
English Language Arts 9
Unit 5: Visual Literacy
Visual Terminology

Name:

Date:

Note:

Be sure that you understand the following terms (often referred to as features of text or elements of text) by the time we have completed this unit on visual literacy. I also suggest that you refer to your Resource Lines text (pages 198-200) as well.

1. **Background:** Objects appearing smaller or “behind” more significant objects in a visual.
2. **Balance:** The way shapes, objects, and colours are arranged within a visual. When elements are balanced, they create a feeling of order or harmony.
3. **Colour:** Use of colour can communicate many things. Very often colour is used to create mood in still images (ex. Dark colours create a mood of mystery or sadness).
4. **Composition:** The arrangement of visual elements (how the visual is designed.)
5. **Contrast:** A stark difference between objects, ideas, or other features of text in a visual. It could be a difference between objects which underlie the message of the visual, or something as simple as contrast in colour.)
6. **Emphasis:** Drawing attention (or special interest) to a particular element of a visual using one or more of the features of text.
7. **Focal Point:** The main area of interest in a visual.
8. **Foreground:** Giving prominence to one element of a visual (appearing in the “front” of the visual, for lack of a better term.)
9. **Message:** The theme of the visual (the “lesson” the artist wants us to take away after viewing it.)
10. **Movement:** A sense of energy in a visual, determined by the spaces between objects and by the objects themselves.
11. **Perspective:** The appearance of objects as having a sense of depths or distance.

12. **Proportion:** A relationship between objects with respect to size, placement, or importance. May also be called scale.
13. **Subject:** What the visual is about. The subject can usually be stated in one word, such as “teamwork”. Often, people confuse the subject with the theme or message.
14. **Media Text:** Any communication product, including radio and television, movies, billboards, magazine and television advertisements, books, paintings, photos, collages, posters, comics, and web pages.
15. **Connotations:** The associations a word or image evokes.
16. **Target Audience:** An audience made up of the same kind of people, for example, children between the ages of eight and twelve.
17. **Stereotypes:** The suggestion that all people belonging to a certain group look and/or behave the same way.
18. **Texture:** The quality or feel of an object’s surface, such as roughness and smoothness. Through the skilled use of lines and dots in visual images, texture can be “felt” with the eyes.
19. **Caption:** The words beneath a visual that explain the subject and give background information. Captions help to shape the meaning of the visual, sometimes in misleading ways.
20. **Title:** The words that are oftentimes above a visual or placed so that it is easily recognized. Titles are often in bold lettering and are usually in a larger font than the rest of the words on the page.
21. **Slogan:** Often a catchy phrase that is associates with a product or organization that is being advertised. (Ex. Nike’s slogan is “Just Do It!” McDonalds’ slogan is, “I’m Lovin’ It”)
22. **Layout:** The positioning of articles and photos in a news publication. Layout also includes the use of borders, colour, and artwork.