



# Comprehension Strategies

## Visualising & Visual Literacy

This document is the fourth in a series of support materials. It contains a synthesis of material from a variety of on-line and printed sources. It has been designed to support the Northern Adelaide Region Comprehension focus 2010-2012

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## Visualising

- Proficient readers spontaneously and purposefully create mental images while and after they read. The images emerge from all five senses, as well as emotions, and are anchored in readers' background knowledge.
- Proficient readers use images to immerse themselves in rich detail as they read. The detail gives depth and dimension to the reading, engaging the reader more deeply, making the text more memorable.
- Proficient readers use images to draw conclusions, to create distinct and unique interpretations of the text, to recall details significant to the text, and to recall a text after it has been read. Images from readers' personal experience frequently become part of their comprehension.
- Proficient readers adapt their images as they continue to read. Images are revised to incorporate new information revealed through the text and new interpretations as they are developed by the reader.
- Proficient readers understand and articulate how creating images enhances their comprehension.
- Proficient readers change and modify their images in response to images that other readers share.  
"WHAT DO YOU HEAR, FEEL, TASTE, SMELL, AND PICTURE?"  
"WHAT DO YOU SEE IN YOUR MIND?"

Good readers use visualising techniques and visual representations in the following ways.

### **Before reading**

- students visually can organise their thinking, visualising the possible content, linking background knowledge and forming predictions.

### **During reading**

- students can visualise the content, comparing predictions with ideas, themes and information in the text. They begin to form a visual representation of what they are reading.

### **After reading**

- students can visually link new information with prior knowledge, visually represent what they have read in a graphic summary, and build new understandings.

Within our daily lives we are provided with an abundance of visual images from a variety of sources. From daily television shows and commercials, to the billboards seen on the way to school or work, to the illustrations provided in our students' textbooks; imagery surrounds us. Yet, the images we are shown are not always the images we personally would arrive at had they not been presented to us. If we could not see the images of our favourite TV show, but could only read the script, would the images we visualise match those of the ones provided? Or would our thoughts furnish us with a different picture? Perhaps it would be more personal and reflective, as we made connections with what we read and what we personally know about the topic.

Visualisation is the ability to build mental pictures or images while reading. It is evident that our own visualisations, when reading the script, would greatly depend upon our prior knowledge and engagement with the topic (Manning, 2002; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). However, if we are able to construct any mental image from what we read, it is likely that our understanding of the material will be greater than had we not (Gambrell & Jawits, 1993). Better yet, if we are able to combine the ability to generate mental imagery (visualisation) and attend to illustrations provided in a text, there is greater effect on the understanding of the material and enhanced comprehension (Gambrell & Jawits, 1993).

Helping our students gain visualisation skills is an important way to foster greater comprehension when reading. It allows students the ability to become more engaged in their reading and use their imagery to draw conclusions, create interpretations of the text, and recall details and elements from the text (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). Struggling students' ability to monitor and evaluate their own comprehension is enhanced by mental imagery (Gambrell & Bale, 1986). When a breakdown in comprehension occurs, and a mental image cannot be visualised, students will become aware of the need for a fix-up strategy.

Keene and Zimmerman (1997), in their book *Mosaic of Thought*, offer some key ideas on why teachers should help their learners evoke images when reading.

They include:

Mental images emerge from all five senses, as well as emotions, and are secured to a reader's prior knowledge. Using images helps immerse students in rich details. The details help students become engaged and make the text more impressive.

Readers who adapt their visualisation in response to images from other readers are considered more proficient.

### **How to Use the Strategy:**

Visualisation can be developed through a variety of activities and lessons. A first step is to provide a model and explanation about generating mental images for the students. Choosing a piece of text to read aloud to students that is short and descriptive can be useful. If the text has pictures, it is important to conceal the pictures until the end of the lesson.

Before beginning the actual read aloud/visualisation mini-lesson, the teacher may want to suggest that students close their eyes and listen carefully as the story is read. The teacher may also want to share how the pictures that she makes in her mind help her better understand what she reads. For example, she may say:

"When we read we can often make pictures in our minds about what is happening in the story. Pictures of the setting, the characters, and what is happening can help us understand and remember what we read. When I think about what is going on in the story, I make a personal connection to the picture in my mind." (Johns & Lenski, 2001)

During the mini-lesson, the teacher should read a short part of the given text, and complete a "think-aloud." The think-aloud needs to be very specific as the teacher discusses how the images are produced in his/her mind. The teacher should describe in detail how the words from the text remind her of something in her own life and develop into an image. The teacher can discuss incidents, emotions, and new understandings. Having students listen for adjectives can also be helpful. Thinking aloud about what it may look or feel like to be "hot and sticky" or "so happy I could fly away" will be helpful to struggling students. The first mini-lessons designed for modelling the strategy of visualisation should be almost completely teacher directed (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997).

As students become more accustomed to the concept of visualisation and mental imagery, the teacher should gradually invite students to share and expand their own images developed during the read alouds. The emphasis during the first mini-lessons on this strategy should be the materials that are not too challenging. The goal is to help students become aware of the need to create their own images and expand on them. As the year continues, the teacher will want to increase the level of difficulty of the text. Soon students will be sharing their visualisations during read alouds and their own private time for reading.

Allowing opportunities for students to share their images with the teacher and other students is vital. Offering them help in describing their images is also an important part to the development of the strategy. As mental images are visual representations of thoughts, it is often a good idea to allow students the opportunity to draw and illustrate their own mental pictures of the stories they read or that are read to them. Sharing these and comparing them will allow for greater understanding and comprehension of the text.

### ***The Role of Text Illustrations***

As noted by Gambrell and Jawits (1993), combining the ability to generate mental imagery and consider text illustrations will allow for greater comprehension than when either strategy is used in isolation. Struggling readers benefit greatly from illustrations provided in the text. They offer support to these readers more than non-struggling readers because poor readers tend to need confirmation about what they are reading (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003).

However, when text illustrations do not match the story, comprehension can decrease and learning can be reduced. One way to overcome this obstacle is to allow students to become engaged in the story and critique the illustrations after analysis of the text (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003).

### ***Other Ideas***

#### ***Creating Comic Strips*** (Johns & Lenski, 2001)

Allowing students to illustrate frames in comic book fashion to explain what is happening in a story is a good way to promote visualisation. Students can work together or individually on the creation of a short strip of the story.

Modelling how to visualise scenes from the story beforehand will be helpful to students understanding of the concept. "Talking bubbles" can be added to aid in further understanding of the story.

### **Using Picture Books** (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003)

Picture books are often used with younger learners to develop early literacy skills in the areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. Providing older students with picture books will often allow them to have a greater understanding of higher level concepts by using a lower level text. Both older and younger students can be trained to use the illustrations in text to enhance comprehension and their own visualisation.

### **Movies and W-R-W-R** (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003)

Movies provide a wonderful opportunity for students to gain background understanding to intermingle with their own visualisation about a story or concept. When reading a text, the addition of a movie can help students connect to new information they may have not had background in and adapt their new thoughts, images, and feelings to the text at hand (Gambrell & Jawits, 1993). Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson suggest using a Watch-Read-Watch-Read (W-R-W-R) method in which students will build some background of the text, make predictions, watch part of the movie, read more of the text, confirm understandings, make more predictions, watch more of the movie, and continue reading the text (2003).

### **Assessment:**

Assessment of the visualisation strategy can be in the form of teacher observation, student self-assessment, use of a mini-conference rubric, or the review of an illustration of a mental image after a read aloud. Helping students understand the concept, giving them the opportunity to practice the strategy, and giving quality feedback are important parts to helping students enhance their comprehension.

## **Visualisation: Making Mind Pictures**

*Notes to the Teacher:* Select a number of short, texts which are readily visualised. Use these to support student awareness, and development of skill in the use of visualisation to support their understanding of what they read. The real value of visualisation happens in the context of the reading they do with real texts each day. It is important to move from the resources included in this activity set and to support students' facility and use of visualisation in the texts they encounter on a daily basis.

Activities such as these will activate students' prior knowledge of the topic and raise any sense and visual memories they have of the topic prior to reading.

If necessary, set a purpose for reading each short text selection.

Introduce the visualisation activities to familiarise students with activity expectations.

Depending on the independence level of the students, select a text to visualise together prior to working with a partner.

Over the longer term --

Create a broader context for this activity.

Once students have worked with the sample texts, select several resources in several media on a topic. For example, select short information text pieces from the classroom library, from specific pages in web sites written for students at this level, and from the school's video resources and apply/adapt the visualisation activity to those information resources.

Develop a purpose for reading with the students.

Select specific passages from those resources for which visualisation supports understanding.

Using the visualisation activities, have the students discuss how they visualise what they read, hear and see using all their senses to support their learning. Discuss with students the value of visualisation in their understanding of text. Discuss with students how what they see in a video affects the reading of text on a web page, CD resource or book.

Discuss with students how using resources in a range of media supports the development of meaning while reading and how the understanding they gain through reading affects the meaning they gain from non-book information resources.

Visualisation is a key extended comprehension reading strategy for life.

### **Visualisation: Making Mind Pictures**

When we read a story, magazine, information text, CD, or video, the writer relies upon us to create pictures in our minds. These pictures help us to understand what we are reading.

- Read the passage

With a partner, describe the pictures that you each created in your mind's eye from the sample text provided by the teacher.

What did you like about your own and your partner's mind pictures?

- Read the passage again for ideas or feelings which add details to your own mind pictures.

Circle the words in the text that best help you to form great mind pictures about the text?

What ideas of your own did you add which make the picture vivid or more interesting but which were not in the text itself?

- Discuss your mind pictures again with your partner?

What new details or ideas appear in your mind pictures as a result of the second reading?

How are your and your partner's mind pictures similar?

How are your and your partner's mind pictures different?

How do you explain the similarities and differences in your mind pictures?

*Design based on Harvey and Goudvis' Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding, p. 97-99.*

Is the Student Creating Sensory Images?

## **YES!**

- Wants to keep reading
- Can give details from the story
- Laughs or cries when appropriate
- Makes predictions
- Reads with expression
- Can describe the characters
- Can extend the story beyond the page

## **NO?**

- Lacks interest in reading
- Can't retell in her own words
- Lacks interest in finishing
- Can't describe characters, setting, or events from the story

## Opening the Door: Teaching Students to Use Visualisation to Improve Comprehension

**Visualising text is a proven way to improve reading comprehension. It is a technique that can be taught using this simple, step-by-step strategy from literacy consultant Cathy Puett Miller.**

*"Proficient readers spontaneously and purposely create mental images while and after they read. The images emerge from all five senses as well as the emotions and are anchored in a reader's prior knowledge."*

-- Keene and Simmerman, *Mosaic of Thought*

Each day, our students are bombarded with the visual images of TV and video games. In contrast, most students view reading as a passive activity. But a simple technique -- *visualisation* -- can transform students of all ages from passive to active readers; visualisation can help students cross the boundary to improved comprehension.

Your students will be able to grasp the visualisation technique by following a simple, step-by-step plan:

### MODELLING THE TECHNIQUE

Direct modelling of the active thought processes involved in visualising text is the first step. Begin with a familiar fiction read-aloud. As you read a short passage, describe images *you* see in *your* mind. For example, you might use the following quote from *Where the Wild Things Are*:

"That very night in Max's room a forest grew and grew and grew until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls became the world all around."

After reading that quote, share with students the images you visualised as you read it.

As I read that passage, I thought about the words and I imagined what the characters looked like, what they were doing, and what their surroundings were like. I shared with students that I imagined a window with a moon shining through it. Saplings began to sprout and quickly grew leaves and stems. (The scene was like those time-lapse photography images you see on the Discovery Channel.) I saw little vines spreading their tendrils down the walls and across the ceiling. Before I knew it, the entire room was green and leafy, and much darker than before.

### STUDENTS PRACTICE VISUALISING

When you finish sharing your thoughts, let students try the same technique on their own. Share a highly descriptive reading selection appropriate for students' listening vocabulary level (up to two years above their reading vocabulary). If necessary, before reading share a vocabulary mini-lesson to introduce unfamiliar terms. Depending on the ages of your students, you might choose from the following titles or use a title of your choice that provides excellent descriptive passages.

- Danny Schnitzlein's *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* (ages 4-8, Peachtree Publishers, 2001)
- Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (ages 9-12, Puffin, 1998)
- Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (ages 12-18, Dover Publications, 1999)

Before reading aloud to students, offer the suggestions below.

While I read, close your eyes and listen carefully. Stay alert and think about what happens in the story. See if you can imagine the scene the words describe. Pretend you are making a movie; what would you see from behind the camera?

As you listen, when you hear describing words (adjectives) -- such as *hot*, *red*, *musty*, or *quiet* -- use those words to help paint pictures in your head.

For students identified as "at-risk", you might discuss what it feels like to be hot, or what shade of red a tomato might be, or how musty gym socks smell when they've been in a locker for three days. Give them concrete ideas and connect to prior knowledge. In other words, turn on the thought processes and you will prime students to do the same when they read. Remind them to think about what characters smell, taste, feel, hear, and think. Good readers do that. Also, point out to students that this technique will help them remember what the story is about.

## SHARING VISUALISATIONS

After reading the selection, direct a class discussion in which students share *their* images. Emphasise that everyone's visualisations will differ. Be sure to acknowledge and value all students' ideas.

- If students create images that do not fit the words, help them question their images and adjust them. (This is another effective comprehension strategy.)
- If they create images that reflect the words, praise them and encourage comparison/contrast discussions.
- If students have difficulty creating an image, try another short read-aloud session and practice modelling again. Ask questions to lead them to create images on their own -- questions such as *Does this remind you of anything in your life?* or *What do you think the dog looked like?* or *Do you have a dog? How do you think this dog is the same as yours? Different?*

## USING DRAWING TO HELP STUDENTS VISUALISE

Next, use a different selection from the same or another text. Tell students you will share part of a story (show no illustrations). Ask them to draw their own illustrations as they listen. The physical act of creating a picture can help students grasp the concept of visualisation.

To connect this image building with comprehension and to reinforce the concept of visualisation, make time to share and discuss students' images. That might be done in small groups first, then as a class.

## INTEGRATING VISUALISATION INTO EVERYDAY LEARNING

After students begin to grasp the concept of visualisation, be sure to reinforce it frequently. Make visualisation a part of class every day. Those who have more difficulty with the concept will learn from peers' expressions imagination. Encourage those who struggle to ask other students how they came up with their ideas and to learn from one another.

Integrate this exercise into daily class read-alouds and silent reading. Incorporate not only physical images, but also ideas about feelings the characters might experience. (That will exercise students' critical thinking skills, especially their skill at making inferences.) Use the combination of drawings and mental image-making that works best for your students. As you progress, you can move from descriptive texts into expository texts.

By using visualisation, you open the door for life-long reading. Most of all, you help develop in students the habit of actively thinking about what they read -- which leads to greater retention and understanding.

**REFERENCE** Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop by Susan Simmerman and Ellin Oliver Keene (Heinemann, 1997). Article by Cathy Puett Miller, Education World® Copyright © 2004 Education World

### Visualisation Extension Activities

**Have students read a pre-printed passage and use the visualisation strategies taught in class.**

Before duplicating the passage, insert a dot or asterisk every 3-4 sentences. Each mark represents a "pause-for-reflection" point -- a point at which students should stop and think about the words they have just read (and reread as necessary). Before they proceed, ask students to create a mental picture (think about what they read) and circle the words that helped them create their images. Have them select one "pause" and draw an illustration or use a visual organiser to hone in on the ideas and images the author describes.

**When reading in a content area, encourage students to use these visualisation techniques to understand more of what they read.**

Expository text is full of images -- maps, charts, text boxes, sidebars, and more -- that aid in comprehension.

## Creating Visual & Other Sensory Images

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) describe the benefits of visualising:

1. Allows the readers to create mental images from the words in the text
2. Enhances meaning with mental imagery
2. Links past experience to the words and ideas in the text
3. Enables readers to place themselves in the story
4. Strengthens a reader's relationship to the text
5. Stimulates imaginative thinking
6. Heightens engagement with text
7. Brings joy to reading

Second language learners typically have a more difficult time visualising therefore, teachers need to build more background knowledge and spend more time "front loading" the lesson and building schema with extended visuals.

### When Sensory Images form in a child's mind

- ✓ It is an ongoing creative act.
  - ✓ Pictures, smells, tastes, and feelings burst forth and his mind organises them to help the story make sense.
  - ✓ It is this ongoing creation of sensory images that keeps children hooked on reading."  
(Zimmerman, Hutchins)
- If kids fail to create sensory images, they suffer a type of "sensory deprivation."
  - "It's like walking into a theater and sitting in a seat. But nothing comes up on the screen."

### Idea 1: Create Sensory Experiences

So many of our students DO NOT have an adequate sensory background of experience. They have not been exposed to many varieties of smells, tastes, or touching, nor do they own accompanying words to describe them.

1. Have students name words that describe the five senses.
2. Bring in fragrances, textures, colors, tastes, sounds.
3. Have students identify the samples.
4. Discuss the qualities of each object.
5. Provide the vocabulary

### Idea 2: Teaching a Sense: Touch

- Place these objects in different paper bags. Have students identify objects by feel only.
  - ◆ Examples: silk, pinecone, fur, sandpaper, rubber ball, cooked noodles, screwdriver
- Have students place objects in order, for instance, from smoothest to roughest.
- Provide words for the adjectives of touch: smooth, squishy, slimy, metallic, scratchy, bumpy

For students in the most deprived sensory environments, we need to give specific training in visualisation. We move from the concrete to the abstract.

1. Present students with different objects.
2. Ask students to look at the object carefully and feel its texture. Smell it. Listen to it. (Some objects may have a sound.)
3. Put the object away. Have students close their eyes and see the details in their minds.
4. Have students draw a picture of the object or describe it in writing.

### Idea 3: Think-Alouds

What sensory images flood you as you read this text? Sketch the words or tell someone what you experience.



*"The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay... It smelled of the perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows... It smelled of grain and of harness dressing... It was full of all sorts of things you find in barns: ladders, grindstones, pitch forks... lawn mowers, snow shovels, ax handles, milk pails, water buckets, empty grain sacks, and nasty rat traps..." E.B. White*

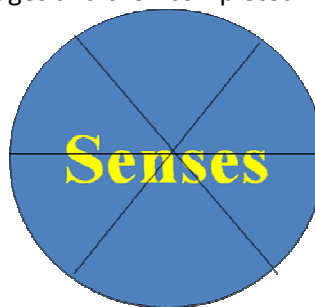
Model your thinking, then ask...

- What words in the text helped you form that picture?
- How did your background knowledge add to the details of this mental picture?
- How have the sensory images changed as you read the story?
- Does creating images help you remember the story?
- Can you explain to the group how seeing the facts in your mind helps you decide what information is the most important to remember?

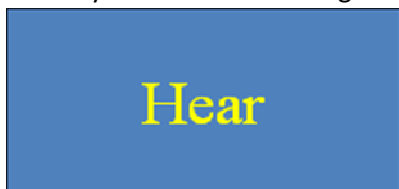
#### Idea 4: Organise the Response

Graphics help organise a student's thinking. By filling in each section of the wheel, he/she is needing to pay attention to all senses. Students should write more than, "I hear a bell." Instead they should write, "I hear a bell that goes 'Briiiiing... briiiiing.'" Another approach is giving students each a strip of paper with one sense on it. A team can find the sections in the text that describe that particular sense.

- Make a sensory wheel. Divide a circle into six wedges and then completed with the following:



- I hear, I feel, I taste, I touch... (Emotionally, I feel)
- Give strips of paper with symbols of the senses. Students read with partner to find sections of text where they could visualise using one of the senses.



#### Idea 5: Elaborate

- Press students for greater elaboration.
- If they see a car:
  - ◆ What color is the car?
  - ◆ What type is it?
  - ◆ How many doors does it have?
  - ◆ Does the top roll down?
  - ◆ What sound is the horn?
  - ◆ What do the seats smell like?
  - ◆ What coverings do the seats have?

#### Idea 6: Vocabulary Visualisation

When students illustrate a word's meaning, they naturally choose images from their prior knowledge. Taking an abstract meaning and making it concrete increases memory of the word by at least 50%. What picture would you have drawn? How would you have acted out the word?

e.g. Ask students to think of a way they could remember the meaning: dictatorship- “a ruler with absolute power and authority”

Ask students to make a graphic representation that would connect with their lives personally and facilitate memory of the word.

Ask students to “act out” the word’s meaning.

### **Idea 7: Visualising Maths Word Problems**

Make a visual representation of the problem.

Scott, a freshman at Michigan State needs to walk from his dorm room in Wilson Hall to his math class in Wells Hall. Normally, he walks 300 meters east and 400 meters north along the sidewalks, but today he is running late. He decides to take a shortcut through Baker’s Park. How many meters long is Scott’s shortcut?

Kauffman in his studies found that people naturally used mental imagery to solve problems, especially if the situation was novel. In the act of making a diagram, students must select the most relevant facts to the problem.

#### Using Visualisation in Maths

Visualising is one of the best ways to help you out in solving mathematical problems. It is probably easiest to relate this to the ever favorite word problem you run into over and over again. Every time you read a word problem you probably think to yourself — “ How am I going to solve this one?” This strategy helps you be able to put together the pieces of the word problem puzzle in your head down on paper.

Even if the problem does not involve words you are still visualising. There are many ways you may visualise a problem. The easiest way is probably to draw a picture. If the problem is not one where it would be easiest to draw a picture then you may be able to think aloud and follow the steps to the problem.

Whichever is easiest for you would be the route to go. Here are Polya’s (Teaching Reading in Mathematics, 2000) problem-solving steps that include both drawing pictures and thinking aloud.

A. Understand the problem. (MAKING CONNECTIONS)

1. Ask yourself if you have done a similar problem before.
2. Determine what is given and if any information is not needed.
3. You may want to draw a sketch of the problem.

B. Devise a plan. (QUESTIONING and VISUALISING and MAKING INFERENCES)

4. Ask yourself if there are any hints in words to how you should solve this problem.
5. Look at the key words in the problem and see if the simplest plan would be to select the correct operation.
6. If you are not sure what to do, then see if there is a problem that is similar to the one you are working on.
7. You can also restate the problem to make sure that you understand what the problem is asking for.
8. Make sure you have taken into account all aspects to the problem so you can carry out your plan.

C. Carry out your plan. (DETERMINING IMPORTANCE)

9. Check to make sure you are doing each step correctly.
10. Ask yourself, “Why is this the best way to solve it?”

D. Examine the solution. (SYNTHESISING INFORMATION)

11. Check the solution to see if you have correctly answered the question.
12. Ask yourself — “Is this solution a reasonable answer for this problem?” If not then check your plan again.

### **Idea 7: To Increase Science Knowledge-Make Models**

Pictures, diagrams, computer images, other representation of complex objects or processes help students understand things they can’t observe directly.

For example: Make a model of an atom, DNA, a cell’s structure, the solar system.

## Idea 8: Graphic Organisers

Since the brain sees information in pictures, graphic organisers are a must for efficient learning. Graphic organisers could be images such as: cluster maps, flow charts, Venn diagrams.

The use of visual cues such as acronyms and flow charts can be significant tools in order to remember key historical date information, names and concepts. Take the time to draw when possible, using decision trees or bubble charts. Writing down the main word from each bullet point and then creating an acronym is also key when apply reading strategy exercises.

## Idea 9: Use Poetry

Writing poetry and reading it multiple times is a way to “sense” any concept. The poem can deal with ANY content area. From reading about a lonely amoeba to the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, students can be helped to enter the scene and subject more fully.

## Idea 10: Sketch to Stretch

- Have students choose a scene or a passage and draw it, incorporating the passage into the visual.
- In groups, ask students to choose the "most important moment" in the book and represent it graphically. When the groups share their work with the class, they should explain the reasons for choosing the moment they did as well as why they portrayed it as they did.
- In groups or with a partner, ask students to choose a character and portray him or her non-representationally—using colour, shape, and visual symbols. When they share their work, they should explain why they chose a particular character as well as the artistic choices they made for their portrayal.
- Have students do a visual sketch in their writer’s notebooks in place of the customary written response. You may ask that they include a brief written commentary so you can understand their thinking.
- To begin a discussion, ask students to do a quick sketch of an issue in the reading that interests them. Use the sketches to begin the discussion.

### Sketch-to-Stretch

Sketch your response to the story in the box below. Remember not to worry about artistic quality, just sketch your reaction.



Describe your sketch and your reaction to the story below.

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## Visualise and Verbalise

Visualising and Verbalising is a strategy to connect and interpret both oral and written language. It is the ability to recall facts, get the main idea, make an inference, draw a conclusion, predict/extend and evaluate.

### Rationale

Visualisation is directly related to reading and language comprehension and critical thinking. The brain sees in order to store and process information.

### Instructional Procedures

1. Begin by telling students that you are going to look at a picture and describe it to them without first showing it to them. Tell them that you want to place the picture in their minds.
2. Display the structure words and tell the students that you will be using the structure words as a guide for including the detail you will be describing to them in order.

#### Structure Words

**1 What**

**2 Size**

**3 Colour**

**4 Number**

**5 Shape**

**6 Where**

**7 Movement**

**8 Mood**

**9 Background**

**10 Perspective**

**11 When**

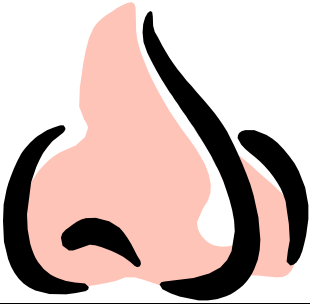
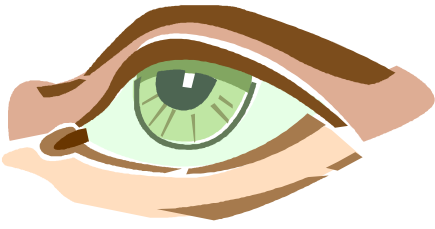
**12 Sound**

2. After you finish describing with the structure words, encourage students to ask you questions for clarification.
4. Ask for student volunteers to describe what they picture.  
"Your words made me picture..."
5. Show students the picture so that they may compare it with their mental picture.
6. If there is a discrepancy, encourage students to say, "You know what, I didn't picture the..."
7. Give out pictures and the structure words to half the class and ask them to work with a partner to repeat the same process. Remind them not to show their partner the picture,
8. After students have become proficient at this, you can move on to word imagery. Partners have to guess the word by its description. Some familiar, high imagery nouns to use are:  

<b>clown</b>	<b>Santa Claus</b>	<b>Christmas tree</b>	<b>monkey</b>	<b>fire truck</b>	<b>doll</b>
			<b>butterfly</b>		
<b>Mickey Mouse</b>	<b>cowboy</b>	<b>owl</b>	<b>banana split</b>	<b>snake</b>	<b>dog</b>
<b>Horse</b>	<b>cat</b>	<b>tiger</b>	<b>elephant</b>	<b>flower</b>	
9. Students can then practice visualising, sentences, paragraphs and then passages.

## Sense-o-Gram

As you read or listen to the selection, jot down any words or phrases that activate your senses.



*"Images are all around us, and the ability to interpret them meaningfully is a vital skill for students to learn."*

*" 'Literacy' usually means the ability to read and write, but it can also refer to the ability to 'read' kinds of signs other than words — for example, images or gestures. The proliferation of images in our culture — in newspapers and magazines, in advertising, on television, and on the Web — makes visual literacy, the ability to 'read' images, a vital skill. But what does it mean to read an image, and how can teachers help students develop the skills to do so thoughtfully?"*

*"Visual literacy is the ability to see, to understand, and ultimately to think, create, and communicate graphically."*

From  
***Reading images: an introduction to visual literacy***  
Melissa Thibault and David Walbert  
<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/675>

# Visual Literacy

## What is Visual Literacy?

Visual literacy is the art and skill of seeing and comprehending visual details, the ability to read and write visual text, and the ability to understand the meanings of and messages in visual text.



## What is visual text?

Visual text contains images, either with or without accompanying words. Visual texts can be printed, electronic, fiction, or non-fiction. They range from diagrams to documentaries. Examples of visual texts include maps, charts, graphs, textbook illustrations, flow charts, street signs, Internet websites -- in short, any information source that includes pictures or illustrations.

## Why is visual literacy important?

Our increasingly visual world is filled with messages that need to be understood. These may be obvious, like street signs or advertisements, or they can be subtle, like the architecture of buildings or the clothes we wear. Visual literacy helps us determine and understand the messages being sent through images.



## Art, Language Arts, and Visual Literacy

Young children are natural artists. Somewhere along the line, they take on adult reservations about what they can draw; people become stick figures, trees become rectangles and circles. Part of visual literacy is paying attention to details. Making and appreciating art also require attention to details. The more children are encouraged to notice details, the more details they are likely to see, use, and understand. Writing activities that incorporate art, photographs, and illustrations can help students use more details in their writing, and vice-versa.



## Visual Literacy

- Understanding and making visual images is referred to as visual literacy.
- In a society where we are bombarded with visual images, your students need to make sense of all the visual cues around them.
- Using visual practices such as imagery, attending to visual images, and using visual representations in your classroom will assist them in developing and improving their visual literacy.

### Use a variety of visual texts

- Picture story books
- Factual books –pictures, headings graphs
- Films
- Videos
- DVDs
- Digital images
- Comic books
- Magazines
- Cartoons
- websites

Visual images are fast becoming the most predominant form of communication. Children are surrounded by all sorts of visual media now and according to Mary Alice White, researcher at Columbia Teachers' College:

*'Young people learn more than half of what they know from visual information, but few schools have an explicit curriculum to show students how to think critically about visual data.'*

Visual literacy includes such areas as facial expressions, body language, drawing, painting, sculpture, hand signs, street signs, international symbols, layout of the pictures and words in a textbook, the clarity of type fonts, computer images, pupils producing still pictures, sequences, movies or video, user-friendly equipment design and critical analysis of television advertisements.

This is a vast range of activities for teachers to draw from, but the efforts required to develop visual literacy can be rewarding for both the teacher and the pupils. Visual literacy supports classroom practice in many ways across the curriculum: it builds on children's home experiences, classroom technology allows access to a huge range of visuals, it is an excellent teaching medium for visual and kinaesthetic learners, it supports EAL children in understanding, it is very effective for developing boys' writing and it deepens children's understanding of texts.

### Visual literacy and writing

Research about writing indicates that there is a need for purposeful writing – writing which motivates, is purposeful, relevant and has an audience. Good practitioners should be developing approaches to engage and motivate children's writing. Research strongly suggests that there should be a move away from commercial schemes, and that genre-based approaches across the curriculum should be developed where visual images are used to stimulate writing. Recent recommendations develop the idea of teachers as writers: not only teachers modelling but writing for pupils and alongside them. This leads onto the idea of teachers as talkers; modelling talk and valuing talk and its role in writing. Good practice should incorporate and develop the interests of children through the deliberate use of visual texts and visual approaches with explicit links to writing.

### Motivating reading and writing

The article, 'Beyond the frame: exploring children's literacy practices' (Burnett and Myers, *Reading Literacy and Language*, 2002) explored the factors that motivate children to read and write at home. The small-scale research study was based in an inner-city school in Sheffield and found that children are motivated to create their own purposes for literacy in their own private worlds. Researchers set out to explore the literacy events, including visual images, ICT and media texts that children chose to engage in outside school. Eight pupils from Years 3 and 6 were invited to use disposable cameras to capture instances of when they used literacy at home. The photographs that emerged, and discussions that followed, revealed some telling insights into the children's motivation and creativity with regard to opportunities for reading, writing, visual displays and use of ICT.

Analysis of the data revealed that literacy was used as a means of:



- cementing relationships – this included sharing books with younger siblings or corresponding with friends and relatives overseas
- organising domestic routines – this included using calendars, or notice boards to remember key events such as birthdays or outings
- exploring and adding to knowledge – this involved both access to information in hard copies of texts or electronically; for example two children used their computers to explore school topics or research areas of particular interest
- creating a statement of identity – this included displays of pictures, certificates, religious texts, or prayer calendars that helped the children to develop their sense of family identity
- personal enjoyment – the children in the study all reported reading for pleasure, but also seemed to be including aspects of reading or writing in their play, such as writing notes to themselves or creating props for make-believe play situations.

The project revealed some telling insights into the children's motivation and creativity with regard to opportunities for reading, writing, visual displays and the use of ICT.

### **Visual literacy to motivate boys' reading and writing**

*Raising Boys' Achievements in Writing* (United Kingdom Literacy Association, 2004) was a project that looked at the continuing gap between boys' and girls' writing. The project provides focused and reliable evidence to show what raised boys' attainment in writing. It was based around a three-week unit of work integrating visual stimuli and drama approaches and focused on attitude and motivation. The project illustrates the point that the use of visual images, such as videos/DVDs/still images, has shown an improvement in writing and attitude to writing by boys. If boys' writing is a concern in a school then the school should consider developing these aspects to support its improvement.

Using visual literacy can lead to an extension of meta-language. Results from the DfES *Raising Boys' Achievement* project (2005) demonstrated that by the end of the project the boys were more able to express ideas about the process of writing and effective writing behaviours and indicated that they saw themselves as much more in control of their own writing. Moreover, the project had a noticeable effect not only on levels of writing attainment but also beneficial effects on reading, speaking and listening.

The impact of the research is powerful if literacy teachers take the findings of the project and act on them to promote the use of visual literacy. Using visual literacy can result in:

- increased quantity of writing
- increased quality of writing
- wider use of vocabulary
- greater use of imagery
- increased fluency
- more adventurous writing
- improved attitude to writing
- greater engagement with writing
- greater commitment to writing
- improved motivation, self-esteem and enthusiasm.

These are just some of the findings of the impact of this approach with boys in the research schools.

### **Visual technologies**

Recent research by Becta indicates that the use of ICT can have a great impact upon standards. The following list gives examples of the variety of ICT opportunities that can be used. Technologies include:

- video/DVD
- digital images
- ICT texts/web-based texts
- photographs/images
- sound.

Images – still and moving – may be a good start for some teachers who may not have access to some of the technologies – all teachers could show a video.

## Teaching approaches

So, if visual literacy can make such a significant improvement to the development of writing skills, then what teaching approaches should be used? The recommendations for integrating images are that teachers should develop an integrated approach to speaking and listening, drama, reading and writing and that teaching is clearly linked to children's experiences and culture. Use of images can be a powerful tool in the teacher's toolbox. It can stimulate children's discussion and motivate their interest. Use of images that are relevant will be even more successful. So why not try the following ideas to get visual literacy started in your classroom?

- **Real-life pictures** – Consider if there are any pictures that you can share with the pupils to exemplify stories from your life. Can pupils bring pictures in and share a story? This exercise could be linked to drama, role play and speaking and listening. Activities could include a two-minute discussion about a picture using some question prompts.
- **Describing pictures** – Using a picture (I recommend 'The Picnic' by James Tissot) describe the scene to the pupils. Pupils can then use the description to sketch the picture on a blank A4 sheet. Show the children the picture and ask them to compare with their version. How close was their picture to the real thing? What mistakes had they made? Question the pupils about the picture. Is it a photograph? If not, how was it made? When was it made? What is happening in the picture? Is it a celebration – if so, what are they celebrating? Whereabouts are they? What time of year is it? Allow the children to guide the direction of the discussion.
- **Film and television images** – Use a visual image from a favourite film/TV programme to develop noun phrases. My Year 5 pupils loved this activity using the first glimpse of Miss Truchball in the film Matilda. Give the pupils an A4 copy of an image and ask them to label the picture. Add adjectives to describe the nouns in different colours.
- **Still images** – Take a still from a favourite scene from a film or TV programme or use a picture or photograph. Using pre-cut speech and thought bubbles, ask the pupils to think about what the characters/people in the scene/picture or photograph are saying and thinking. The pupils can write out the word and thought bubbles and attach with tape or glue.
- **Hidden images** – Use pieces of card to mask the majority of a picture or photograph. Leave a small section of the image uncovered. Ask the pupils what they think is happening in the picture/photograph. As more pieces of card are removed, ideas need to be remodelled and this will be a catalyst for interesting discussions.
- **Pictures for writing** – Use a picture as a stimulus for extended individual writing. Stories can be written from different viewpoints of people in the image.
- **Film** – Take a look at the [Film Education website](#). This is a website designed for primary teachers in the UK and contains links to free resources. There are lots of ideas and resources for classroom use.
- **Media** – Pupils will have been exposed to a range of advertising. All forms of advertising will affect the way pupils interact with the world – and can be used to develop literacy skills. Media shapes the way the pupils communicate – and this can be acknowledged in the literacy lesson. Look at some adverts with the pupils – how do the adverts make them feel? How is any text within the adverts written? How do images and text interplay in adverts?
- **Picture dictionaries** – A lot can be gained from creating a classroom picture dictionary. Not only can an understanding of key vocabulary be consolidated, but by using software such as PowerPoint, interactive presentations that integrate words and pictures can be easily created in the classroom.
- **Pictures and sound** – Pupils can explore the connection between sounds and images and develop pictures that illustrate the poem. Choose a poem and read it to the pupils; then ask them to draw a representation of the poem. This will consolidate their understanding of the words used within the poem. The pupils can also record the poem and integrate the pictures they have drawn and the recording into a PowerPoint presentation.

## Cross-curricular visual literacy

There are also many cross-curricular opportunities to link visual literacy with other core subjects.

- **Charts and diagrams (maths)** – There is a wealth of activities that can link non-fiction texts with images. Select a non-fiction text full of facts and figures and ask the pupils to represent the information in a chart or diagram. Once the charts/diagrams are completed, ask the pupils to discuss how well the visual representations match the original text(s). This activity can also be linked to work done in mathematics – ask the pupils to represent visually mathematical data.
- **Man on the moon (science and PSHE)** – Show the pupils a picture of Neil Armstrong landing on the moon. Ask the pupils to draw the moon and represent pictorially what they know about the moon. Then ask them how the picture made them feel – proud, perhaps?

## In conclusion

There is much to be gained from using visual media to develop essential literacy skills. So move away from the big book, the phonic focus and the guided reading. A refreshing break from a typical literacy hour will make for a more interesting, engaging lesson, and remember that the majority of information absorbed is actually collected through our sense of vision.

## Organisation of visual texts

Information and ideas are conveyed through symbol systems other than print.

Visual texts may stand alone such as in photographs, maps, or picture books, or they may be integrated into multimodal texts, sometimes called hybrid texts.

Stimulus material needs to provide opportunities for students to identify the:

- purposes for which these texts are used
- contexts in which they are used
- structure of visual texts

and to demonstrate

- the literacy outcomes for using such texts.

These texts may include:

### Photographs

- news photograph
- historical etc.

### Cartoons

- cartoon strip
- social comment e.g. political
- caricature

### Diagrams

### Illustrations

- style
  - line drawing
  - collage etc.

### Paintings

### Graphs

- labelled diagrams
  - picture glossaries
  - summary diagrams
  - structure diagrams
  - diagrams with keys
- scale diagrams
  - measurement
  - estimation
- analytic diagrams
  - cross sections
  - cutaways
- synthetic diagrams
  - flow diagrams
- ☐ linear flow
- ☐ chain sequence
- ☐ cyclical flow sequence e.g. life cycle
- ☐ how to ... diagrams
- ☐ story boards
- ☐ tree and web diagrams

- bar and column
- line graphs
- pie graphs

#### Timelines

- simple timelines
- multiple timelines

#### Maps

- bird's eye view
- context maps
- geographical maps
- flow maps e.g. weather maps
- map features e.g. coordinates, scale

#### Tables

- comparative
- summary

(Moline 1995, Callow 1999, Kress & van Leeuwen 1996.

### **How Do We Know What We Know? Analysing Pictures**

#### **Picture Analysis Worksheet**

#### OBSERVATION

Study the picture quietly for a few minutes. Describe exactly what you see, including people, clothing, jewelry, or other objects or writing in the picture.

#### INFERENCES

Are there people in the picture? If so, what are they doing? What can you tell about the person or persons from looking at the picture? Is it a picture from today or long ago? How can you tell? What do you think the artist or photographer was trying to convey?

Based on what you observed, what can you infer or guess about the picture?

#### QUESTIONS

What questions does this picture raise in your mind?

Where could you find answers to them?

## Comprehending Picture books: Image, Text, Design

*Picture books Defined:* A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; an art form; a social, cultural and historical document; and foremost, an experience for the child. It hinges on the interplay of illustrations and written text, the simultaneous display of two facing pages and the drama of the turning page (Bader, 1976).

### Why Picture books?

- Micro-Texts - able to read and discuss complete text in a single session
- Wide variety of genres, topics, themes, authors, illustrators, formats, literary devices
- Range from simple stories to complex narratives
- Provide opportunities for discussion of significant topics
- Picture books draw upon several systems of meaning simultaneously (text, image, design)
- Teachers need a theoretical foundation and vocabulary to talk about Image.
- Picture books offer a connection between School-Based Literacies and Multiliteracies.

### Image & Text

- An Illustrated Text is different from a Picture book
- Interplay varies among images, design elements and written text
- Visual (Image) and textual (Writing) draw upon different semiotic resources
- Text is sequential, temporal (order)
- Image is simultaneous (composition)

## Considering Art in Picture books: Basic Elements of Design

### Line

- Vertical Lines: indicates stability, height, separates elements in image
- Horizontal Lines: bring elements together, calming
- Diagonal lines: suggest motion and movement
- Thin Lines: suggest frailty, an elegant quality
- Thick Lines: suggest strength or provide emphasis

### Shapes / Patterns

- Repeated shapes are patterns
- Shapes can be open or closed, angular or round
- Basic shapes:
  - Circle - comfort, protection, endlessness
  - Square - stability, honesty, conformity
  - Triangle - dynamic tension, action, conflict

### Colour

- Red: power, warmth, anger, energy or passion, active
- Green: associated with nature, calming, cool
- Blue: restful, calm, sense of detachment, serenity or melancholy, passive

- Yellow: happiness or caution, warmth
- Orange: associated with fall, seasonal
- Black: dark moods, scary, depressing

## **Visual Grammar: Understanding Images through a Semiotic Lens**

### **Composition & Perspective**

- Placement of Elements - Scale
- Information Values - Image Zones
- Perspective – Power & the Gaze

### **Motif & Symbolism**

- Recurring Symbols

### **Salience (Signification)**

- Salience – Colour / Position / Anomaly

### **Framing (Connect - Separate)**

- Framing – Sequence / Dramatic Effect

### **Modality**

- Reality Value - Level of Abstraction

### **Final Considerations for Picture books**

- Deliberate choices by artists, graphic designers, publishers
- Images are NOT simply illustrating the text, nor Decorations, They are Their own System of Meaning
- We need to Teach Children how to Read Images as well as Text
- Images require different comprehension strategies than text

## **Picture Book Analysis Guide**

- Pick up the picture book, attending to the size, format (horizontal or vertical), materials used in construction of book (papers, graphics).
- Consider the author of the text and the artist. What media is used in the illustrations? What fonts are selected? Where is the text located on the page? Borders etc.
- Look at the cover, title and illustrations. What expectations are set up for you as you approach the picture book? What does the cover, title and illustrations suggest?
- What is included in the peritext? The dedication, title page, author's note, summary statement etc..
- Skim through the book, reading quickly to see where the story goes. What is the overall structure of the book? Home-Away-Home ? Repetitive structures or language? Cumulative? The Hero Cycle? Circular, chronological, or other?

**Read through the picture book more deliberately, coding / marking important aspects you want to consider. After your second reading, consider the following questions:**

- What were your initial reactions to the text and illustrations?
- What is the overall structure of the text?
- How does the opening of the story compare with the closing of the story?

- How do the illustrations relate to the text?
- Words propel the reader forward and images slow us down. How did this tension between reading and viewing affect your experience?
- What kind of gaps does the author / illustrator leave for the reader to fill in? Are details purposefully left out to create tension?
- How does the story flow from page to page? Are there borders that separate things or does it cross over in language and image from page to page?
- Consider each opening separately. What emotional connotations came to mind?
- Whose background knowledge is privileged in reading this text?
- Is there a relationship between form and content? Does the design of the book add to the content being presented? How?
- What themes were constructed as you read?

### **Analysing Visual Images and Design in Picture books**

- Begin by considering the format of the images and their placement in the picture book
- Where is the text located? Within the image? Separated by borders or white space, Why?
- Are the illustrations double page spreads, single page images, collages, overlapping images, or portraits?
- Consider the series of images in the picture book. Do the images change over the course of the book? Do they get bigger, smaller, change?
- Select particular images to consider. Ask the following:
  - What is fore-grounded and in the background?
  - Consider the “path” your eyes follow as you approach the image. What catches your eye first? Why is that element salient?
  - What colours dominate the image? What effect does this have on you as reader?
  - Consider the use of white (negative) space. Are the illustrations framed or full bleed? How does this position you as a viewer?
  - What is the “reality value” or level of abstraction? Are the images life-like or stick figures?
  - Are there any recurring patterns in the images?
  - Are there any anomalous elements? Things that stick out, or seem out of place? Are these important to consider?
  - What is the artist trying to get you to look at through leading lines, colours, contrast, gestures, lighting?
  - Are there any recurring symbols or motifs in the images?
  - Consider the style or artistic choices? Are they appropriate, and how do they add to the meanings of the picture book?
  - How are the images framed? Are there thick borders or faded edges?
  - Consider the setting of the story. How is this realised in the images? Realistically? Metaphorically?
  - Consider size and scale. What is large? Why are certain elements larger than others? Does this add to meanings of power, control?
  - Consider the viewer's point of view. Do characters directly gaze or address the viewer? Are the characters close up or distanced? How does point of view add to relationships with the characters?

## Why Picture Books?

Picture Books are accessible to most students. Picture books also provide the opportunity to read and discuss a complete text in a single lesson. Some are simple stories whilst others, like graphic novels, deal with complex subject matter. They are able to be analysed at different levels. They also offer a wide variety of genres, topics, themes, authors, illustrators, formats and literary devices for analysis and discussion.

The visual elements combined with the text enable links to be made between the two modalities. The critical analysis of picture books bridges text-based literacies and digital literacies and provides the opportunity for students to apply their knowledge to other visual formats.

### Questions to ask about Pictures and Picture Books

<b>S</b>	<b>Shape</b> – what are the main shapes in the picture? What effects do they have? <b>Size</b> – which shapes are smaller / larger? Which characters take up the most space? Why? <b>Symbols</b> – are there any recurring symbols?	Repeated shapes are patterns Shapes can be open or closed, angular or round Basic shapes: Circle - comfort, protection, endlessness Square - stability, honesty, conformity Triangle - dynamic tension, action, conflict
<b>L</b>	<b>Line</b> – what lines do you notice? What effects do they have?	Vertical Lines: indicates stability, height, separates elements in image Horizontal Lines: bring elements together, calming Diagonal lines: suggest motion and movement Thin Lines: suggest frailty, an elegant quality Thick Lines: suggest strength or provide emphasis
<b>I</b>	<b>Images</b> - What images are there? Where are the images located? Why? Are there any recurring symbols? Why?	Where is the text located? Within the image? Separated by borders or white space, why? Consider the series of images in the picture book. Do the images change over the course of the book? Do they get bigger, smaller, change?
<b>C</b>	<b>Colours</b> – what are the main colours in the illustrations?  <b>Composition</b> - how is the picture composed?	Red: power, warmth, anger, energy or passion, active Green: associated with nature, calming, cool Blue: restful, calm, sense of detachment, serenity or melancholy, passive Yellow: happiness or caution, warmth Orange: associated with fall, seasonal Black: dark moods, scary, depressing Placement of Elements - Scale Relationships between the elements
<b>K</b>	<b>Knowledge</b> – what do you know about the artist, author, topic already?	What knowledge do you already have about the text? Whose background knowledge is privileged in the text?  <i>SLICK - Debbie Draper, 2010</i>



## QAR (Question, Answer, Relationships) for picture books

Right There	In the book	Literal	Identifying what is in the text – orientation questions	What do you see? What is happening? What is the setting?
Artist / Author and You	In the book and in my head	Inferential	Make inferences about what is happening in the text / picture. Rely on background knowledge to interpret the text – inferences must be backed up with evidence from the text	What do you think ...is doing? How do you think ....feels?
On My Own	In my head	Inferential	Make inferences about the text / picture based solely on prior knowledge. Students may not even look at the text but their inferences should be logical.	What do you know about....? Why do you think this happened?-
Putting it Together	Think & search	Inferential Synthesis	Make links between aspects of the text – notice patterns	What do you think is going to happen?

### Picture Books – Illustrator Study

#### Purpose:

- To enable students to consider the relationship between text and illustrations, to identify and understand the use of symbolism; stereotype ; cause and effect; point of view; mood in picture books.
- To assist students to develop an awareness of the role of an illustrator and also of the media and illustrative techniques used by illustrators to render their messages in visual texts.

:

#### Session 1:

- Invite children to predict text for the wordless picture **Niki's Walk**. (Children will usually provide a simple narrative).
- Read **Rosie's Walk** without showing illustrations and then repeat reading showing illustrations . Discuss the extra layers of meaning added by the illustration. Discuss the role of the reader/viewer and the way the text is open to some additional interpretation by the viewer by discussing the question “Did Rosie know about the fox?”
- Share the book **Tuesday** by David Wiesner. – a humorous and complex visual text with minimal text. Discuss the techniques used by the illustrator to engage the reader .Explore

#### Cause and effect /narrative structure

The use of the title “Tuesday” and the minimal text indicating the passage of time from early evening to dawn. This progression of events is reinforced by the use of frames to create a “filmic” event.

**The use of shape** (facial expressions of the frogs/people; frames ); **colour** (deep blues) and **size** of images to convey a surreal **mood** along with the **use of stereotypic images** (“haunted house” full moon” “scudding clouds” ) which allow the viewer to suspend disbelief and enjoy the fantasy.

- Children then read a selection of picture books from a wide range of picture books individually and then discuss their favourites with a peer.

# Visualizing

## Activity: Think Aloud

**Purpose:** To demonstrate when, why and how you visualize while reading text.

1. Explain to students that you are going to show them how you create images in your mind when you read a text. This think aloud will take something that appears mysterious to children, *visualizing*, and make it something that they understand and think that they can do too!
2. Teacher chooses a part of a text to read aloud.
3. Begin reading. Pause to verbalize your thinking and the images that are being created in your mind. Reveal how you created the images in your mind. Explain to students how you selected rich words from the text, connected to your own personal experiences and prior knowledge and pulled phrases from the text that connect to the 5 senses to create the visual image.
4. Describe to students how creating the image helped you understand and enjoy what was happening in the text.



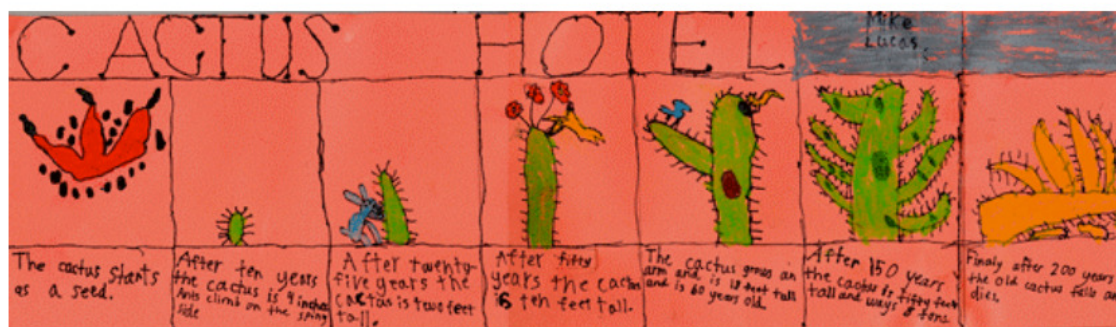
# Visualizing

## Activity: Gallery Images

**Purpose:** To create mental images while reading.

1. Teacher explains the concept of using images to represent information. Show 2 - 4 examples of different images representing different content area concepts. Discuss how images correspond to information.
2. In small groups, have students read a section of expository text and create 2 - 4 images to represent the content. Students share images with classmates.
3. Start a gallery on a classroom or hallway wall to exhibit images!

\*Source: McLaughlin, M. & Allen, M.B. (2000). Guided Comprehension: a teaching model for grades 3-8. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.



## Visualizing

**Activity:** Guided Imagery

**Purpose:** To create mental images; to provide time to discuss visualizations.



1. Teacher reads a descriptive passage to students pausing occasionally to share what he sees in his mind and the emotions he is feeling. Point out to students the rich text that helped create the images and emotions. (Be sure to include text that stimulates all 5 senses).
2. Teacher asks students to close their eyes, breathe deeply and relax as he reads a descriptive passage.
3. Throughout the passage, pause to ask students what they see, hear, taste, smell and feel. Ask the students what words helped them create the mental image and emotions.

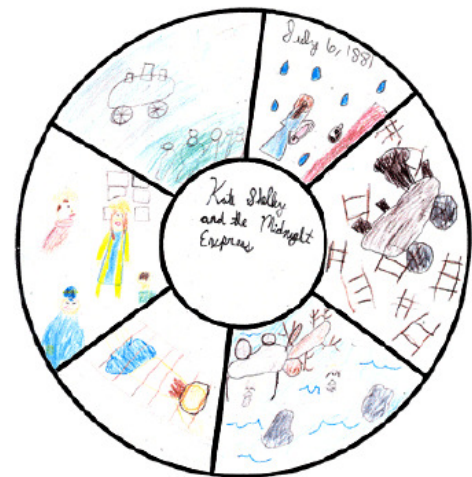
\*Source: McLaughlin, M. & Allen, M.B. (2000). Guided Comprehension: a teaching model for grades 3-8. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

## Visualizing

**Activity:** Story Wheel

**Purpose:** To help students visualize story elements and practice summarizing.

1. Teacher prepares story wheels prior to lesson. A story wheel is a circle divided into 6- 8 pie segments (pie pieces) with a smaller circle in the center of the larger circle. See example below.
2. Students read a story.
3. After completing the story the students list the important events in the story. Remind students that the events should be chosen from the beginning, middle and end of the story.
4. Next have the students divide the list of important events into a list of 6 - 8 (depending on pie pieces) most important events.
5. Students can write the events on the pie segments. Some teachers like to have their students number the events. Some teachers choose to skip this step and move right to step 6.
6. Next the students should illustrate their events on the corresponding pie segments.
7. Have students write the story title and the Author's name in the center circle.
8. Post story wheels in the reading center or on a classroom kiosk.



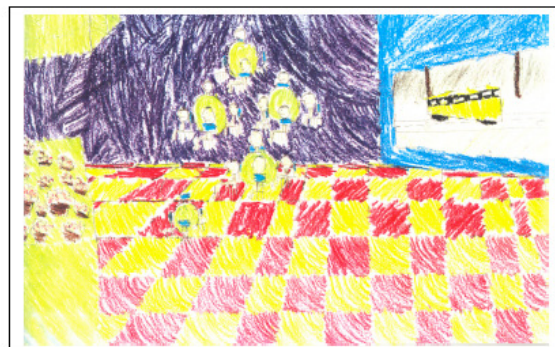


# Visualizing

## Activity: Artistic Response - Visual Art

**Purpose:** To create artistic representations based on a text.

1. Tell students that they are going to be artists in reading class! Artists are responsible for creating an artistic representation of a text.
2. Divide students into small groups that will read a shared text.
3. Students read the text and individually create an artistic representation of the text. Encourage students to use artwork in any medium (drawing, cutting, sculpting, and painting), music, drama (one-act play, puppets) or dance.
4. Students share their artistic representations with the members of their group. Invite the group to connect the artistic representation to their own ideas about the reading. Then the artist can share what his representation means, where it came from, or what it represents to him.
5. Complete this activity several times throughout the year and encourage students to try a variety of approaches to create their artistic response!



This is a great cross-curricular activity. Plan with your art teacher, music teacher, drama teacher, dance / movement teacher, etc.

## Visualization Check Sheet for Readers

Check the moves you typically make or the moves you made in a recent think-aloud.

Provide examples. Which moves do you not make but think you could?

Set a goal to try one or two of these during your next reading.

\_\_\_ I use sensory images like sounds, physical sensations, smells, touch, and emotions described in the story to help me picture the story.

As I read I create pictures in my mind of:

\_\_\_ events and actions

\_\_\_ characters and their features, clothing, etc.

\_\_\_ settings and situations

\_\_\_ I create images that elaborate on or embellish story details.

\_\_\_ I may visualize unmentioned scenes or actions or details, e.g. picturing characters when they were younger or older, seeing a setting in greater detail than it is described, etc.

\_\_\_ I may visualize myself in the scene.

\_\_\_ I may imagine meeting a character, having the character enter my daily life.

\_\_\_ I feel emotions and may visualize in ways that heighten these emotions.

\_\_\_ I use images and experiences from own life to help me see and experience the text.

## Visualizing Assessment Table

STUDENT						
Tell me about the mental pictures in your mind.						
Where is the picture in your head coming from?						
Why do you visualize when you're reading?						
What do you look for in the text to help you visualize?						
Does everyone have the same mental images? Why?						
How did your background knowledge help you make image?						
Are all images critical to understanding the story?						

Developed by Jennifer Ingebritsen

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Picture Show Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	0 = minimal	1 = basic	2 = proficient	3 = exemplary	Score/comments
Picture show communicates literal understanding of the text.	No images; or images bear no relationship to text.	Images illustrate one or two items directly mentioned in text, may be peripheral details.	Images illustrate key elements of character, setting and events in text.	Images illustrate key elements of character, setting and events in text. Images are detailed, and student can describe additional details from mental image.	
Picture show communicates main concepts and demonstrates inferences about characters, setting, events, main problem and resolution.	No images; or images that illustrate only literal understanding of words in text.	Images or music choices illustrate more than simple objects mentioned in text. Images demonstrate some inferences about elements of the story, but main concepts are missing.	Student clearly combined the author's words with her/his own background knowledge to understand the text. Images and music choices illustrate inferences about characters, setting, events, main problem and resolution.	Images extend or enhance the text with student's own interpretations. Student can explain his/her inferences based on descriptive words, associated feelings and experiences, or emotional responses to the text.	
Student is able to go beyond pictures, to use all senses to understand text.	Images illustrate only visual elements of text. Student is unable to explain basis of music choices.	Images, music choices or student explanations illustrate some use of multiple senses or emotions.	Picture show illustrates use of multiple senses through use of color, composition, rotation of objects, and appropriate music choices. Student can describe a "mind movie" that includes more than visual images.	Images and music come from all the senses and the emotions. Student describes a rich "mind movie" that includes sound, smell, movement and feelings and demonstrates personal interaction with the text.	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Picture Show Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	0 = minimal	1 = basic	2 = proficient	3 = exemplary	Score/comments
<b>Picture show communicates literal understanding of the text.</b>	No images; or images bear no relationship to text.	Images illustrate one or two items directly mentioned in text, may be peripheral details.	Images illustrate understanding of significant information and vocabulary presented in the text.	Images illustrate understanding of significant information and vocabulary presented in the text. Images are detailed, and student can describe additional details from mental image.	
<b>Picture show communicates main concepts and demonstrates ability to understand and acquire information from text.</b>	No images; or images that illustrate only literal understanding of words in text.	Images or music choices illustrate more than simple objects mentioned in text. Images demonstrate some understanding of concepts or relationships, but main concepts are missing.	Student clearly combined the author's words with her/his own background knowledge to understand the text. Images and music choices illustrate understanding of key concepts and relationships.	Images extend or enhance the text with student's own interpretations. Student can explain his/her inferences and clearly communicate what was learned from the text.	
<b>Student is able to go beyond pictures, to use all senses to understand text.</b>	Images illustrate only visual elements of text. Student is unable to explain basis of music choices.	Images, music choices or student explanations illustrate some use of multiple senses or emotions.	Picture show illustrates use of multiple senses through use of color, composition, rotation of objects, and appropriate music choices. Student can describe a "mind movie" that includes more than visual images.	Images and music come from all the senses and the emotions. Student describes a rich "mind movie" that includes sound, smell, movement and feelings, and can explain how mental images enhanced comprehension.	

### References and Useful Links:

[http://rusd.marin.k12.ca.us/belaire/BALearningCenter/carewebpage/reading\\_handbook/visual/creatingmentalimages.pdf](http://rusd.marin.k12.ca.us/belaire/BALearningCenter/carewebpage/reading_handbook/visual/creatingmentalimages.pdf)  
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[http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic\\_table/periodic\\_table.html](http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html)  
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