

The Grammar of Visual Design

An Approach to Visual Literacy

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Understanding Visual Coding

Angles: The angle or point of view used in an image suggests particular relationships between the viewer and the image.

Audience: Group of people at which a text, image, commercial, film or TV program is targeted.

Codes: System of signs and symbols that communicate particular meanings.

Colour: Colour is used to both create images to convincing images and suggest particular moods or feelings. All images use colour differently. Colour can be described in terms of tone and saturation. See below for Tone. Saturation is the degree of purity in a colour. See Colour chart.

Composition: The combination of and integration of the various elements of an image into a whole text.

Demand: When the eg. person or animal looks at the viewer, the participant's gaze connecting with the viewers demands us to look/ connect with them.

Gaze: The directed look of either a viewer or a figure in the image.

Layout: Organization of visual and verbal (written) elements, such as magazines, advertisements, movie posters etc.

Mode: The textual form and constriction of both written and visual texts.

Point of View (POV): An image, illustration or camera shot taken from a character's point of view, showing what a particular character sees.

Reading path: A sequence that guides the eye in certain directions around the composition of an image.

Salience: The element(s) in an image which attract the viewer's attention to varying degrees. These are realized by factors such as placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrast in colour or tone.

Social distance: Culturally determined boundary which suggests different relations between the represented participants and the viewer.

Eg. Close up - intimate distance

Medium shot - social distance

Long shot - public distance

Symbols: Visual signs or shapes (including letters, numbers etc) usually something that stands for something else.

Eg.  Representing a church

 Hospital or medical

Tone: The degree of lightness or darkness of a single colour or coloured area.

Vectors: Lines (abstract or actual) that guide the viewer's eye across an image. They may be objects (such as arms, legs, a pole, and the side of a house) or invisible lines, such as the direction of a gaze from a person's eye to another person or object. They can also slice a photograph into 2 or 3 parts. It can show a split in opinions, groups of people or objects. The idea is to work out why.

They can connect objects or people within a picture. They can show a relationship and then it is up to us to determine what this relationship is eg. A line may join 2 people so maybe they share the same belief.

Think about Holy pictures... that show lines coming from the clouds above Jesus. What meaning do these lines convey?

Viewer: Someone looking at or engaging with a visual text

Visual texts: Texts (still or moving) that are purely image or that have a combination of image and text.

Blue	Peace, tranquillity, truth, dignity, power, melancholy, coolness, heaviness. Regarded as being therapeutic.
Yellow	Happiness, cheerfulness. Can denote caution, decay, and sickness.
Red	Warmth, urgency, passion, heat, blood, excitement, danger and hostility. Used as an accent colour, it can promote expectations and quick decision-making.
Green	Growth, fertility, health, cheerfulness, vegetation, money. Signifies life, new growth, energy and faith.
Grey	Cool detachment, bleakness, and lack of intensity.
Purple	Wealth, royalty, sophistication, intelligence. Also the colour of passion and love.
Black	Death, rebellion, strength and evil. Associated with the supernatural, it can also suggest inner strength and determination, as well as power and formality.
White	Purity, chastity and cleanliness.
Black and white	Nostalgia, seriousness, truth, detachment.
Brown	Credibility, stability, and neutrality.
Orange	Warmth, strength of personality. Associated with autumn, it also has broad appeal.

The Rabbits/ Shaun Tan.

Visual Analysis.

Working Notes.

Cover.	<p>Relevant Visual Cues.</p> <p>Representational Meanings:</p> <p>Participants: Who? Rabbits, strangely shaped and uniformed:surreal; Sharp pointed shapes: Bonaparte hat, strange guns:Tiny. indigenous representations, miniature kangaroos? bandicoots? with coiled tails. Vectors/ shadows. Elongated prow of ship/overarching. Turbulent cloud.Symbolic use of colour/Black/Red blood/passion/death</p> <p>Interactive meanings:</p> <p>Angles:Horizontal/Oblique not part of my (viewer) world Low(viewer) to high (ship) endowing the latter with power. Social distance:soldiers close to viewer. Modality: surreal: Super- real: not naturalistic. a high degree of</p> <p>Compositional Meanings:</p> <p>Left/Right/given/New: Salience: Soldiers and the ship</p>	<p>Visual Grammatical Resources.</p> <p>Symbols/Colour -</p> <p>Vectors</p> <p>Angles.</p> <p>Social distance</p> <p>Given/New</p> <p>Salience - Size, focus, colour, distance</p>
End-Papers.	<p>Brolgas and flowers.</p> <p>Soft-tranquil blue setting:White innocent birds: Idyllic natural world</p> <p>Black border/Vector.</p> <p>Juxtaposition: Deep blue replaced by dirty brown: configuration of British flag..Union Jack? See white seal of authority.</p>	<p>Vector</p> <p>Symbol.</p>
Title Page.	See shift in idyllic image of end- papers,new given/right:shadowy top..impending doom?	

Napoleon
French military
+ political leader
who rose to power
during the French
Revolution
1804-1815
Strong character
war like

A particular
mode in which
something exists
or is experienced
or expressed

modality = truthfulness
or credibility

	Why is the font represented so?	
DPS1:	<p>Rep.Meanings;</p> <p>Large reptiles: rocky outcrop.opening of a vast cave?Strong, vivid colours: small snail-like creatures.Tiny white birds SymbolsContrast of colour: strong earth /blue sky.Horizon , hint of funnel and smoke. Time standing still:surreal: empty/vast/silent.See vectors...white text on black background...left to right..also deep blue vector top to bottom.</p> <p>Interactive Meanings:</p> <p>Reptile's eye...offer? Close social distance to viewer Angles: Horizontal/ Oblique? Not part of your world? Viewer, low to high view of vast black and blue expanse...sense of being dwarfed ,overpowered ,alienated?</p> <p>Compositional Meanings:</p> <p>Left/Right..given/ New contrast: Direction from past- forward(writing vector)</p> <p>Rock/ Reptiles are salient.</p>	<p>Vectors.</p> <p>Symbolic colour.</p> <p>Offer</p> <p>Social Distance</p> <p>Angles.</p> <p>Information Value: Given/ New.</p> <p>Salience.</p>
DPS2:	<p>Rep. Meanings:</p> <p>Bandicoots v Rabbits: Transactional reaction Across the gutter of the text:Large machine driven vehicle: birds, flowers, animals Symbols: Ominous manufactured vehicle about to overtake the " real world". Existing world magnificently represented through a palette of deep, warm, soft colours: pink, yellow, mauve: Track for</p>	<p>Vectors.</p> <p>Symbols.</p>

	<p>impending arrival of ominous vehicle as a path towards viewer (vector)?</p> <p>Interactive meanings: Angles: Viewer low to high (present landscape) Frontal: Part of my world. Close social Distance Contextualised/ Illuminated?</p> <p>Compositional meanings: Top/ Bottom..Ideal/Real Salience: Present world(landscape) And black-lined pathway.</p>	<p>Angles.</p> <p>Social distance</p> <p>Colour</p> <p>Ideal/ Real</p> <p>Salience.</p>
DPS 11:	<p>Rep. Meanings: Rabbits in formal suits/tails :ridiculous top hats (symbols of authority) Ruling Class: large and grotesque: Note the official stamp of the realm..authority to steal the children Symbolism: Black/White contrast..but the Rabbits are black the children white/innocent? So are the box-kites spiriting off the children(usually symbols of joy and freedom) They are being led away by black, menacing ships and tiny white strings.NB: See bandicoots running after them...hands outstretched</p> <p>Interactive meanings: Angle: Low viewer to Rabbits high. Horizontal/ oblique..not part of our world. Close social distance: confronting and intimidating for the viewer.</p>	<p>Vectors</p> <p>Symbols.</p> <p>Angles</p> <p>Social distance</p> <p>Colour.</p>

Summary of visual codes

adapted from Jon Callow - *Image Matters*
(PETA)

What's going on? (Field)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action qualities• Concept qualities
How is the viewer involved? How is a relationship established between the viewer, the image and the image maker? What type of relationship? (Tenor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Angles• Shot distance• Colour• Offers and demands
How is the image composed? (Mode)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading paths (lines & vectors)• Layout (given / new ideal / real)

A SCAFFOLD FOR READING VISUAL IMAGES

- Use this scaffold to make notes to support your reading of texts that incorporate visual images.

	SOCIAL CONTEXT		
Publication & demographic or target audience.			
Purpose of text.			
VISUAL CODES	WHAT'S GOING ON?		
Narrative OR concept?			
Background: realistic OR abstract?			
VISUAL CODES	HOW IS THE READER INVOLVED?		
Gaze: offer or demand?			
Angles: vertical angle (high, low, straight on) & power relationship horizontal angle & reader involvement			
Framing of shots: (intimate – close up, social – medium, public – long).			
Colour (symbolism).			
VISUAL CODES	COMPOSITION OF THE IMAGE		
Given / New <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>G</td><td>N</td></tr></table>	G	N	
G	N		
Ideal / Real <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td>I</td></tr><tr><td>R</td></tr></table>	I	R	
I			
R			
Salience			
Reading path & vectors			

