



Presenting: Static Images

ACCESS THE ENGLISH EXEMPLARS ONLINE AT www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/

LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

Solitaire

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The teacher had identified that the class needed help with reading comprehension, and so it became a focus for the year's activities. She used the resource *What is Comprehension and How to Teach It* to help plan the programme, including ideas on introducing and exploring narrative texts.

When their reading comprehension skills improved, the teacher turned to visual texts. She began by sharing *My Dad* by Anthony Browne. Over a number of sessions the class explored the different features of the text and how the illustrations reflected the text. Students were questioned in response to verbal text – what sort of dad is this? What qualities does he have? Can we tell what the book is about from the verbal text only?

The book was read and discussed. Students responded to the visual text as a class and in small sharing groups, and then reported back. Questions focused on the visual links and the quality these were expressing, for example:

Question: On page 8, Dad is represented as a horse. Why do you think this is? Answer: Dad is portrayed as a horse's head and the back of the chair legs are a horse's legs and hooves. The quality is that he is healthy. He eats a lot. He has a big appetite.

They then compiled a list of qualities represented in the visual text.

The teacher introduced the features of a book cover, which were labelled on a photocopy. She asked:

- Why do you think the illustrator has selected this colour for the background?
- Where do we find the dominant image?
- Look at the font – what do you notice?
- Does the picture match the title?
- Where do we find extra information, for instance, the author's name?

In small groups the students analysed a variety of sophisticated picture book covers. The task was to discuss particular features and the rationale behind them. The main elements were then shared, and summarised on a chart.

A graphic designer was invited to talk with the class. He focused mainly on discussing "What's the point? What message are we trying to get across to our audience? If we are attempting humour, we need to select our audience carefully."

He shared examples of his work and students asked why he had selected particular features, especially in relation to layout. His main points were summarised on a wall chart.

The teacher had laminated a number of lettering cards, and downloaded activities from English Online (<http://english.unitecology.ac.nz/>). Students completed a contract independently over a period of days. These activities

were then assessed using two different items from the Assessment Resource Banks (<http://arb.nzcer.org.nz/nzcer3/Nzcer.HTM>).

They were to select a book they enjoyed and produce a response in the form of a static image conveying a strong sense of the book. They were now ready to determine particular criteria for their static image – the charts around the room were used as a reference.

The class developed the following criteria:

- The message must be clear: there needs to be a point to the image.
- It must reflect a theme explored in the text.
- It must have impact. We need to think about colour, font, dominant image, layout, framing, white space.
- It must include a verbal feature. This could include a question, a quote, a joke.

Students drafted their images in small groups so that that teacher could question and conference on the spot. There was such a range of abilities she varied expectations accordingly.

Teacher-student conversations

Florence had attempted three different drafts. Having found the first two a little complicated and fussy, she discussed the third with the group, and then with the teacher.

- Teacher: Florence, that layout looks good. Are you pleased with that?
- Florence: Yes, I wanted the joker to be in the middle as it is the dominant figure. It adds a bit of mystery and is the central character. Well, it's a weird book but I think the father [joker] is the main character, anyway.
- Teacher: Really interesting framing – where did you get that idea from?
- Florence: Well I just wanted to keep it black and white to look like a pack of cards, and I needed to include verbal features so I just came up with that idea.
- Teacher: I'm just wondering if the font can be enlarged. Can our audience read it easily?
- Florence: Can you hold it up and I'll move back and see. I'll make it a bit bigger but it will still need to fit on the page.
- Teacher: I love the idea of all the small questions for the background. It gives it some depth.
- Florence: I'm going to put a trick in there actually. Remember Chris [graphic designer] said he does that sometimes?
- Teacher: Great. Now just check the criteria. As there are so many words, remember to leave some white space. Can you think where that will be?
- Florence: Well, definitely the joker and the cards themselves.

Florence then went on to colour and complete her work. She then confirmed that all the criteria had been met.



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INTEGRATING VIEWING AND PRESENTING

Students benefit from many opportunities to explore, view, and discuss a variety of static images. They can be encouraged and guided to use these visual techniques. Throughout the programme there will be a large supply of images, illustrations, wordless texts, advertisements, posters, logos, signs, and symbols that can serve as useful models for students to develop skills.

Older students can analyse features and provide explanations in small and class groups. Emphasis can be placed on balance, composition, perspective, atmosphere, exaggeration, and how words can anchor illustrations.

By questioning students in terms of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, the teacher can encourage them to think more deeply about the elements chosen and how they combine to create impact. In turn, students can develop their own criteria for success.

The teacher used a number of sophisticated picture books. Combined with text the illustrations were invaluable in exemplifying the impact of combining the verbal and visual. The guest graphic designer shared a number of his own advertisement designs for viewing in terms of visual features.

WHERE TO NEXT?

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

Concept

- Provide a more detailed explanation which targets an identified audience.
- Provide greater justification for choices, relating more closely to the central themes of the text.

Impact

- Explore ways of achieving greater integration of verbal and visual features for a particular audience with focus on the idea, purpose, and audience.
- Explore ways to use and present text with greater clarity.

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

REFERENCES

Browne, Anthony (2000). *My Dad*. London: Doubleday.

Dymock, Susan, and Nicholson, Tom (1999). *What is Comprehension and How to Teach It*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

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



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Florence has communicated with some clarity the idea of mystery and chance through an appropriate dominant image and relevant text used as both the frame and the background.



Impact

Combines visual and verbal features to clearly communicate an important idea or mood.

- Limited use of colour, in keeping with a pack of cards.
- Represents the father as a joker, to indicate chance.
- Places the dominant image centrally.
- Framed with leading philosophical questions from the book.

Good sense of proportion and effective use of white space. This allows the questions in the background to create a sense of atmosphere and mystery.



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Student's explanation

I took time to select my colours. They represent playing cards. Why playing cards? Well, the book is organised into chapters based on the cards. The cards are a central theme of the book.

Keeping it simple – just using black, red, and white – is also effective as it helps things to stand out and provides contrast. Once again, in terms of the font, I linked it to the story. I selected a smaller font to provide a background image. The font I chose for the border is the same as the book.

I decided on "Who am I?" because in the book there are many people who are related to each other but they don't actually know this. By the end of the book, it all comes together and the questions are answered. I chose five quotes from the book to make a border. The book revolves around these five philosophical questions.

The joker is the main figure so it had to be central. The father represents himself as a joker. The queen of hearts represents the mother and the nine of diamonds the boy. He is nine years old so that's why it's a nine of diamonds. As they are both red cards they stand out. I have hidden some questions in the background and also the title and author of the book. I wanted to provide a bit of a trick for the audience. Another reason I decide on cards for the theme is because without some background knowledge of cards I think the reader may find the book a bit confusing.

Concept

Uses appropriate terminology to explain the techniques.



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Student's original work

