

1) Is Annie Leibovitz a photojournalist? Why or why not? Substantiate your claim based on what we have learned about photojournalism and what we know about Leibovitz and her work.

I would argue that Leibovitz is not a photojournalist, at least not for most of her career. Her early work with *Rolling Stone*, where she'd attempt to make herself "invisible" within a band's entourage in order to get truly candid shots, arguably was photojournalism. However, most of her career she has focused on posed portraits, often with elaborate staging and designed to make the subjects look as good as possible. While I don't think there's anything wrong with these if they aren't done deceitfully, I think their lack of objectivity and adherence to truth discounts them from being considered journalistic.

2) Select your three favorite Leibovitz portraits (not necessarily from the film). To the best of your ability describe each from a technical (exposure, composition, lensing) and emotional level – what makes these images so special to you?

My favorite is probably the portrait of John Lennon in the nude kissing Yoko Ono. The composition is fairly simple, but the posing and expressions combined with warm lighting make it a really moving photo. I also like the Whoopi Goldberg portrait, which obviously makes great use of negative space with the milk, but also has really interesting framing with the angled bathtub in what appears to be an otherwise-boring bathroom, making it seem almost as though the photo wasn't staged. My third choice would be the Blues Brothers portrait; it's shot in the corner of a plain room with a forward-facing flash, which fits the characters' personas as it almost feels like they shot this themselves in a tiny apartment.

3) Why photograph celebrities? Do you think that this would be more or less difficult than photographing "regular" people? Why or why not?

Why indeed? Shooting celebrities is likely good work and a good way to advance your career if you can get it, and I imagine if you're a photojournalist interested in arts, entertainment, or fashion, it would be desirable work. Shooting celebrities sounds more difficult to me, as you would be facing heavy peer competition for gigs, tough scheduling constraints (as celebrities are busy people), and overall higher expectations, from both your editor and your subjects. On the other hand, celebrities would likely be better at posing and showing their good side, so your job would likely be easier on the day of the shoot.

4) Financial troubles have plagued Leibovitz since the passing of Susan Sontag. Research and explain her series of unfortunate events and the attempts that she has made to recover.

It seems that Annie Leibovitz's financial troubles are largely the result of simply not managing her money well. According to *New York* magazine, she had a reputation early on at *Rolling Stone* for going over her budgets, losing cameras and even rental cars, and having an expensive cocaine habit. As she continued *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, her troubles continued as her shoots got ever more elaborate, she began living a more eccentric lifestyle with many homes and hired help, and she continued to be poorly organized with her finances. In 2009, her loans and mortgage debts had totalled to \$24 million, and she risked losing the rights to her photographs which she had put up as collateral. She ultimately managed to settle with her creditor over the following few years and keep the rights to her photos, though she ended up selling her expensive New York townhouse.

Sources:

- Cook, John. "Inside the Financial Collapse of Annie Leibovitz." August 17, 2009. *Gawker*. <<https://gawker.com/5339375/inside-the-financial-collapse-of-annie-leibovitz>>
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5) Would you say that Leibovitz takes photos that empower women? Yes or no, explain your answer.

I'd argue that her photos do empower women. The most obvious example would be the nude portrait of pregnant Demi Moore for *Vanity Fair*. The photo showed her in a very provocative and sensual pose despite her large pregnant form, challenging stereotypes about how women are portrayed in pop culture. It showed Demi Moore being unashamed of her body and opened discussion on the taboo topic of pregnancy. I also think it's important that, as Yoko Ono mentioned in the film, she was much more open to collaborating with portrait subjects and getting their approval than many other photographers, empowering women (and others) to control how they're portrayed.