

Textual features: language features

Alliteration

- when the poet uses the same consonant letter at the beginning of a number of words placed close together e.g. *dark plastic skeleton dangling near my French doors*.

Apostrophe

- addressing an inanimate object or a dead person as if they were alive e.g. 'Death be not proud though some have called thee mighty' (Donne, J in *Favourite verse* (1999) Hurford, C (Ed), Parragon, Bath. p.450)

Assonance

- when the poet repeats the same vowel sound in a number of words placed closely together. e.g. *Billy's pen hit the desk and it ricocheted into the window*.

Consonance

- repeating the consonant anywhere in a number of words e.g. *Deadly destruction of the world*.

Hyperbole

- dramatic exaggeration e.g. *I am so hungry I could eat a horse*.

Imagery

- graphic pictures created by colourful language features e.g. *Algae lie still and bloated on the top*.

Imperative Voice

- forceful verbs, ordering someone to do something e.g. *Open your mind to injustice*.

Irony

- saying one thing but meaning another e.g. *War doesn't hurt anyone*.

Metaphor

- when one object through comparison becomes the other object. When a poet continues the comparison over a verse or a number of lines it becomes an extended metaphor e.g. *Lord Farquard is an evil monster*.

Onomatopoeia

- this is when a poet wants the responder to hear the sounds in the poem, so a word is used that echoes the sound the poet wishes to create e.g. *The dragon bellowed and shrieked in anger*.

Oxymoron

- two contradictory words placed together to make a dramatic point e.g. Shakespeare's Othello stated that he wept *cruel tears* (Shakespeare, W)

Pathetic Fallacy

- using nature to reflect human feelings e.g. *Brent's ribs were painful and he winced in pain when he turned to look at the bruised and angry storm clouds building in the East.*

Person

- 1st: *I*; 2nd: *you*; 3rd: *he* or *she* or *they*. The second person *you* when addressed to the responder can be forceful and persuasive. The first person can invite empathy.

Personification

- when a composer transforms a non human object into a human by giving the object human qualities e.g. *He was in love with the curvaceous lines of his red 3.6 litre turbo Porsche.*

Repetition

- repeating key words.

Sibilants

- repetition of the 's' sound. It can sound soft, relaxing or gentle or even sinister and cold. It all depends on the choice of words and images e.g. *sweet scent of mint and basil.*

Similes

- a comparison between two objects using "like" or "as" e.g. *When the dragon saw Donkey, she acted like a lovesick teenager.*

Symbolism

- when the composer uses an image to represent something else, such as winter which could symbolise death, or a dark shadow which could symbolise danger e.g. *The shadows of the tall, dark trees were creeping closer to the child.* (the underlined words could symbolise impending evil)

Tone

- the feelings of the composer. These feelings are conveyed through word choice and imagery e.g. *I move into an amazing world.* (The tone is one of awe, appreciation and wonder.)

Word choice

- the composer's choice of words affects the tone, the mood and the response of the reader. The words could be sensual (appeal to senses), emotive (emotional and stirring), humorous, descriptive, blunt, harsh etc. The following words are persuasive, direct and warm e.g. *Move into its world and feel its magic.*

Textual features: visual terms

Binaries:

- when one thing is privileged over another. For example in *Who's afraid of the big bad book?* fairytale's privileging of blonde over brown hair is mocked through Goldilock's wig.

Body language and gaze

- examine facial expressions, gestures, stance or position as these features can convey the attitude, feelings or personality of the individual being drawn or photographed. Take note of the direction of the subject's eyes e.g. In *Who's afraid of the big bad book?* Herb's eyes are always directed at the fairytale characters. They are drawn in exaggerated angles to show this.

Colour and tone

- in a black and white image examine the use of contrast, light and darkness. In a colour image, colours are used to signify feelings and evoke a response e.g. red conveys passion, anger, hell, vitality etc., whereas blue conveys peace, harmony or even coldness

Composition

- what is included in a visual is usually deliberately placed there or included. This also applies to what the composer has omitted. Therefore, consider all inclusions and omissions such as surroundings, objects, clothing etc. For example *Who's afraid of the big bad book?* humorously includes visual features such as a squashed pea. The words become metafictionally part of the story.

Framing

- the same camera shots and angles relevant to film are applicable to visuals. Close-ups, extreme close-ups, medium shots, long shots, tilted up or down shots and so on are relevant. For example in *Who's afraid of the big bad book?* there is a close-up shot of Goldilocks screaming. Note that the size of her mouth is exaggerated.

Intertextuality

- textual connections that can be made between texts and enables the reader to make significant connections to their prior knowledge of texts. For example in *Who's afraid of the big bad book?* a number of fairytales are melded to tell Herb's story.

Rule of thirds

- used by the great Dutch painters, the rule of thirds can be useful for some images. Divide an image into thirds from the top and sides and look at the placement of people and/or objects. An object in the top third is usually empowered, whereas anything in the bottom third is disempowered. For example in *Who's afraid of the big bad book?* Herb is often placed in the bottom left hand corner signifying his fear and vulnerability. This is an ironic reversal of when he was in control of the book and drawing moustaches, adding telephones, and cutting out princes.

Vectors

- this refers to the line that our eyes take when we look at a visual. For example in *Who's afraid of the big bad book?* the use of vectors is subverted as text and images are placed in numerous positions.

Textual features: filmic terms

Angles

- camera angles: canting (Dutch tilt) where the camera is tilted on the side; tilted up empowers; tilted down disempowers; wide-angle means all of the scene is in focus

Antihero

- unconventional hero such as Shrek who is ugly, has poor manners and is antisocial

Auteur

- a director with a recognisable style

Binary oppositions

- privileging one thing over another e.g. in *Shrek* the binaries are subverted because ugliness is privileged over beauty

Camera Shots

- close-up – tight framing such as a face
- extreme close-up – eye
- medium shot – torso
- long shot – whole body
- point of view shot – view of the character
- crane shot or bird's eye view – high shot
- establishing shot – long shot establishes the setting, scene and mood of a film

Context

- personal, social, historical, workplace and cultural circumstances of a composer, responder or when the text is set

Editing

- cut – end of a shot
- jump cut – quick, non-sequential cut to another shot
- montage – director deliberately drawing attention to editing through the combination of a number of shots from different scenes
- split screen – more than one frame can be seen at once

Focus

- depth of field – what is in focus in the shot
- narrow depth of field – object in foreground in focus

- pull focus – change focus from one object to another

Genre

- a classification that is made according to the conventions of the text e.g. a western, fantasy, crime fiction. Some texts are nebulous and difficult to classify such as multigeneric texts that employ the conventions of many genres or subvert the conventions such as *Shrek*. When a viewer approaches a text assuming that it fits into a genre they will have certain expectations and bring their prior knowledge of the genre to the text

Ideology

- beliefs, ideas or assumptions

Intertextuality

- textual connections that can be made between texts and enables the viewer to make significant connections to their prior knowledge of texts, and even fill in the gaps of a text. *Shrek* relies on the viewer's prior knowledge of other fairytales

Lighting

- key lighting – represents natural lighting as it casts shadows
- fill lighting – no shadows
- back lighting – light behind a subject

Movement

- panning – sweeping movement – right to left is disconcerting
- body cam – moves with actor
- vomit cam – hand held camera
- tracking – follows the actor
- dolly – camera mounted on tracks to follow an actor or an object

Satire

- using mocking humour to expose a flaw or flaws in society - will employ hyperbole, symbolism, irony etc.

Sound

- diegetic sound – natural sound that would occur in the scene
- non-diegetic – external sound such as theme music. In *Shrek*, the non-diegetic music plays a significant role. It adds to the humour and the subversion.

Symbolism

- using an object to represent something else

Values

- what people believe is important in life such as honesty, tolerance, compassion, moderation, and loyalty. Shrek who has shunned company learns to value friendship and love. The viewer's valuing of beauty is challenged by the ending.

Imaginative writing

- write for a specific audience and use the appropriate language and form. For example if you are requested to compose a letter to a friend, remember that it would be personal, descriptive and even humorous. It would start with a greeting.
- in a narrative create a real place and real characters by supporting your description with detailed observation
- avoid too much information and focus on appealing to the senses through effective descriptions “show don’t tell”. Remember our most powerful tool is our imagination! A text that suggests rather than tells all has a powerful impact on the reader.
- develop a strong, distinctive voice. To achieve this it is advantageous to write about what you have experienced so that your writing comes from the heart. If this is not possible because of the nature of the set task, adopt a believable persona and maintain his/her voice. This could mean using colloquial register and slang so that you convincingly capture the voice of the character e.g. in Tim Winton’s short story *The big world*, he writes

After five years of high school the final November arrives and leaves as suddenly as a spring storm. Exams. Graduation. Huge beach parties. Biggie and me, we’re feverish with anticipation. (Winton, 2004, p.1)

- employ realistic dialogue that reflects the personality, attitude and intentions of your characters
- you are most convincing when you write about what you have experienced; so ground your imaginative writing in things you know
- choose and control your use of a range of language features to engage and influence an audience; this means using techniques such as:
 - ✓ a variety of sentence beginnings and sentence lengths. You could use short, simple sentences and fractured sentences to create tension or long, complex sentences to slow the action down. Ellipsis (...) is a dramatic way of leaving something not said, or hinting that what will happen is too difficult to describe.
 - ✓ vary paragraph lengths – don’t be afraid to use a single sentence paragraph to make a dramatic statement
 - ✓ poetic devices such as: similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration, assonance, sibilants and onomatopoeia. There are many others. Tim Winton in his short story *Aquifer* cleverly uses very ordinary similes to make us smile and visualize what he is describing or what the character is feeling e.g. *Reeds bristled like Venetian blinds in the breeze.*(Winton, 2004, p.38)

- ✓ contrast: juxtaposition can be very effective. You could, for example, start by describing the beauty of a place, stressing its quietness and tranquility and in the next paragraph have a bomb drop.
- ✓ imagery: paint a picture for your reader. Add colour, sound and smells. Once again Winton in his short story *Aquifer* does this well:

From the water's edge you couldn't even see our street. I found eggs in the reeds, skinks in the fallen log, a bluetongue lizard jawing up at me with its hard scales shining amidst the sighing wild oats. I sat in the hot shade of a melaleuca in a daze. (Winton, 2004, p.43)

- ✓ punctuation and paragraphing do matter as it is a writing task

References:

Child, L. (2002) *Who's afraid of the big bad book?*, Hodder Children's, London

Donne, J in *Favourite verse* (1999) Hurford, C (Ed), Parragon, Bath.

Winton, T. (2004) *The turning*, Picador, Australia