LEVEL 1   2   3   **4**   5

Allison

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

Violet, whose work is featured here, and Sangita, whose work is featured in the level 3 exemplar Sweet As Sugar, were in the same class and shared the same learning experiences. However, the girls produced work at different levels of the curriculum. Their teacher met their individual needs through carefully targeted questioning and support.

The class had spent most of the term exploring narrative text in the reading programme. The teacher incorporated elements of Bloom's taxonomy into the programme, encouraging the students to extract features from the text, using analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The teacher introduced static images by asking, "How do we communicate messages to our audience?" The class uncovered features of persuasion, mostly in small, mixed-ability viewing groups. The teacher placed a variety of persuasive posters and advertisements around the classroom. Over a week, the groups viewed the images and addressed questions that focused on the language of the images.

- What is the main purpose of this image?
- Why have these particular colours been used?
- What do you think the illustrator meant to say? Is the message clear? Does it match the visuals?
- Who is the target audience? How can you tell?

The teacher used book covers and music posters to explore particular elements of static images and demonstrate that simple ideas can provide greater impact than a busy image. The class discussed materials, medium, colour, and texture that provide impact and brainstormed a list of verbal features.

The class was sharing J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. The teacher asked the students to compose and illustrate limericks about characters from this book to help them explore layout, colour, framing, and font. The students peer-assessed their work in terms of set criteria. They then transferred their main ideas into a PowerPoint presentation to provide a background for a class performance, using images and limited words to tell the story.

The teacher then asked them to select a book they had enjoyed and produce a static image related to it, using features targeted at a particular audience. They had to be able to explain their choice of features.

The teacher made the following suggestions:
- It must have impact.
- Simplify your idea.
- Think about layout, font, colour, framing, and white space.
- Select a medium you know you can manage.

The students drafted their images, practising them in pencil and using scissors, glue, and a photocopier to try different layouts. They asked a buddy and the teacher for feedback before they published their images. Violet decided to illustrate *Allison* by Allen Say.

Teacher-student conversations

Violet had an excellent understanding of the main themes of the story. She had selected the main features of the image, the question, the characters, and how they would be placed, but needed questioning to help draw out the more subtle features of her image.

Teacher:	Okay, I can see you have it well planned in terms of layout, but it's probably the details we need to look at a little more carefully.
Violet:	Yes. I don't want a plain border or font. I'm looking at connecting it more with the book.
Teacher:	Great idea. Okay, what's the theme?
Violet:	It's about a young Chinese girl who is adopted and I guess it's about exploring whether it's okay. Was it a good decision?
Teacher:	What about including some form of Chinese theme in the font and border?
Violet:	I'll do some research in the library. … I also want to link them all in another way. Like a trick for the audience. Just provide them a little clue.
Teacher:	Yes, that would work well. Let's think about that main theme again. It's all about family. Let's brainstorm from that.
Violet:	Family trees!
Teacher:	That's it! What visual feature could you use?
Violet:	Trees, leaves, branches …
Teacher:	Yes. Let's look at your image. Where could this be included so as to not make it too dominant?
Violet:	I'm thinking on the doll and maybe the tie.

LEVEL 1 2 3 **4** 5

Allison

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.

Teachers can explore elements of static images with more advanced students by analysing features and providing explanations, emphasising balance, composition, perspective, atmosphere, exaggeration, and the way words can anchor illustrations. By questioning students in terms of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom's taxonomy), teachers can encourage them to think more deeply about the choices made and how these elements combine to create impact. Students can then develop their own criteria for success.

This teacher used sophisticated picture books to demonstrate how verbal and visual features work together to provide impact.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Violet towards the next learning step, the teacher could help her to focus on:

Concept
- Justify the selection of the idea to be represented.
- Make greater use of appropriate terminology to explain the techniques.

Impact
- Target the audience to greater effect.
- Play with the layout, colour, and font.
- Use exaggeration and different techniques to create a variety of effects.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Achievement objectives

Level 4: Viewing and Presenting Functions

Viewing: Reading visual and dramatic texts, including static and moving images, students should respond to and discuss meanings, ideas, and effects, identifying the purposes for which the verbal and visual features are used and combined.

Presenting: Using static and moving images, students should use verbal and visual features to 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 language 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
http://www.tki.org.nz/r/language/curriculum/p40_42_e.php

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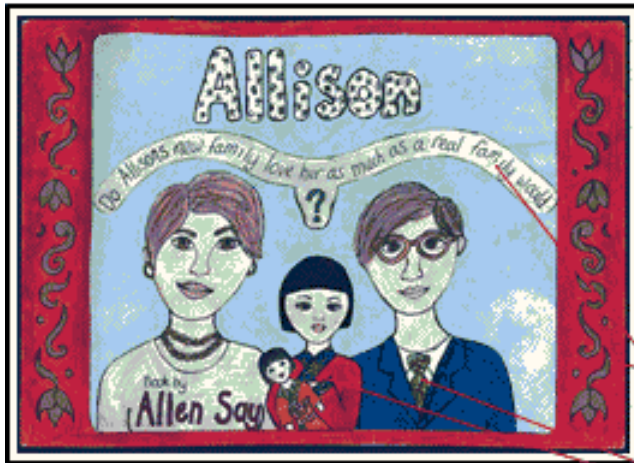Tolkien, J.R.R. (2001). *The Lord of the Rings.* London: Harper Collins.

LEVEL 1 2 3 **4** 5

Allison

WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Through framing, composition, and a rhetorical question, Violet makes effective use of the idea of a family portrait to communicate a key idea from the book.

Impact

Combines visual with verbal features to clearly communicate an important idea.

Uses composition and balance to highlight the unusual family relationship and Allison's difference from her parents.

Provides simple, thoughtful layout and composition.

Uses framing carefully and effectively to suggest both the Chinese aspect of Allison's story and the idea of a family portrait.

Uses symbols to echo ideas from the story.

Uses a rhetorical question to hook in the reader.

| LEVEL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Allison

Student's explanation

I decided on the red border to represent love. The gold effect reflects the Chinese element in the story and it also matches Allison's kimono. I have tried to copy Chinese lettering into the name "Allison" to show her cultural background.

I decided to ask the question, "Do Allison's new family love her as much as a real family would?" I wanted the audience to be able to answer this by viewing my image. I hope they will think that the answer to this question is "yes". I attempted to show that they do love her as much as if she was their own child by showing happy and relaxed expressions on their faces.

This image looks a little like a family portrait on the wall – with the red wallpaper behind. Allison, in the middle, looks interesting and special and her parents look boring and dull – very different from Allison. The shape of the question embraces them and brings them together – unites them.

The bright colours catch your eye. I have included a few little extra bits in the image, such as the tree pattern on Allison's dress and on her Dad's tie. This represents a family tree. On the mother's necklace it says, "You're not my Mommy" and on Mei Mei's [the doll's dress], "Where did Mei Mei come from?"

I also tried to make it look a bit more adult, as people my age have read it and enjoyed it, but I think little kids wouldn't get it. They wouldn't understand the concepts about adoption in the book.

Concept

Justifies the selection of an important idea to be communicated.

Explains how the frame, composition, and use of colour combine to convey the idea and help achieve the purpose.

Explains how the visual and verbal features used show an awareness of audience.

Uses some appropriate terminology to plan for and explain the techniques used.

LEVEL 1 2 3 **4** 5

Allison

Student's original work