

# Differing interpretations

## Secondary Lesson Plan

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### Source

*Inside Out Student Guide*

### Learning area

English

### Level

Middle secondary

### Description

Students compare individual interpretations of a very short text, finding significant variations. They then examine one example of the way objects and symbols may be used to influence interpretation of accompanying text. This activity is a part of a series of lessons in which students examine the way in which directors of films or plays can read exactly the same text but interpret the words and stage or film the production differently.

### Purpose

To develop an understanding of the reasons for varying interpretations of, and responses to, a single text.

### Duration

Two sessions

### Possible outcomes

In relation to *English — a curriculum profile for Australian schools*, work on this activity could lead to the achievement of outcomes in the following strands:

- **Reading and viewing**
  - Texts
  - Contextual understanding

Links to other learning areas, such as Drama in the Arts, are also possible.

### Materials required

- Video: 'Director's interpretation', *Inside Out*, program 8.
- A copy of the short text for step 1, written on the board or an overhead projector sheet.

## Procedure

### 1 Interpreting a text

Students read and write down an interpretation of the following short text.

*It's very hard to live in a small unit with a screamin' child and a howlin' dog.* That's what she said as she handed the empty revolver to the police.

Groups of students share interpretations. The class discusses the exercise, noting the number of different interpretations and developing an explanation for why this has happened.

### 2 Choices and symbols as aids to interpretation and representation

Students write a list of objects and symbols that they associate with evil.

They discuss which of these objects and symbols they would use if they wanted to present three witches as being very powerful and evil.

### 3 Four directors' views

There are four versions of the opening scenes of *Macbeth* presented in 'Director's interpretation'. Each member of the group is allocated one of the four productions. After viewing all of the productions, individual students note their reaction to the following questions.

- What did the witches look like? Did they remind you of anything that you might have seen or read about before?
- How did they sound?
- What kind of atmosphere was created in the scene?
- What do you think and feel about witches? What makes you respond in this way?
- What is the production saying about the witches and the kind of creatures they are?

Students talk about their responses to these questions with others in their group.

Individuals rank the four productions in order of preference and then explain to the rest of the group the reasons for their ranking.

### 4 Diversity of reactions

The whole class discusses the responses to the productions and the rankings. The diversity of reactions, the related differences in the contexts and the differing values and attitudes of the viewers are noted.

### Extension activity

Develop an interpretation and performance of a further scene from *Macbeth* or from a modern text such as *Tellin' Me Nothin'* by F. Neal. Group decisions are made concerning the appearance of the characters, the set, special effects, changes to the script, actions and reactions of characters. After the performance, the group explains to the class why they chose to produce the scene as they did and the adjustments that were made to the initial concept during the process of developing the performance.

## Acknowledgments

*Inside Out* is an ABC Children's and Education Television production.

## Related products

- [Teaching Viewing and Visual texts: Secondary](#)  
Introduces teaching about visual language and visual texts and provides a range of classroom activities.
- [Teaching language: secondary](#)  
Activities and units to help teach written and spoken language.