

The Study of Visual Texts at Oak View Primary and Nursery School

What are 'visual texts'?

A visual text can be any of the following; its focus is on the still or moving images used to convey a message to the 'reader'. They can be used to persuade, inform or entertain and are accessible by all. The level of interpretation is dependent upon the individual and the exploration of the text as prompted by the teacher.

- Adverts
- Film
- Graphic novels
- Picture books (for all ages)
- Computer games
- Paintings

What are the benefits of visual texts/visual literacy to children?

The comprehension of a visual text is the understanding of the images in the context that they are being used. The reader will be expected to bring their own life experiences and understanding of the world around them to unravel a meaning.

- Literal comprehension
- Inferential comprehension
- Personal engagement and response to a text
- Engagement with visual impact of a text
- Storytelling techniques
- A rich and broad vocabulary
- Greater engagement of boys

How can we study them?

Primarily, one must identify the different elements which make up a text. These include: images, words, colour, typographical features (font size, type of font), layout, camera angle. What are the images trying to tell us? As with a written text, children are expected to elaborate upon their responses and justify these using evidence from the text.

Academic research supporting the study of visual texts

Children Reading and Creating Visual Texts

Scholars agree that reading pictures is indeed a multifaceted act. Further, children often look at illustrations more closely and "see" details in pictures (Kiefer, 1995) that are missed by "skipping and scanning" adults (Meek, 1988, p. 19). Several individuals have explored how children read images in text (Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Kiefer, 1995; Styles & Arizpe, 2001; Walsh, 2003). For example, Arizpe and Styles (2003) used three multi-layered picture books to investigate how children ages 4-11 read visual texts. The researchers found that the children, who participated in individual and group interviews about the literature, were sophisticated readers of visual texts. The children "read colours, borders, body language, framing devices, covers, endpapers, visual metaphors and visual jokes" (p. 224). Walsh (2003) also examined children's reading of visual texts and found that the images in picture books evoked a variety of responses in the young children participating in her research. Kiefer's (1995) work also revealed how the illustrations in picture books influenced children's oral, written, visual, and representative responses. She used Halliday's (1969) work on functions of language to assist her in developing a taxonomy that described the children's verbal responses to various picture books. Kiefer's taxonomy also reflected the developmental differences she observed and recorded in the children's responses.

Full article to be found at- <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v7n1/pantaleo.html>