**Ekphrastic Writing ala *Chance Developments*:**

**Extra Credit Opportunity for Engl 110W**

**Background:** I once attended an intriguing poetry reading held in a quilt museum. The show consisted entirely of poems inspired by original art quilts, illustrated by film-projected images of the quilts themselves. This was a new twist on an ancient tradition called “ekphrasis,” wherein one work of art inspires another work of art in a different medium, often poetry. According to the [Poetry Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry_Foundation), "an ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a scene or, more commonly, a work of art." More generally, an ekphrastic poem is a poem inspired or stimulated by a work of art.

This tradition was updated recently by Alexander McCall Smith, a hugely successful Scottish novelist, who has produced *Chance Developments,* a collection of short stories based on “orphaned” photographs, which he defines as “old black-and-white photographs that had no clear provenance and featured unknown people in all sorts of situations.” He chose five of these and wrote five very different stories set in different countries. Some focused on the person who took the photo, others on a person in the photo, and all were told from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. Obviously, there are many other options.

**The assignment:** In class we discussed an “orphan” photo I found at an antiques fair in Santa Cruz, one of three children whose names were recorded on the back, along with a note to the recipient from their grandmother. I’ve posted that photo on the course site, along with a few more I found in an antique store in Santa Cruz.

If you would like to try this form of writing, just choose an “orphan” photo of unknown people and write a story of at least a few pages about the person or people it depicts. I’d prefer that you use one of the photos I’ve posted, but I’ll accept another as long as you include the photo, and as long as you promise it’s an “orphan,” and that this story is your own original work.

Of course, I hope your motivation is primarily artistic, but I will give you **up to 15 extra credit points** for a good one.

There is no due date, but get it to me before the last week of the semester (before finals).