Visual Literacy: Using Images to Increase Comprehension

Children live in a very visual world

Builds on children’s experiences

Deepens children’s understanding of texts

Very effective for developing writing

Supports ELL children in understanding

Excellent for visual and kinesthetic learners

Students need visual images to help them read and understand texts. Visual information can support reading and help make meaning of text. Focus on how to use images to build skills.

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Why Visual Literacy?

We live in a world where visual images are becoming increasingly important as most information is presented as a combination of words and images.

It is essential that students not only have the capacity to derive literal meaning from texts but also to develop an understanding of how the texts are produced.

What is Visual Literacy?

**Visual literacy:** The ability to decode, interpret, create, question, challenge and evaluate texts that communicate with visual images as well as, or rather than, words. Visually literate people can read the intended meaning in a visual text, interpret the purpose and intended meaning, and evaluate the form, structure and features of the text.
Written and Visual Language

Examples of teaching skills through visual literacy

- Exploring visual texts and the context in which they occur.
- Teaching the codes, conventions and structures of text to support students’ constructing their own texts.
- Using a series of strategies for reading visual texts and responding in writing/drawing demonstrating understanding – comprehension.
- Integrating visual and verbal texts.

Reading and Viewing form a single Strand of the English profile because visual texts, like written texts, involve the use of language to make meaning. Many of the skills and understandings relevant to the study of written and visual language are the same.

Contextual Understandings relevant to the study of both written and visual texts:

- Texts can be based on either fact or fiction
- The use of language depends on shared cultural understandings
- A text may have different meanings for different people

Linguistic Structures and Features common to both written and visual texts:

- Point of view
- Sequence in plot and sub-plot
- Narrative structures Expository structures
Visual Literacy

Give children powerful messages about images, language, and literacy.

Students should learn to critically analyze the visual texts and the socio-cultural contexts surrounding the information.

To make meaning from images, the “reader” uses the critical skills of exploration, critique, and reflection.

Re-composing Helps Understanding

• "Re-composing" means reading information in one form and summarizing it in another form (such as a diagram or table).

• If you ask students to re-compose the information, they can no longer simply copy their source. They need to think about what a paragraph means before they can summarize it as a visual text.

• Re-composing is a key strategy in aiding comprehension.
A Character Study
Comprehension

Literal (explicit)
• What was the last thing Max jumped over?

Inferential (implicit)
• Why did Max jump bigger and bigger things?

Creative
• What else could Max have jumped over?

Critical
• What lesson is this story telling you?

Visual
• What shows you Max will be in trouble at the end?
Max is a “show-off” flashy
Max is jubilant.
Min and Mop are timid.

Max Jumps

Hoping to impress his friends their
names are Min and Mop
Max jumped over a stick, and
leaped across a log.

triumphantly Max soars over
the peaceful fence. Min and Mop
watch different ways. filled with
excitement, laughing, up on they
feet and chewing grass and with the
mouths open big to let flies in!
When Max flies over the hedge
he gasps Splat! SPlish! Smuch.
Max is in the mud Who Ho Ha:

Filled with a lot of joy Max
hops over the flowers, leaps over
the log, and flies over a pile
of sticks. Nervously Min and
Mop watch him jump, tighten
their muscles, and hold their
breath.

ostentatious
showy

happy jubilant
The Visual Text...

The visual text is the clearest way to present information.

To make meaning from images, the “reader” uses the critical skills of exploration, critique, and reflection.

What is seen with the eye and what is “seen” with the mind.

Comprehension

- Summary
- Inference
- Perspective

Charts, diagrams, cross sections, and maps are a few of the elements that are as critical as the words they supplement.

Layers of Experience within a Discipline

- Ethical Considerations
- Trends
- Patterns
- Details

Over Time

Perspectives

Issues / Themes

Complexity

Relationships: In, Between, Across Disciplines
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Somebody</th>
<th>Wanted</th>
<th>But</th>
<th>So</th>
<th>Then</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The giant</td>
<td>to know what the little girl had</td>
<td>she would only show him one thing at a time</td>
<td>he kept demanding to see more</td>
<td>he saw himself in the mirror and ran away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The giant</td>
<td>to scare the little girl</td>
<td>she wasn’t afraid</td>
<td>she showed him her mirror</td>
<td>he saw his reflection and ran away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The little girl</td>
<td>to cooperate</td>
<td>the giant was very demanding</td>
<td>she showed him her mirror</td>
<td>he saw how mean he was and ran away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The little girl</td>
<td>to mind her own business</td>
<td>the giant wouldn’t leave her alone</td>
<td>she tricked him into looking in the mirror and he ran away</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
The Hysterical Giant

The giant’s laugh was frantic and he laughed so much that his tummy hurt. It was side-splitting.

Hysterical, he ran around in circles like a cat chasing his tail and he knocked down a tree.

### Synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>meaning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hysterical</td>
<td>Out of control, the crazy giant jumped up and down. He made a big, big hole in the ground and was never seen again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier-It-Up</td>
<td>(Synonyms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frantic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>side-splitting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visuals can enhance and accelerate classroom instruction for using images to build skills.

Grandpa can ride a bicycle.

Beyond belief, Grandpa can ride a bicycle very quickly and happily around our little town.

Building Blocks of an Image...

Manipulatives as Visual Literacy Tools
It is essential that students not only have the capacity to derive literal meaning from texts but also to develop an understanding of how the texts are produced.

Color-Coded Parts of Speech
(Humans process visuals 60,000 times faster than text!) Colors evoke predictable responses
Max is a “show-off” flashy
Max is jubilant.
Min and Mop are timid.

Max jumps

Hoping to impress his friends their
names are Min and Mop
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Max is in the mud Ha Ha Ha!

ostentatious
showy

jubilant
happy
Visualizing is thinking

Most young readers can interpret ("read") diagrams and maps long before they can read the same information in words and sentences.

• Support their reading with nonfiction books that cue the unfamiliar words with clear diagrams, not just photographs.

• Older children who are "unable to read" may be merely waiting for you to provide them with illustrated nonfiction.

Students can use a table to list all the questions they aim to answer. The table helps them to see how much they have researched and what still needs to be investigated.

Support students’ reading with nonfiction books that cue the unfamiliar words with clear diagrams, not just photographs.

Visual literacy: The ability to decode, interpret, create, question, challenge and evaluate texts that communicate with visual images as well as, or rather than, words. Visually literate people can read, interpret the purpose and intended meaning, and evaluate the form, structure and features of the text. They can also use picture and word images in a creative and appropriate way to express meaning...

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