English sample unit: Pictures tell the story!   **Stage 2**

Focus: Visual literacy	**Duration:** 5–6 weeks

Explanation of unit/overview	**Links to other KLAs**
In this unit students will develop their understanding of how stories can be communicated using images – both still images and moving images. Through an in-depth study of a wordless picture book and an animated short film they will explore how visual narratives are constructed. They will engage in interpretation of the settings, events, characters and themes expressed in these texts. They will also learn some of the visual codes and conventions used by illustrators and filmmakers to communicate their stories and engage with their audience. Integration of design and technology, digital technologies, visual arts and drama offers a range of creative possibilities to support students' deep engagement with the texts. There is also a strong emphasis on students experimenting with digital tools and processes to compose their own multimodal texts and express their own unique interpretations of the narratives.	**Creative Arts** • Visual Arts – students view and create artistic images throughout a picture book. • Music – students create a soundscape using musical images and/or digital imagery. **Science and Technology** • Information technology – students learn about and use digital technology to represent and manipulate images, ideas and messages. • Working technologically through research, idea development, critical analysis, refinement and production.

Outcomes	**Assessment overview**
EN2-2A plans, composes and reviews a range of texts that are more demanding in terms of topic, audience and language EN2-3A uses effective handwriting and publishes texts using digital technologies EN2-8B identifies and compares different kinds of texts when reading and viewing and shows an understanding of purpose, audience and subject matter EN2-10C thinks imaginatively, creatively and interpretively about information, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts EN2-11D responds to and composes a range of texts that express viewpoints of the world similar to and different from their own EN2-12E recognises and uses an increasing range of strategies to reflect on their own and others' learning	Students produce a variety of work samples, including designated assessment activities. These should be evaluated to determine students' level of achievement and understanding. Students engage in peer assessment, based on jointly derived criteria for activity completion. Additionally, student understanding may be assessed through the use of observational checklists, anecdotal records and analysis of contributions to class discussions.

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources

EN2-8B
• identify the audience and purpose of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts (ACELY1678)
• identify and interpret the different forms of visual information, including maps, tables, charts, diagrams, animations and images
 	
EN2-10C
• share responses to a range of texts and identify features which increase reader enjoyment
• justify interpretations of a text, including responses to characters, information and ideas, eg 'The main character is selfish because …'
• discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, eg character development and plot tension (ACELT1605)
	1A Viewing a picture storybook
	Sharing the text (reading/viewing and interpreting)
	During shared reading discuss the idea that we can 'read' in different ways.
	
	1. Preview the cover of a wordless picture book, eg *Tuesday* (David Wiesner) activating students' prior knowledge and inviting predictions.
	
	Adjustments: Provide sentence starters for student responses, eg 'I can see …' or provide a word bank of items for students to identify elements of the cover.
	
	2. Explain that David Wiesner is both the author and illustrator of this picture book. He uses very few words in this text, which may be a little puzzling at first. David Wiesner invites you, as the reader, to be a problem solver. You need to use clues from the pictures, as well as using your own imagination to create your own interpretation of the text. Discuss why David Wiesner may have adopted this approach, considering the intended audience and purpose of the text.
	
	3. Share the text with students, pausing to think aloud and model thinking about the text using a 'See Think, Wonder strategy, or a 'Say Something' strategy. These thinking routines support students to attend closely to details in the visuals, stimulate their curiosity and encourage thoughtful interpretations.
	
	4. After modelling, pause at various openings and invite students to turn and talk with a partner about their observations, their questions, predictions and wonderings. Encourage students to justify their thinking using evidence from the illustrations.
	
	Adjustments: Provide scaffolds and sentence beginnings, eg I wonder why …, I can see that …, I think she is happy because …
	
	5. After sharing, invite students to work in pairs and choose a double page opening to complete one of the suggested response activities.
	
	   a. Students will work independently or with peers to analyse a picture and share their thinking about:
	     – what they noticed
	     – the effect the picture has on the viewer/story
	     – how the illustrator achieved the effects.
	OR
	   b. Students pretend they are a 'fly on the wall'. They examine the facial expressions shown in the book and imagine what the frogs or other characters are thinking or saying to one another. They record the conversation or the thinking in an interesting way, eg using speech/thought bubbles in a comic strip (with software apps or Web 2.0 tools such as Comic Life, ToonDoo, or audio recording tools such as VoiceThread or Audioboo), as a journal entry from the perspective of one of the characters.
	
	Adjustments: Students with autism will need visual prompts for describing facial expressions.
	OR
	   c. Students write their version of the events and jointly construct a wall story.
		Dictionary of Classroom Strategies K–6, Board of Studies (shared reading)
		
		Wordless picture book, *Tuesday,* by David Wiesner (any suitable picture book which has a strong visual narrative could be substituted for this title)
		
		Document camera, eg a hovercam for projecting the picture book on the IWB
		
		'See, Think, Wonder' routine from the Harvard Visible Thinking site
		
		Software
		• Comic Life
		
		Web 2.0 tools
		• ToonDoo
		• VoiceThread
		• Audioboo
		
		Apps
		• Comic Life
		• ComicBook
		• Strip Designer

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources
	Adjustment: Scaffold responses if required. **Adjustments:** Select activity for students based on their individual needs.	
EN2-8B • identify and interpret the different forms of visual information, including maps, tables, charts, diagrams, animations and images • explore the effect of choices when framing an image, placement of elements in the image, and salience on composition of still and moving images in a range of types of texts (ACELA1483, ACELA1496) • interpret how imaginative, informative and persuasive texts vary in purpose, structure and topic EN2-2A • create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, eg perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601, ACELT1794) EN2-10C • justify interpretations of a text, including responses to characters, information and ideas, eg 'The main character is selfish because …'	**1B Exploring the Visuals** *Analyse techniques* During several shared reading sessions explore the visuals and techniques used by the illustrator to create meaning. 1. In the initial exploration of the pictures, focus on familiar aspects of the visuals. Discuss how David Wiesner establishes the *setting* and the *characters*. Encourage students to justify their responses using evidence from the text, eg: • Where is the story taking place? Is it real or imaginary? What makes you think that? • Who are the characters in the story? How do their facial expressions help us understand how the characters are feeling? **Adjustments:** Provide scaffolds with model sentences; provide sentences that students match with facial expressions; provide words to describe facial expressions and feelings that students can match. 2. Discuss with students how David Wiesner is a very clever visual storyteller. He arranges the pictures just as carefully as an author places words in a sentence. Each illustration is carefully planned using a range of visual techniques or codes. Teachers may wish to choose some or all of the following to explore. a. Explore the artistic choices/techniques the illustrator uses to create the moods and emotions and the key themes of the story such as use of colour, light and shadow, and size, eg How does the use of the colour build the mood of the story? What do you notice about the size of the frogs on different illustrations? How does it make you feel about the events? **Adjustments:** Choose appropriate techniques and questions to match students' abilities, eg colour. b. Discuss ways the illustrator tells the story from particular perspectives. Explore the use of angles to convey relationships between the characters (point of view) or develop relationships between the viewer and the action (spectator/participant), eg: – Look carefully at an illustration and describe whether you, the reader, are close up or far away. Why do you think the writer has placed you there? – Can you find any examples of a character that is close to you or is looking directly at you? (a demand for response). – Can you compare it with another illustration in which you feel more distant from the action? What do you notice about the character's gaze?	Exploring visual images in picture books for primary students – teacher resource sheet Multiple copies of the text A collection of wordless/picture books with strong visual storylines such as those by: • David Wiesner • Jeannie Baker • Bob Graham • Anthony Browne • Shaun Tan • Rod Clement • Chris Van Allsburg **Software** • GIMP • iPhoto • Photoshop Elements • Picasa OR **Apps** • Luminance (free) • Photogene (small fee but makes great collages)

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources

• discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, eg character development and plot tension (ACELT1605)
 	
• use visual representations, including those digitally produced, to represent ideas, experience and information for different purposes and audiences
 	
EN2-11D
 	
• experiment with visual, multimodal and digital technologies to represent aspects of experience and relationships
 	
EN2-12E
 	
• develop criteria for the successful completion of tasks
	– Explore the use of framing – in what ways does the book remind you of a film or movie?
	
	Adjustments: Provide students with several copies of pictures from the book. Students place the pictures into two groups – characters looking at you and characters looking away from you.
	
	3. Students experiment with using digital technologies to manipulate visual texts through completing one of the following activities:
	
	    a. Students use a paint program/photo manipulation application and a scanned illustration from the story to experiment with changing colour, eg Photoshop Elements, GIMP, iPad apps such as Luminance or Photogene. Discuss how this affects the mood of the story.
	OR
	    b. Students work in groups to recreate an event in the story and capture a series of two or three digital stills experimenting with close-ups, long-distant and mid-distance shots. (Resource: Exploring visual images in picture books for primary students resource sheet.)
	
	Adjustments: Choose technology to suit the ability level of students. Provide step-by-step instructions for completing each activity (including visual prompts if required). Limit the number of activities undertaken, eg change one colour in activity (a), use one picture to recreate an aspect of the event in activity (b).
	
	4. **Assessment activity – picture book:** After modelling the visual analysis, invite students to work in pairs/small groups to complete one of the suggested response activities. This will require them to identify and interpret the visual techniques and codes used by the illustrator to construct images.
	
	    Students will choose a picture book from a collection of wordless picture books and, using post-it notes:
	
	    a. identify various examples of offers and demands
	OR
	    b. identify various examples of angles, eg close-ups, long shots, mid shots, low-angles, birds-eye view.
	
	Adjustments: Limit the number of examples students are required to identify. Select techniques for students to identify that are suited to the students' ability.
	
	5. Before starting the activity, jointly construct a rubric outlining criteria for activity success, including specific descriptors and peer evaluation processes (students will use this as the basis for peer evaluation in learning sequence 3).	

EN2-3A • use a range of software including word processing programs to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements (ACELY1685, ACELY1697)	**1C Responding to a picture storybook** *Imaginative response activity* After the visual analysis, invite students to work in pairs/small groups to choose a double page opening to complete the suggested response activity. 1. Tell students: 'Storytellers often use music to help tell their story. Imagine you were helping make a movie of the picture book, *Tuesday*. Your job is to create the audio tracks for the film. Create a soundscape for a scene from the story, eg when the frogs visit the haunted house.'	**Sound recording tools** *Software* • Audacity • Sound Recorder (Windows) • GarageBand (Mac/iPad) OR

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources
EN2-2A • experiment with visual, multimodal and digital processes to represent ideas encountered in texts	• Part 1: Students choose a software tool to create their audio composition using digital loops, sound effects, etc; OR Students create their own soundscape using musical instruments, percussion instruments or other 'noise makers' and record using a sound recording tool. • Part 2: Students insert the finished sound file into a PowerPoint or Keynote file containing a representation of their scene (eg digital artwork, scanned drawing, scanned image or photo). **Adjustments:** Students with hearing impairment could be presented with a short written narrative or scene for which they construct images using digital technology.	*Web 2.0 tools* • VoiceThread • Audioboo **Musical instruments/ noisemakers**

EN2-8B
 	
• identify characteristic features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text (ACELY1690)
• explore the effect of choices when framing an image, placement of elements in the image, and salience on composition of still and moving images in a range of types of texts (ACELA1483, ACELA1496)
• identify and interpret the different forms of visual information, including maps, tables, charts, diagrams, animations and images
• interpret how imaginative, informative and persuasive texts vary in purpose, structure and topic
 	
EN2-10C
 	
• share responses to a range of texts and identify features which increase reader enjoyment
• justify interpretations of a text, including responses to characters, information and ideas, eg 'The main character is selfish because …'
	2A Viewing an animated short film
	
	Sharing the text (reading/viewing and interpreting)
	
	During shared reading discuss the idea that we can 'read' in different ways. We often use the term 'view' when we read and comprehend a film.
	
	1. Introduce the short animated film. Explain that in films stories are told with moving images and sound. Explain that in this particular animated story the characters don't speak, so the story is told only with sound (music and sound effects).
	
	  a. Share the title: 'For the Birds' and invite students to listen to the soundtrack without the pictures and predict what the story may be about, eg:
	    – What can you hear?
	    – What might be making the sounds?
	    – What might some of the sounds represent? (eg talking, laughing, teasing, asking questions, fighting/arguing)
	    – What characters may be in the story?
	    – What do you imagine is happening?
	
	Adjustments: Students with hearing impairment can look at an advertising image or poster of the film instead of listening to the soundtrack and predicting the story. For other students, provide cards with words or images of sounds, objects and characters – students choose what they think they are hearing and what the sounds represent.
	
	  b. View the film with the sound and with the pictures. Pause several times, inviting students to turn and talk with a partner about their observations, their questions, predictions and wonderings. Encourage students to justify their thinking using evidence from the film.
	
	Adjustments: Students with hearing impairment tell what they think is happening in the story based on the images in the film.
	
	  c. After viewing the entire film, discuss:
	    – How does the sound help tell the story?
	    – What is making the sounds you hear? (eg squeaky toys)
	    – Do you think it is effective?
		For the Birds. Pixar animated short film (approx 3 mins), available on iTunes or DVD
		
		Note: There is no actual dialogue – the animators use sound effects (squeaky toys) to represent the dialogue between the characters
		
		Dictionary of classroom strategies K–6, Board of Studies (storyboard)
		
		Storyboard worksheet and storyboard generator http://generator.acmi.net.au/
		
		Characters as identified by the Pixar Animators www.pixar.com/shorts_films/ftb/characters.html
		
		Dictionary of Classroom Strategies K–6, Board of Studies (hot seat)

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources

• discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, eg character development and plot tension (ACELT1605)	**Adjustments:** Students with hearing impairment can analyse visual techniques such as colour. For other students, provide a scaffold with sentence starters and word banks.
	
	2. After several viewings invite students to identify key elements of the narrative, eg the setting, characters, key theme or message, and storyline. Complete one or more activities centred on these elements:
	
	  a. **Setting:** Explore the use of the everyday setting – birds on a wire. Explore the possible symbolic meanings associated with the setting and its underlying theme(s) of belonging/being excluded because of difference/bullying, etc, as in the colloquialisms: 'birds of a feather flock together', being an 'odd bird', or being the 'odd one out'.
	
	  b. **Plot:** Collaboratively build a list of scenes to be storyboarded for an animation team. Individually or in pairs, students illustrate and communicate the key ideas of a frame for a class storyboard to retell the story.
	
	  c. **Characters:** Identify and explore the characters and their interrelationships. All the birds on the wire look similar. Are there any characters that stand out? Could we possibly give some of them names which describe their personalities or behaviour? Are there any characters that are like people you know? Did your feelings towards any of the birds change while watching or after watching the film?
	
	Use activities such as 'hot seat' or 'taking sides' to further explore the characters' personalities, characteristics, motivations and experiences.
	
	Adjustments: Select activities based on students' abilities. Have students answer literal questions such as who, what, where and when. Provide words to describe the characters' feelings and have students identify how characters are feeling at different points in the film. Have students give an example of a time they felt the same as one of the characters in the film, eg embarrassed, happy, left out, angry.	

EN2-8B • identify and interpret the different forms of visual information, including maps, tables, charts, diagrams, animations and images • explore the effect of choices when framing an image, placement of elements in the image, and salience on composition of still and moving images in a range of types of texts (ACELA1483, ACELA1496)	**2B Exploring the animation** *Analyse digital storytelling techniques* During several shared reading sessions explore the visuals and techniques used by the animators to create meaning. 1. Introduce the concept that a film/animated movie is constructed by joining together hundreds of frames or still images. These frames which make up the story are deliberately constructed using various camera techniques or codes. 2. Choose various stills/sequences and examine the impact of some of the following visual techniques used by filmmakers and animators by: examining the facial expressions and gestures/actions of one of the characters throughout the film OR exploring how the camera is used to engage the viewer as a participant or observer of the action. a. **Facial expressions/gestures:** What do you notice about the character's facial expressions, body language/position or gestures? What is the character saying or doing? How is the character feeling?	Lights camera action teacher resource sheet *Dictionary of Classroom Strategies K–6*, Board of Studies (freeze frames) *Software* • Comic Life **Apps** • Comic Life • Comic Book

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources
• interpret how imaginative, informative and persuasive texts vary in purpose, structure and topic EN2-2A • create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, eg perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601, ACELT1794) EN2-10C • justify interpretations of a text, including responses to characters, information and ideas, eg 'The main character is selfish because …' • use visual representations, including those digitally produced, to represent ideas, experience and information for different purposes and audiences EN2-11D • experiment with visual, multimodal and digital technologies to represent aspects of experience and relationships	b. **Gaze (demand or offer):** Revisit the concept of demands and offers as explored previously with picture books. What do you notice about direction of the character's gaze? Is the character looking at another character? Is he making direct eye contact with you, the viewer? How involved does this make you feel? c. **Camera distance (close-ups, mid shots, long-distance/wide shots):** Identify various examples and discuss how involved in the story you feel, eg long shots are used to set the scene whereas close-ups often show strong feelings and emotions. d. **Camera angles (high angle, front on/eye level, low angle):** Where are the character(s)? Does it help you understand how the characters are feeling at this part of the story? e. **Camera movement:** Can you identify any camera movement, eg zooming in/zooming out? How does it help tell the story at this point? **Adjustments:** Select an activity based on students' abilities, in particular an activity they have undertaken in a previous lesson. Provide visual prompts and scaffolds as needed eg annotated visuals of facial expressions and body language. 3. **Assessment activity: Animation** *Part 1* • Freeze frames: Students work in small groups. Each group retells their favourite event in the story by creating a tableau of only three freeze frames to depict a beginning, middle and end. Each freeze frame is captured with a digital camera. OR • Zooming in: Students can recreate a zoom shot, by starting with a long shot, then a middle-distance shot, finishing with a close-up. **Adjustments:** Select student groups to ensure students who require assistance have at least one peer to assist them in their role. Ensure students' roles are explicit. *Part 2* • Students then use a simple comic strip tool to storyboard their frames, eg Comic Life or Comic Strip. Before starting the activity, jointly construct criteria for the activity, including specific descriptors and peer evaluation processes (students will use this as the basis for peer evaluation in learning sequence 3).	
EN2-2A • experiment with visual, multimodal and digital processes to represent ideas encountered in texts	**2C Responding to an animated short film** *Translation activity: Exploring simple animation techniques* 1. Students experiment with simple animation techniques to recreate a scene from the story showing: • the squabbling birds on the wire; OR • the teasing of the large gawky bird; OR • the small bird who falls to the ground near the large laughing bird, using one of the following simple animation techniques: Zoetrope, Flip Book, Thaumatrope.	How to make a Zoetrope www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Zoetrope Create a Flip Book www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Flipbook

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources
• create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, eg perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601, ACELT1794) EN2-3A • use a range of software including word processing programs to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements (ACELY1685, ACELY1697) EN2-10C • use visual representations, including those digitally produced, to represent ideas, experience and information for different purposes and audiences EN2-12E • develop criteria for the successful completion of tasks	2. Students make a simple animation using stop frame animation (eg slowmation, claymation). Students incorporate a storyboard and use digital cameras and animation software such as iMovie or Slowmation. Simpler animations can be created in MS PowerPoint or using iPad applications such as Flip It! Lite or Flip Book Lite. **Adjustments:** Choose technology to suit the ability level of students. Provide step-by-step instructions for completing each activity (including visual prompts if required). Limit the complexity of the animation to be created.	How to make a Thaumatrope www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Thaumatrope Animation teaching resources and software download www.slowmation.com/ **Software** • MS PowerPoint • iMovie • Slowmation **Apps** • FlipBook Lite • Flip It! Lite

EN2-12E
• jointly develop and use criteria for assessing their own and others' presentations
• identify different ways of learning in English and consider own preferences
• appreciate how the reader or viewer can enjoy a range of literary experiences through texts
	3 Reflecting on visual texts
	
	Reflection, viewing and summation
	1. Organise a celebration day where students present their completed assessment activities (Assessment activity: Picture book; Assessment activity: Animation). Parents and community members could be invited to attend as 'guests' to view students' presentations.
	  • Students give short talks to explain and/or interpret their finished visual and digital texts. If time allows, guests may be asked to share positive feedback.
	  • Allow time for a peer-assessment session. Review the jointly constructed assessment criteria for activity success. Discuss appropriate ways of communicating and receiving feedback. Feedback could be provided in oral or written form, or using a Likert scale to measure achievement of specific criteria.	

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Resources
• discuss their roles and responsibilities when working as a member of a group and understand the benefits of working collaboratively with peers to achieve a goal	**Adjustments:** Provide scaffolds as required to model students' explanations of their visual and digital texts and for peer assessment. Provide sentence starters if required, eg My visual text shows …, I used this picture because …, I like this student's text because … 2. As a class, reflect on the unit studied. Discussion questions may include: • What have we learned about types of texts? • What have we learned about the job of illustrators and animators? • What were the challenges and advantages of completing activities as part of a group? • What were the challenges and advantages of giving and receiving peer feedback? • What have we learned about visual techniques and digital technologies? • How might the use of visual texts (eg picture books, animations) help people in their learning? • What helped you to learn most effectively in the unit? Explain why. **Adjustments:** Select reflection questions based on students' abilities. Less complex questions for reflection may be required, eg In this unit, I enjoyed … One thing I have learnt about visual texts is … 3. Invite students to contribute to a visual feedback activity, eg indicating the activity they enjoyed and learned the most from on a picture graph or in a table. **Most effective activities** <table><tr><td>**Activity 1**</td><td>**Activity 2**</td><td>**Activity 3**</td><td>**Activity 4**</td></tr><tr><td>🖐🖐🖐🖐🖐</td><td>🖐🖐🖐</td><td>🖐🖐🖐🖐</td><td>🖐🖐🖐🖐</td></tr></table>	

Evaluation
At the conclusion of the unit, teachers should reflect on student learning and engagement in activities, and use this to inform planning for subsequent learning experiences. **Questions to guide reflection** 1. To what level did students achieve the learning outcomes? 2. How effective were the activities in helping students to understand key concepts and achieve the learning outcomes? 3. Did teaching strategies and activities facilitate high levels of student engagement? Why/why not? 4. How could the unit be improved to enhance student engagement and learning?

Unit resources

Picture books

Recommended text: *Tuesday* by David Wiesner

It is possible to use many other picture books for this unit. Teachers should consider texts with strong visual storylines such as those by:

- Anthony Browne
- Jeannie Baker
- Bob Graham
- Colin Thompson
- Shaun Tan
- Rod Clement
- Chris Van Allsburg
- David Wiesner.

Animated short films

Recommended text: *For the Birds* – animated short by Pixar (available on iTunes or DVD)
Other recommended shorts include:

- *Pixar Short Films Collection* – Volume 1 (DVD) Disney Videos
- *Miniscule: The Private Lives of Insects* (DVD) available from ABC Shop
- *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr Morris Lessmore* (short film and ebook) available on iTunes
- *Kiwi!* www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=sdUUx5FdySs#
- *Fish Wish* (Vancouver Film School) www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=aZB0no_RCMs

Note: Many versions of these animated shorts are also available on Youtube.

Student resources

- Storyboard activity sheet

ICT resources

Following is a list of ICT resources from which to choose, including commonly used software applications for classroom computers. Many Web 2.0 tools are free and iPad apps often have a free 'lite' version or are quite inexpensive.

Hardware

- Hovercam, digital cameras, iPads

Software

- Photo editing*:* iPhoto, Photoshop Elements, Picasa, GIMP
- Sound recording and composing: Sound Recorder (Windows), Audacity, GarageBand (Mac/iPad)
- Authoring: Comic Life, PowerPoint/Keynote, iMovie or Movie Maker, Slowmation

Web 2.0 tools

- Sound recording and composing: VoiceThread, Audioboo

iPad apps

- Photo editing: Luminance, Photogene
- Authoring: Comic Life for iPad, Comic Book, FlipBook Lite, Flip It! Lite

Teacher resources

- *Dictionary of Classroom Strategies K–6*: Board of Studies
- Exploring visual images in picture books for primary students (teacher resource sheet)
- Lights Camera Action (teacher resource sheet)
- Drama resource: This website contains details of drama techniques and strategies such as tableaux and freeze frames to help students express their interpretations of texts dramaresource.com/
- *Pixar For The Birds*: This website contains details of the storyline characters and animation techniques
- *Pixar For The Birds*: Wikipedia (online) has a detailed plot summary www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_the_Birds (film)
- How to make a Zoetrope (online) www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Zoetrope
- Create a Flip Book www.wikihow-com/Make-a-Flipbook
- How to make a Thaumatrope www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Thaumatrope
- Slowmation: Animation teaching resources and software download www.slowmation.com

Lights, camera, action …
Visual literacy and motion pictures!

Film and television are highly accessible and influential media, considered by most of us to be essential elements of popular culture. They provide us with both information and entertainment. The popularity of such places as Fox Studios and Movie World provides further evidence of our fascination with these media. Filmmaking itself is a highly complex and sophisticated process. The cinematic experience is a multisensory one, in which filmmakers utilise both visual and auditory codes to develop complex multilayered texts.

It makes sense therefore to consider the incorporation of the study of 'film as visual texts' in our primary literacy programs, in addition to the study of picture books. By developing student understandings of the ways films are 'constructed', we can help students to become informed and critical viewers. In developing knowledge of the specific codes and techniques or devices used by filmmakers for young students, it helps to 'start with the known'.

1. What is happening?

Students are generally familiar with the grammar of story from written texts. Initially, examine the known elements of the narrative, such as setting, plot and characterisation. Consider how these are conveyed in the film using **dialogue, acting, etc.**

2. What elements of the film are used to further develop the narrative?

In its simplest form, film is a narrative told through a series of shots/scenes, with each shot adding a new piece of information. In reality, however, the filmmaker uses a range of techniques to engage viewers and make the story compelling and/or credible, such as:

- **Costume and makeup:** How do these assist in the portrayal of characters? Are the characters realistic, stereotypes/caricatures, or fantasy? Do the costume and makeup contribute to the portrayal of relationships between the characters and/or the setting? How?
- **Music and sound effects:** Sound effects and music are utilised to heighten the visual messages and mood creation.
- **Lighting:** Lighting also contributes to building the atmosphere/mood of a particular setting.
- **Special effects:** A common feature of modern films is the use of illusions/animations created using computer-generated effects and the layering of images.

3. How does the filmmaker establish relationships between the viewer and the events/characters in the film?

The exploration of **camera angles** and **framing** can help students understand the story from a particular character's point of view. Alternatively, students can discuss how they are being positioned as a viewer in different shots as 'spectator' or 'participant'. A discussion of these techniques in familiar scenes will allow students to discover the impact that the deliberate use of these techniques has in conveying mood, emotions or action.

Angles can be utilised to convey relationships between characters (point of view), or relationships between the viewer and the action (spectator/participant).

- **Vertical:** Looking up or looking down often conveys a relationship of power.
- **Horizontal:** Angles at eye-level may be used to convey equality or intimacy.
- **Front on:** This engages the viewer directly with the character and prompts an emotional response.
- **Over the shoulder:** This makes the viewer a participant in the action.

Framing is used to control the nature/amount of information given to the viewer. It may also correspond to cultural expectations of social distance.

- **Long distance** (panning) is often used to establish a setting – the viewer is detached.
- **Mid distance** (zoom out) signifies a degree of social distance – the viewer as an onlooker/bystander.
- **Close-ups** (zoom in) signify intimacy or strong engagement of the viewer.

4. How is the film put together?

Students focus on the development of the story through the editing function – the building of **sequences** and the utilisation of **transitions.** (**Storyboarding** will support development in this area.)

Sequences: Film sequences are commonly developed utilising a series of shots to convey an event. Students will readily be able to identify sequences and could storyboard them.

- **Establishment shots** set the scene for the upcoming action/events.
- A common pattern in building sequences is **anticipation, action and reaction** (physical/emotional).

Transitions: Sequences are joined to make the scenes of the movie utilising **transitions**.

- **Fade in/Fade out and dissolves** provide gradual transitions between shots/scenes.
- **Jump cuts** imply more dramatic changes/switches in action.

Some teaching ideas to develop understandings

- **Reader's theatre:** Develop ideas for using voice, sound effects, costume and simple props.
- **Storyboarding:** Create a storyboard for a brief action sequence from a written text and identify patterns in the sequences. Students act out using a digital camera to record freeze frames. Use PowerPoint and the animation features, including transitions, to share the story. Add some voiceovers or record some sound effects.
- Explore **framing, angles** and **image sequencing** in picture books, eg books by Anthony Browne**.**
- Experiment with a digital still/video camera and wide angle/zoom functions to compare and contrast the **framing** of particular objects in their environment.
- **Framing:** Choose a powerful image from a well-known movie scene, eg a close-up shot. Draw the image with a frame and redraw it at different distances, eg mid/long distance. Discuss how this impacts on the viewer.
- **Claymation:** Develop a simple story and model the characters using clay. Use a digital camera and step-by-step images to build an animation sequence utilising iMovie software. Add titles, credits and transitions.
- **Make their own movies:** 'Tips for Making Your Movie' is a wonderful resource at www.apple.com.education/dv/tips/index.html.

Exploring visual images in picture books for primary students

Our students are generally skilled in interpreting written texts. However, when working with picture books, learning to 'read' or 'view' the images critically is also an essential literacy skill. This involves students developing the understanding that illustrations are carefully constructed. The composition is developed through careful arrangement of a number of elements – and choices about techniques such as media, colour, use of light, etc. In developing these understandings, it is important for teachers and students to have a common language that allows them to explore the meanings embedded in images. When helping students explore visual texts, start with some of the familiar narrative elements before exploring other techniques specific to illustrations.

1. What is happening in the picture? (Scanning for key details)

Setting: It is useful to start with describing the place **where** the action is taking place. Is it realistic/imaginary? How do students know? Are there any clues about **when** the action is happening?

Characters: Clothing can tell us a great deal about a character's role in the story and maybe gives clues about their personality. Clothing can also be used to represent stereotypes. **Facial expressions** can provide clues to a character's emotions and possibly the relationship between characters. Look closely at the body language between characters. Invite children to imagine what a character is feeling.

2. What artistic choices/techniques does the illustrator use to engage the viewer and convey meaning?

Media: The art media – eg pen and ink, pencil, watercolour, collage, photographs – is a key choice made by the illustrator. Sometimes these choices reflect the mood or emotions expressed in the text, or perhaps reinforce the setting (time and place), eg Jeannie Baker uses **collage** in *Where the Forest Meets the Sea.* The textures make the objects realistic and strongly reinforce the environmental message about preserving the rainforest; For example, the beautifully detailed and intensely realistic **pen-and-ink drawings** and **sepia tones** used by Brian Harrison-Lever for *In Flanders Field* bring to life the grim surroundings of life in the trenches during World War I.

Colour: Most students will be aware that **colour** can contribute to their emotions/moods. They can usually identify colours that make them feel happy/cheerful or sad/gloomy, or even those that seem mysterious/threatening. Look also for **contrast** – bright/dark colours, warm/cool colours or the use of colour as a highlight. **Special tones,** eg monotone/sepia tones, can also contribute to our sense of 'when' a story takes place. The book *One Child* by Chris Cheng, illustrated by Steven Woolman, is an excellent resource for teachers wishing to explore the use of colour.

Light/Shadow: Lighting also contributes to building the **atmosphere**/**mood** of a particular setting. Shadows can be suggestive of something menacing or sinister.

Size: Size can be exaggerated to show power relationships between characters. It can also be used to highlight the importance of particular objects.

Motifs: A motif is a recurring symbol used throughout a text to express an important theme or idea and contribute to the development of the story. Anthony Browne frequently makes use of gorillas in the place of humans in his stories. This adds a touch of humour and encourages the viewer to recognise the important messages being communicated about human behaviour. Other motifs that Browne uses include bananas, famous artworks and hats.

3. How does the illustrator establish relationships between the viewer and the events/characters in the story?

Perspective

A study of perspective through the exploration of **angles, framing** and **positioning** can help students understand the story from a particular character's point of view or, alternatively, how they are being positioned by the storyteller. A discussion of these techniques in familiar scenes will allow students to discover the impact that the deliberate use of these techniques has in conveying mood, emotions or action. Anthony Browne skilfully combines these techniques to great effect. With teacher guidance, students should be able to locate and discuss examples of these techniques and the perspectives being portrayed.

Angles can be utilised to convey relationships between characters (point of view), or relationships between the viewer and the action (spectator/participant).

- **Vertical:** Looking up or looking down often conveys a relationship of power.
- **Horizontal:** Angles at eye-level may be used to convey equality or intimacy.
- **Front on:** This engages the viewer directly with the character and prompts an emotional response.
- **Over the shoulder:** This makes the viewer a participant in the action.

Framing is used to control the nature/amount of information given to the viewer. It may also correspond to cultural expectations of social distance.

- **Long distance** (panning) is often used to establish a setting – the viewer is detached.
- **Mid distance** (zoom out) signifies a degree of social distance – the viewer as an onlooker/bystander.
- **Close-ups** (zoom in) signify intimacy or strong engagement of the viewer.

Offers and demands: Students can also discuss how they are being positioned as a viewer in different illustrations as **spectator** or **participant**.

- Locate an illustration where a character appears to be gazing/looking directly at the viewer, as if expecting them to make some kind of emotional response to their situation. This is referred to as a **demand**. It seeks to engage the viewer as a 'participant' in the action. Eye contact is common, but other more subtle gestures may be used, eg the tilt of a head, or outstretched arms.
- By contrast, look for other illustrations in which the gaze may be indirect or directed between characters. This is referred to as an **offer** and places a lesser demand on the viewer. They are being offered information about the story and are invited to become a 'spectator', an observer of the action.

Humour: Some illustrators enter into a direct relationship with the viewer through the use of humour. In using humorous devices, eg exaggeration or visual jokes, the illustrator introduces an element of play or fun. Viewers often perceive that the characters are unaware and that the joke is a personal experience shared only between the illustrator and the viewer. A useful text for exploring this feature is *Just Another Ordinary Day* by Rod Clement.

Puzzles: Viewers can also be engaged through the use of puzzling elements. Again, the viewer is being invited to 'play'. In addition, a study of an illustrated text can leave the viewer with many 'gaps' that they actively seek to fill. Inviting students to be curious using reflective questions – such as 'Is there anything that still puzzles you about the image?' or 'Is there anything you are still wondering about techniques used by the illustrator?' – is very useful to stimulate creative thinking. For example, I am still wondering why Anthony Browne uses statue and topiary motifs in texts such as *Voices in the Park* and *Gorilla*.

The study of illustrated picture texts is engaging for students. However, all the techniques discussed in this resource should not be dealt with at once. Rather, it is intended that teachers use the resource selectively with a range of texts to build these understandings over time. Thus, the resource includes a blank matrix for recording student responses.

Some additional teaching ideas to develop understandings

In addition to using fiction texts, explore visual images in magazines and newspapers, especially advertisements. Invite students to reflect using the following questions. **What can you tell from the picture? What can't you tell from the picture? What do you think the illustrator wants you to feel when you view the picture?**

There are numerous creative arts activities that can be utilised to explore the use of colour to create mood or atmosphere.

Experiment with photo manipulation software, such as Photoshop Elements, to manipulate colours, crop long-distance shots to create mid-range shots and close-ups, and morph or even 'construct' images.

Experiment with a digital camera to retell favourite stories using close-ups, mid-distance shots and long shots. Use the same **What can you tell?** questioning strategy.

Picture analysis

Picture: _____

(Opening _____. Position: Left/Right page)

Technique	What we noticed	What effect does this have on the viewer or the story?
Setting		
Characters		
Media		
Colour		
Light and shadow		
Size		
Angles/Framing		
Offers/Demands		
Objects, motifs or symbols		
Humour		
Puzzles		