

Composition of visual images

Secondary Lesson Plan



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Source

[In the Picture](#)

Learning area

English

Level

Lower secondary

Description

In the Picture helps students learn how to view visual texts with critical understanding and appreciation. It provides explanations of key concepts, a wide range of student activities and a large number of images, including sixteen full-colour pages, for student discussion and exploration. There are three chapters: 'Visual language: representation', 'Visual language: presentation' and 'Narrative'. 'Composition' is one of the units from chapter 2. *In the Picture* provides images which students could use to complete the suggested activities for this unit.

Purpose

To develop students' awareness of the construction of visual images.

Duration

Approximately 45 minutes.

Possible outcomes

This lesson contributes to the achievement of the following Reading and Viewing outcomes:

- **Texts 4.5** Justifies own interpretation of ideas, information and events in texts containing some unfamiliar concepts and topics and which introduce relatively complex linguistic structures and features
- **Contextual understanding**
 - 5.6 Recognises that texts are constructed for particular purposes and to appeal to certain groups.
 - 6.6 Considers the contexts in which texts were or are created and how these are reflected in texts.

- **Linguistic structures and features**

4.7 With teacher guidance, identifies and discusses how linguistic structures and features work to shape readers' and viewers' understanding of texts.

5.7 Draws on knowledge of linguistic structures and features to explain how texts are constructed.

Materials required

Newspapers and magazines for cutting up. Alternatively, students could be asked to bring photographs from home.

Procedure

Explanation

1. Explain that composing visual images is like composing a song, putting all of the bits together, working out how the pieces are placed in relationship to each other and to the viewer.

2. Provide students with the following framework for examining the composition of an image

Position:

Who or what holds the centre of attention in the picture?

How does the position help make this the centre of attention?

How does the background contribute to the ideas you get from the photograph?

Proximity (who is near whom):

How are people placed in relationship to each other and to objects in the photograph?

What is suggested by the placements? Respect? Affection? Conflict? Unity?

Eyelines:

Where are people looking? At the viewer? At each other? At something out of frame?

What do the eyelines suggest about what is considered important?

Posture:

What do the postures and gestures of the people in the photographs suggest?

Expressions:

What do the expressions reveal?

Is this meant to be seen as a happy moment? A serious occasion?

Activity 1: Advertising

Students choose an advertisement which attracts them from a selection of magazines and apply the framework for examining the composition of an image to the advertisement. The advertised product is often not the centre of attention in an advertisement. What is and why?

Activity 2: Group work

Divide the class into small groups. Each group is to collect a set of each of the following from newspapers, magazines or elsewhere:

- sports photographs
- wedding photographs
- political photographs

After they have collected the photographs they should examine them and discuss:

The sport photographs:

- Who is the star?
- How is 'star' emphasised by the composition of the image?
- Is anything suggested about the role of coaches and trainers?
- Are they seen as being of major importance or as less important?
- Do the images emphasise individuality or team-work?
- What aspects emphasise masculinity (in the case of male sports stars) or femininity (in the case of females)? Are male aspects ever emphasised in females?

The wedding photographs:

How have people and objects been arranged to indicate that the bride is meant to be seen as the centre of attention?

- How do the symbols reinforce the idea of wedding? (For example, flowers symbolise fresh and natural.)
- What is suggested by the composition of the photograph about how brides and grooms are expected to behave in our society?

The politician photographs:

- Who is the centre of attention in the image?
- How are other people and objects positioned in relation to the centre of attention?

Related products

- [Teaching Viewing and Visual Texts: Secondary](#)
- *The Big Picture*