Presenting: Static Images

LEVEL 1 2 **3** 4 5

Do You Dare?

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This teacher introduced a response to literature as an opportunity to focus on the ideas in the texts the students were reading. She explained that they would first need to analyse the way these ideas had been conveyed both visually and verbally. To do this they would need to move beyond the content of the story and examine the message, theme or atmosphere.

The next step was to communicate their understanding of this idea in a static image. To do this they would need to identify:
- the purpose
- the audience
- the visual and verbal features which would convey the idea, message, or atmosphere.

Students examined and analysed many different advertisements for popular food and drink, focusing on the way visual and verbal features were combined to convey meaning about the product. They looked at fonts, colours, logos, illustrations, dominant images, background, foreground, size and proportion, symbols, and types of language. The sessions involved teacher-directed close reading of the techniques, the effect of the features and the rationale behind them.

Students practised and applied a variety of techniques, including:
- layout and spacing of letters and words
- size and style of lettering
- using colour, contrast and shape with font to promote atmosphere
- combining visual and verbal features to reinforce an idea.

During the term the class read Oliver in the Garden, Paul Hunt's Night Diary, and The Water Tower as shared books. They discussed the ideas, themes and mood of the stories, and the way these were conveyed by the visual and verbal features, including:
- visual – colour, dominant image, lettering, depth, graphics, symbolism, atmosphere, layout, use of space, balance, background and foreground
- verbal – imperatives, questions, quotations, statements, metaphors, adjectives, onomatopoeia, cliché, idiom.

They discussed how these features can be combined to support and convey an idea or message. They also experimented with the language features.

The teacher then modelled responding with a static image to an idea in the story. She focused on two or three visual features and a verbal feature, according to the following criteria:

- The theme had to be identified.
- The dominant image should link to the idea.
- Graphics, symbols, colours, media, font should add information about that idea or atmosphere.
- Words should support the idea and get attention, drawing on the verbal features examined in earlier lessons.

Students were expected to make their own response to the story using these criteria, in a variety of media. The teacher modelled recrafting her work to improve and strengthen the link between the features and the idea or mood.

Students talked to each other about their work and made suggestions for recrafting. As they worked the teacher talked with them about their idea or theme, and the need to support this with a dominant image. She asked them about the balance of image and text, the colours, and the impact and relevance of the font. They were expected to take responsibility for their own recrafting and proofreading.

When they had completed their recrafting they made a published copy of their static image. They then wrote an explanation about their response to the story, focusing on:
- the purpose
- the intended audience
- the idea
- the techniques
- their rationale.

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Do You Dare?

Teacher-student conversations

While Samantha was drafting her response to *The Water Tower* by Gary Crew and Steven Woolman, her buddy told her that the way she had drawn a face inside the "O" of the word DO spoilt the effect. She asked her teacher for her opinions:

Teacher: What do you want the smiley face to convey?

Samantha: Well, I wanted to show how the water tower affected people's faces and eyes. In the book everyone in the village had those eyes.

Teacher: Have a good look at how it looks. Hold it away from yourself. Does it give the effect you want?

Samantha: They are meant to look spooky and dangerous, like in the book. They're swirly like in the water tower in the book and they are the same shape as the water tower.

Teacher: Well, it looks spooky all right. How will you show the danger – what colour should do that?

Samantha: I'll probably use red – that's bold and it's red for danger on signs.

Samantha made changes to her image and then expressed concern about its layout and impact.

Teacher: What is bothering you about the way it looks?

Samantha: It looks a bit messy. I think it sort of spoils the way the question looks.

Teacher: I see what you mean – it looks a bit cluttered. What could you do to make the question stand out more?

Samantha: Get rid of the writing, but what can I put there instead?

Teacher: Have a look at how you did the base of the tower – there [points to the red area]. Could you tie that in somehow? Remember you said you wanted the red to show danger.

Samantha recrafted her response and then made her published copy.

INTEGRATING VIEWING AND PRESENTING

Students need many opportunities to explore, view, and discuss a variety of static images and to be encouraged and guided in practising these visual techniques. Throughout their classroom programmes, teachers will find images, illustrations, wordless texts, advertisements, posters, logos, signs, and symbols that can serve as useful models for students.

Students should also be given opportunities for close reading and discussion of selected picture books and texts that show how these features of static images support, reinforce, and convey ideas and themes. Sophisticated picture books may also be used.

Students need opportunities to apply and practise these features. They will then develop an appreciation of how to convey their own ideas about literature.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Samantha towards the next learning step, the teacher might encourage her to focus on:

Concept
- Using appropriate terminology, explain more about visual features, e.g., the horseshoe shape on the water tower.
- Explain the illusion she created by depicting the tower and background of swirling water in the shape of an eye.
- Explain how the visual and verbal features combine to convey the idea or mood, e.g., the dominant image, and the horseshoe shape and the words "Do You Dare?"
- Give more information about the intended audience and purpose, and how she designed the image to target them.

This could be done by:
- Identifying the criteria for features which need to be developed.
- Modelling these features and discussing the process.
- Exploring static images and responses to literature that exemplify these features.

Regular teacher conferencing with Samantha while she is planning and developing her response to literature will help her focus on the features she needs to develop.

Do You Dare?

CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Achievement objectives

Level 3: Viewing and Presenting Functions

Viewing: Students should respond to and discuss meanings, ideas, and effect, identifying the purposes for which the verbal and visual features are used and combined.

Presenting: Students should combine verbal and visual features to communicate information, ideas, or narrative through drama, video, computer, or other technologies and media.

Levels 3 and 4: Viewing and Presenting Processes

In achieving the objectives of understanding and using visual language:

Exploring Language: Students should identify important features of verbal and visual features and use them to create particular meanings and effects.

Thinking Critically: Students should identify and discuss ways in which verbal and visual features can be combined for a particular purpose and audience.

Processing Information: Students should view and use visual texts to retrieve, interpret, organise, and present information coherently; use appropriate technology, including fluent handwriting for effective presentation.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 40–41

REFERENCES

Beames, Margaret (2000). *Oliver in the Garden.* Auckland: Scholastic.

Crewe, Gary and Woolman, Steven (1994). *The Water Tower.* Flinders Park, South Australia: Era Publications.

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

Twinn, Michael (1992). *Paul Hunt's Night Diary.* Swindon: Child's Play International.

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Do You Dare?

WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Samantha's response to *The Water Tower* has atmosphere. Its impact lies in the use of colour, lettering, text, and layout to communicate her idea and the mood. The elements combine to convey the message in a powerful way.

Impact

Begins to combine visual and verbal features to convey an idea or mood.

- The rhetorical question implies imminent danger as it sits over the dominant image.

- Dominant image – central, large and bold – connected by colour and layout to swirling water in the background.

- Layout – visual and verbal features are connected by position. The eye is led from the text, which establishes the idea/mood, via the background, to the dominant image.

- Allusion – the background and water tower are both in the shape of an eye, referring to how the villagers' eyes were affected by the tower.

- Colours – imply danger and darkness, a spooky atmosphere.

Student's explanation

The message in my static image is that there is something wrong going on in the water tower.

I want to give this message out to people who read this book. I used the words "Do You Dare?" because the book gave you a spooky feeling that something dangerous was going on in the water tower. The words are linked to the picture of the water tower because they mean to show there was something different in the water tower – so did you dare to enter!

I drew the picture of the water tower so the message would get into people's heads.

I used black to make it bolder. The green is to make the water look like spooky water. Red makes a dangerous feeling. I did the swirly water behind the tower in the shape of the tower. The tower is the dominant image, and it is what I asked the question about.

Concept

- Explains the idea or mood.

Attempts to explain how the visual and verbal features combine to convey the idea/mood.

- Links the rhetorical question to the dominant image.

- Links the use of colour to the idea of danger and mystery.

- Attempts to explain how the features help achieve the purpose.

- Attempts to explain how the features show some awareness of audience.

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Do You Dare?

Student's original work