



# Presenting: Static Images

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## The Rabbits Are Coming

### 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 *Reading Comprehension* to help plan the programme, including ideas on introducing and exploring narrative texts.

When their reading comprehension skills improved, the teacher turned to the visual features of picture books. 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.unitechnology.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.

Maeve elected to work on John Marsden's allegory *The Rabbits*.

### Teacher-student conversations

Maeve had trialled a number of ideas and decided on photocopying/collage, as she was attempting to use layers to show the rabbits' many facets. She was having trouble deciding on colour and font when the conversation took place.

Maeve: I just can't get the colours right. I don't really want them to be bright. I don't think it goes with what I am wanting to do. ... I'm thinking watery paint or dye.

Teacher: Actually what about water colours?

Maeve: I'll give them a go. I've decided on red, orange and blue but just can't think of what would suit "foreign".

Teacher: OK. Close your eyes. I'll say the word "foreign" over a few times, and I want you to think of the first image that comes into your head.

Maeve: War, army coats.

She then painted the background.

Maeve: Do you think it will look dull if I keep the font white? It's just that I need a white space, and it will match the quotes.

Teacher: No, probably a good idea. They need to show up on that background.

Maeve: Yes, because the background is fussy I want the words to be plain. Maybe the title will be different though. I want it to reflect the quirkiness of the rabbits. I'm cutting it out of magazines and am going to have it look like it's moving.



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# The Rabbits Are Coming

## 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 Maeve towards the next learning step, the teacher might encourage her to focus on:

### Concept

- Encourage the critical evaluation of the impact of the image and the clarity of the message with so many features.
- Provide greater justification for the choice of ideas.

### Impact

- Possibly the title "The Rabbits Are Coming" isn't as clear as it could be.
- The audience could be identified and specifically targeted.

## 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](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 (2001). *Reading Comprehension: What Is It? How Do You Teach It?* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Marsden, John (1998). *The Rabbits*. Port Melbourne: Lothian Books.

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



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## The Rabbits Are Coming

**WHAT THE WORK SHOWS:** Maeve shows considerable insight in combining visual and verbal features to communicate, with some impact, an important idea from the text.



### Impact

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

- Chooses colour carefully to represent the four main characteristics of the rabbits.
- Uses white space for visibility of font and quotes.
- Uses textured layers and depth to represent the many facets of the rabbits' personalities.
- Use frames to represent division and destruction.
- Provides quotes from the text to show key ideas.



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## The Rabbits Are Coming

### Student's explanation

I selected my four main colours to reflect the four main personality traits of the rabbits in the book.

The red to match Evil as it can be seen as "bloody" and something of a "devilish" colour.

The orange to match Determined as it is a strong, bright and bold colour.

The khaki green for Foreign as it reminds me of the war, green trench coats and forced migration.

Lastly I thought a smoky blue for Destructive as it reflects pollution and factory smoke.

For the title *The Rabbits are Coming* I decided that something more colourful and contrasting would be effective. It would help it to stand out.

For my key words – Determined, Foreign, Evil, and Destructive – I decided on a font which allowed me to show the tough exterior of the rabbits, with the black outline and the lonely, blank interior. For *The Rabbits are Coming*, I used magazine letters to show the imperfections and the quirky characteristics of rabbits.

I created a background that shows all kinds of rabbits. I wanted to represent both fictional rabbits (like Peter Rabbit) and non-fiction information about rabbits, like how to care for them and what to feed them. The reason I did this was to reflect the personalities of the rabbits. On one hand they can be very cute; on the other, annoying and destructive.

The key words are each linked to direct quotes from the book. *The Rabbits are Coming* is a type of warning. The words are travelling from left to right – I wanted to make them look like they are moving along like, "Look out, they are on their way!" The black lines have been made to look like someone has smashed the page and cracked it into its four sections. This is to reflect the destructive nature of the rabbits.

I have an audience of young adults in mind as the underlying messages are probably too difficult for younger ones to understand.

### Concept

Explains how colour and font combined with words can convey ideas and mood, and show an awareness of audience.

Uses some appropriate terminology to explain the techniques.



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## The Rabbits Are Coming

Student's original work

