



Presenting: Moving Images

LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

Mailbox

WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: The diversity and quantity of the daily school mail is suggested by rhythmical narration and mailbox images.



In this work the students demonstrate:

- some awareness that an object can represent something else (the mailbox is a symbol for the letters themselves)
- some understanding of shot framing
- an understanding of how verbal features can work with visual features to create mood.

Conveys an idea by using visual and verbal features:

- The same mailbox is shot from seven different positions or angles – this reinforces how varied the mail is.
- Shot length is quite short, creating a sense of urgency.
- Uses indirect narrative for a purpose.

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The class was looking at how writers focus on an object and give information about it. The teacher decided to apply this to their filming work. Groups selected an object to focus on, within the school grounds. They had already thought about showing objects from different angles, and this new project provided an ideal context to continue developing that skill.

An earlier classroom poetry focus was an extract from "Night Mail" by W.H. Auden, in which the poet uses a rhythmical sequence of phrases. He describes the contents and appearance of letters that pass through the hands of mail sorters aboard the nightly Postal Special train as it travels from England to Scotland.

Teacher-student conversations

These conversations show the students can:

- begin to explain an idea to be conveyed (what and why)
- explain the conventionally accepted meanings of the visual and verbal features used
- use some terminology to plan for and/or explain the techniques used.

After viewing the first filming, with narration about the physical characteristics of the mailbox:

Teacher: Your video shows the mailbox from interesting angles, but something seems not quite right.

Group: The box is empty!
The mail had already been delivered when we filmed.

Teacher: What could we do to make the audience think about this missing mail?

Group: Wait for the mail to come, then film.
Get some old mail from the office and put it in the box.

Teacher: Could you use words?

Group: We could describe the mail.

That poem you read about the letters gave us a picture in our heads. We could do something like that. [Only the mail description stanza was used.]

Teacher: Do you know what sort of mail comes to the school mailbox?

Group: Letters.
Packets.

We could ask the office lady.

Teacher: Why not ask her to show you some of the mail that arrives. I think she keeps some of the envelopes for people who save stamps.

The group arranged to talk to the office manager. They then experimented with many phrases describing the mail. The ones they thought best were arranged into a sequence. Then they practised speaking them while their video was playing. By taking turns, they found that they were able to catch their breath. They thought that by speaking quickly, viewers would sense the importance and urgency of mail delivery.



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CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Achievement Objectives

Level 2: Viewing and Presenting Functions

Viewing: Reading visual and dramatic texts, including static and moving images, students should respond to meanings and ideas, identifying and describing the verbal and visual features.

Presenting: Using static and moving images, students should use verbal and visual features to communicate ideas or stories using layout, drama, video, or still photography.

Levels 1 and 2: Viewing and Presenting Processes

In achieving the objectives of understanding and using visual language:

Exploring Language: Students should understand that communication involves verbal and visual features which have conventionally accepted meanings.

Thinking Critically: Students should show awareness of how words and images can be combined to make meaning.

Processing Information: Students should view and use visual texts to gain and present information, become familiar with and use appropriate technologies, and write letter and number forms legibly to present ideas.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 40–41

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move these students towards the next learning step, the teacher could encourage them to:

- experiment with even shorter shots of the mail box
- discuss whether showing images of some of the mail might be helpful or not – would this lessen the impact of the original words?
- suggest the variety of mail without the use of words – draft storyboards, discuss and film these. How effective are they compared with the original?

REFERENCES

Auden, W. H. (1976). "Night Mail", in *Collected Poems*, Faber and Faber. This poem was especially written for the documentary film *Night Mail*, General Post Office Film Unit, 1936, Producers, Basil Wright and Harry Watt; Music, Benjamin Britten.

Ministry of Education (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.