of the moon and pagoda, and it confuses the image by introducing a symbol of America in what is otherwise a very Asian style of image. Finally, I think this image could be improved with a bit of cropping — the black, detailless foreground doesn't bring anything to the image. (see edited photo)

Vince Pelligrini	11_BPS-PellV-P2-Stormy_Sunset	5		This is a well-exposed image. It has a quiet, end of the day feel. There is quite a lot going on here — dark clouds at the top, the large flag on the side of the barn, the flowers in the foreground grass, a horse trailer and other materials between the two barns, a hill in the distance, and a setting sun. I feel that barn with the flag seems to be the star of this show with the dark clouds as the supporting actor. So, for me this is maybe not the best image choice for this theme. However, I do love the quality of the sunlight on the flowers and grass. Just for illustrative purposes, I have cropped the photo to show how different framing could have made the it more about the sunset (see edited photo)
Jacqui Burke	12_BPS-BurkJ-P2-Sunset_Symphony	6		This is a kinetic, exhilarating image — the vast flock of birds and the radiating sunlight combine for a scene that feels alive and orchestral. Perfect timing to capture the one solo bird. I would have liked to see a bit more of the water in the foreground, and the image should be rotated to level the horizon. I might also try darkening the image to make it more dramatic, to showcase the shafts of light breaking through the clouds a bit more, and to also enhance the golden tones of the light on the waves. (see edited photo)
Class B	NATURE			
Alan Chelius	01_BPS-ChelA-N1-Strange_Sky	4	HM	The sweeping cloud formations are extraordinary and ethereal. While the sun, and perhaps a companion sun dog at the left edge of the clouds may be seen, this image feels like it's really about the clouds rather than the sun. I would have liked to see a bit more of the trees included at the bottom of the image. This could have been achieved either by using a wider lens or crouching down low nearer the trees. A third option would have been to frame the shot a bit lower cutting off the top of the clouds a bit, but I can understand how you might not want to sacrifice the clouds
Pat Falco	02_BPS-FalcP-N2-Good_Morning	6	2	This image is fresh, vivid, and joyful — the crisp corn leaves and lens flare feel celebratory. The placement of the sunburst through the stalks is perfect. You might consider slightly deepening shadows at the base of the corn to focus more attention on the sun and halo. (see edited photo)
Angel Rivera	03_BPS-RiveA-N2-Milky_Way_Above_Trees	2		This image certainly features a lot of celestial bodies. I am reminded of all the time I spent photographing on Martha's Vineyard where there is so little light pollution that you can clearly see the Milky Way with the naked eye. It is always an awe-inspiring sight and I can understand this photographer's desire to capture that. This image reads more like astrophotography than art. It would have been nice to have a subject, even a silhouette of a subject in the foreground. The thin band of treetops doesn't have enough visual interest to qualify. Technically, this image is fraught with artifacts. Perhaps photo stacking could have helped clear up some of the spurious junk. And though I agree that the Milky Way is a sight to behold, compositionally, this is just not a very engaging image.
Mike Ruemmler	04_BPS-RuemM-N2-Sunkissed_Seal_Rock	6	3	As a photographer who works in black and white, I love seeing this image here. Technically it has been handled very well. The tonality is superb and the darkening of the sky focuses our attention where it needs to be. Compositionally, I have to wonder if there might have been a more interesting way to frame this. As is, it's like a giant baked potato centered and occupying the entire frame left to right, with the sunburst very near the center of the frame. I wish there was some degree of asymmetry both horizontally and vertically.
Pat Falco	05_BPS-FalcP-N1-Birth_of_a_Day	1		disqualified (sadly) - This is a splendid, poetic scene — the mist, soft light, and delicate reeds create a lyrical stillness. The light filtering through the trees is handled perfectly, and the composition is well-balanced. It pains me to disqualify it because there isn't a clearly identifiable celestial body visible. Regardless, it is an excellent image.

Angel Rivera	06_BPS-RiveA-N1-Golden_Starburst_MC_lake	6	1	Considering this was shot looking directly into the sun, I feel that the exposure was handled very well. The double starburst — the one around the sun and the second one around the sun’s reflection is unusual and interesting, and the image has a wonderful warm feel to it. I think this image would have been better if the photographer had moved forward to avoid the brush in the foreground. Right now it feels like the photographer is hiding behind a bush spying on the neighbors. Sometimes including a visual element in the foreground is beneficial, adding a sense of depth and enhancing the composition. However, in this case the brush is not a strong enough compositional element and not particularly attractive. Leaving it out would create a cleaner image highlighting the sun and water. Next time, you might also consider an asymmetrical framing for better balance, and a darker exposure to further accentuate the starburst. (see edited photo)
Mike Ruemmler	07_BPS-RuemM-N1-Foggy_Morning_Fireball	4		Yes, this certainly qualifies as a celestial body, but without any other visual elements in the frame it seems more technical than artistic — astrophotography rather than art . Good exposure however. I like seeing the sunspots.
Class B	PICTORIAL			
Angel Rivera	01_BPS-RiveA-P1-Farm_Dinner_Bell_Stars	5		This is a classic composition in the same vein as a lighthouse juxtaposed with a starry sky. The rusty old bell is interesting and I suppose one could try to come up with a philosophical message seeing it cast against the brilliant night sky. Technically, the exposure of the sky looks good. I like seeing the various colors — orange, green, red, etc. among the stars. I do see some artifacts in the sky. I don’t know if these are in the actual image or just jpeg issues. I don’t love the harsh lighting on the bell. Some type of more cinematic, gentler lighting, could help. I also think the bell is a little too bright. Our eyes are naturally drawn to the lighter elements in the scene and I think the bell is stealing the show from the stars. A different style of lighting might provide a good solution.
Mike Ruemmler	02_BPS-RuemM-P1-Shooting_Moon	5		Technically, speaking in astrophotographical terms, the image of the moon is outstanding. Excellent detail, sharpness, and exposure. The motion blur is playful, but without anything else in the frame I feel this image is just a novelty
Pat Falco	03_BPS-FalcP-P1-Original_Solar_Light	9	1	This is an excellent image. I love it. Exposure and focus are perfect, and silhouettes of the building and streetlamps look like a custom-built set for a play. It is also a perfectly balanced composition. I think it was very clever and original to “light” the streetlamp with the sun hidden behind it. Really well done.
Alan Chelius	04_BPS-ChelA-P1-Carolina_Wren_Morning_Sun	6	3	This is a fine image of a bird. Exposure and focus are perfect. The salmon and purple hues of the background are lovely. There is even a glint in the wren’s eye. However, I don’t really feel that this is a photo of a celestial body but rather a quite good photo of a bird that happens to have a celestial body peeking out of the top corner. I would suggest some cropping up from the bottom and in from the right to strengthen the composition. (see edited photo)
Mike Ruemmler	05_BPS-RuemM-P2-My_Stars_Under_The_Sun	6	2	This image has a nice vibe to it — a family or group of friends out enjoying a relaxing day by the sea. The quality of light is nice and the exposure has been handled well. I do feel that the sun is pressed up against the top edge of the frame and that there is a bit more space between the sun and the people than I might like. I understand that people aren’t as patient as rocks, but if you could get a similar shot with the sun a bit lower, I think it would be a better composition. Maybe also consider an asymmetrical placement of the sun for balance.
Pat Falco	06_BPS-FalcP-P2-Gift_of_a_Sunset_Reflection	1		disqualified - This is an interesting image that requires some close inspection to really understand what you are looking at. The sunset reflected in the glass is quite subtle and obscured by the christmas tree. I’m not sure I can actually make out a celestial body. I think bring up the exposure below the bottom edge of the building would be beneficial. (see edited photo)

Angel Rivera	07_BPS-RiveA-P2-Silos_and_Moon_Dusk	5	HM	Another technically excellent image. The exposure, focus, and color were nailed. I love the quality of the soft dusk light. Although this image is somewhat evocative of a rocket poised to lift off for a trip to the moon, I still think a more balanced, asymmetrical framing would be more aesthetically pleasing. (see edited photo)