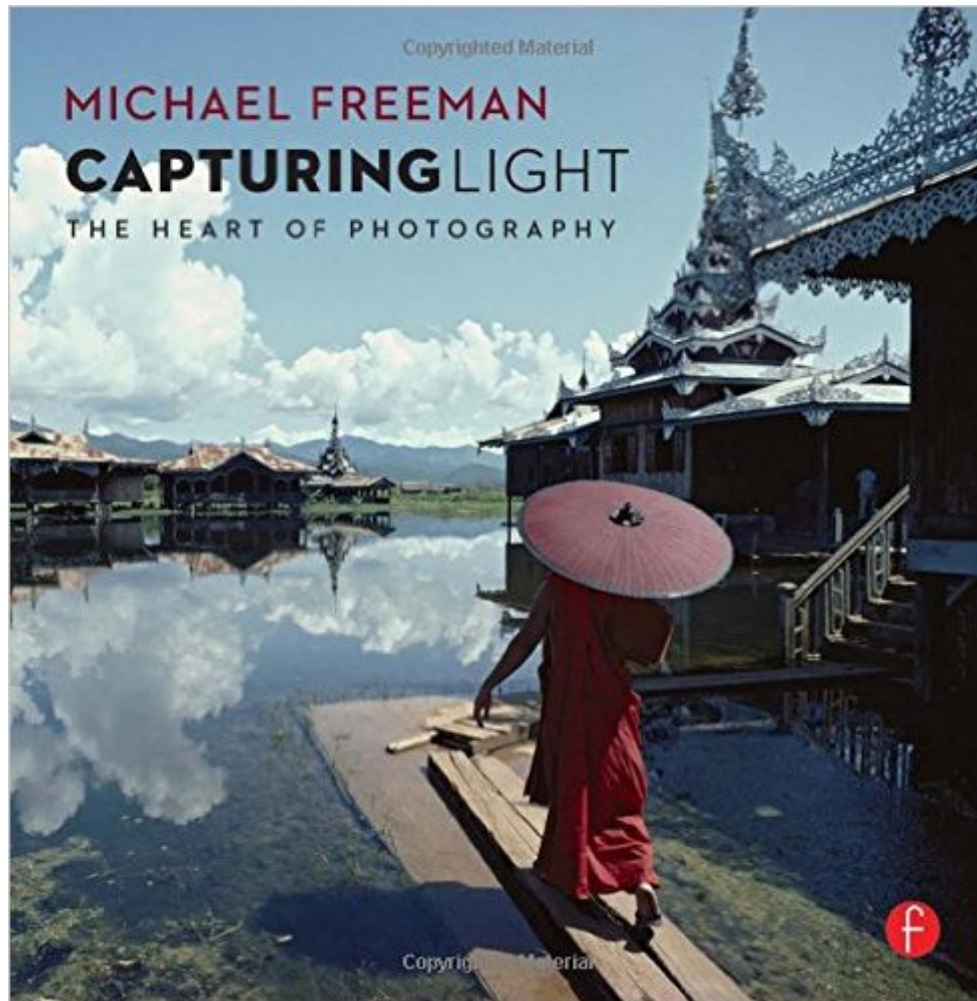


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# Capturing Light: The Heart Of Photography



## Synopsis

In almost all photography it's the quality of light that makes or breaks the shot. For professional photographers, chasing the light, waiting for it, sometimes helping it, and finally capturing it is a constant preoccupation and for some an obsession. Drawing on four decades of doing just this, Michael Freeman takes a simple but practical approach to reacting to, and capturing photography's most important commodity. There are just three sections titled Waiting, Chasing, and Helping: Waiting explains the kinds of lighting that photographers can anticipate and plan for, while Chasing explores the transient, serendipitous light that photographers have to work quickly to exploit. Helping, the final and most technical section, focuses on the skills and techniques for enhancing, reducing, or otherwise controlling light, covering everything from in-the-field shooting choices to technical transformations to post-production.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are probably three things I've purchased in the last few years that have fundamentally changed the way I shoot and improved the quality of pictures I make. The three things are: moving to full frame, getting Freeman's Photographer's Eye, and now this book Capturing Light. I've made substantial investment in the last few years procuring a nice set of gear, namely, Canon 6D, 24-70 2.8mk2, Sigma 35 1.4, 135L, 100Lmacro, among others. For a regular joe like myself, this is a lot of money. Although I saw my photos improving, I always felt that something's missing. The subject

looks sharp, the bokeh is gorgeous, and the scene is properly exposed. What's missing? Then I stumbled across Freeman's Photographer's Eye series (along with Photographer's Mind, Story, etc). It's at that point I realized I was only a gearhead who didn't understand enough about basic elements in photography such as composition and exposure. Without digressing too much, it's after reading Photographer's Eye that I began to compose more creatively and received great feedback from people around me. Photography is similar to painting in that composition and how different graphic elements are put together is far more important than resolution. Now I'm sure you've heard of people mention the beauty of the golden hour (sunrise and sunset), and that other times of the day aren't good enough for photos in terms of quality of light. I bought this concept and for a long while I only shot during those golden hours. After reading this book I came to realize how many opportunities I missed because of such misconception. There's one example in the book that showcases a scene of a backlit building.

In this exhaustive analysis of different types of natural light, the British photographer Michael Freeman illuminates essential principles so that will have you looking for photographic subjects in a different way. His thesis in this lavishly illustrated book is that to capture the best light you need to do three things: wait, chase the light, and sometimes help nature with gear, like diffusers, that have been around a long time. You can wait and plan if you prefer shooting at sunrise or sunset, when light is soft and shadows are long. You can also chase the light, by which Freeman means you hunt for unpredictable occurrences, like a burst of sunlight at the tail end of a storm. A knowledge of what the light will do, combined with serendipity and sheer luck, can turn an ordinary photo into fine art, as Freeman demonstrates throughout the book. *Capturing Light* is not a how-to book. It does not tell you what kinds of cameras or lenses to use, nor does it recommend apertures, shutter speeds, and ISO settings for different conditions. Rather, Freeman explains in a series of short essays what light does under different conditions. You will learn, for example, there are more shades of gray than you ever imagined, and see how mist or rain or fog changes the quality of the image and the feeling it conveys. The heart of photography, as the title says, is all about capturing light, but good photos are also dependent on the photographer's observational skills. If you find your photos are filled with power lines and ugly parking lots, you will learn a lot from reading these short essays and studying Freeman's photos. He will quickly have you observing scenes from a different perspective.

Many, if not most, photography books mention the importance of light. After all, the very word means drawing with light. Usually these books talk about front light, side light and back light, as well

as sunny, cloudy, and overcast days, and a favorite subject is the "golden hour", but usually the taxonomy ends there. Michael Freeman carries the classification into much finer detail, giving his suggestions of how to handle each of his more detailed classifications. The book is divided into three sections: waiting, which describes lighting situations on which the photographer may plan; chasing, which is working with unpredictable light; and helping which presents some of the ways a photographer may manipulate the light. As an example of the depth of his categorization, window light includes directional with soft shadows; classic fall-of; streaming sunlight; narrow window, dark space; and managing several windows. Each category is a double page spread, illustrated with Freeman's images and often including graphics to help understand the condition, with his own narrative and suggestions on how to use the light. The section on helping includes discussion of post-processing techniques, including HDR, but they are not primers. Instead one had better understand specific software to best use his suggestions. The author recognizes the importance of both artistic inclination and capturing the money shot. The entire book is aimed at experienced photographers and is aimed at thinking about light rather than mere technique. There is, for example, no discussion of the basic, three-part approach to exposure. Instead one is expected to understand that changing aperture changes depth of field.

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