

Critical Reading of Visual and Verbal Texts

Points to Consider as You Read/Review Charts, Tables, Illustrations, Photos and Texts

Questions to Ask about a Visual Text

1. What is the nature of the images and words within the visual text you're analyzing?
2. What activity is occurring in the visual text?
3. If the visual text is an ad, what is the call to action? What does the ad want you to do?
4. If the visual text is a photograph or other creative work, what is the overall idea it presents?
5. When you look at the visual text, do you get a sense of balance? Do the elements seem centered or off-centered? What impact does placement of the elements have on your response to the visual text?
6. White space is the area without words or images within a visual text. Some visual texts have lots of white space, while other visual texts are filled with images and words. If the text has white space, how does that space influence your reaction to it?
7. If the visual text is an ad, is there verbal text to support the photographs and convey a message? Too much text? Not enough? Too many photos? Not enough? Does the verbal text function denotatively (providing facts) or connotatively (creating emotional connections)?
8. What is the significance of signs and symbols in the visual text?
9. How do the physical features (species, hair color, age, gender, ethnicity, expression, relationships) of living things in the visual text convey a particular idea or message?
10. How do the physical characteristics (size, shape, color, surface texture) of non-living things convey a particular idea or message?
11. How does the visual text create a mood? What mood does it create?
12. How do lighting and colors in the visual text affect your response to the information presented?
13. What is the theme of the visual text?
14. How does the visual text use images and words to comment on culture, society, human behavior, personal expectations, business expectations, emotions and ideas?

Questions to Ask about a Verbal Text

1. What is the general topic/subject of the text?
2. How does the author introduce the topic: startling fact or statistic, visual imagery, emotional narrative, entertaining anecdote, other form (describe)? How does the introduction influence your response to the text?
3. Identify the thesis (main idea or purpose) of the text. Where is it? How does the thesis interpret the topic/subject of the text?
4. What is the tone of the text? How does the tone affect you emotionally, logically? How does

the tone of the text influence your evaluation of the author?

5. How are ideas organized in the text? From specific to general? General to specific? Spatial? Chronological? Alternating? Block? How does the organization of ideas influence your reaction to and understanding of the text?
6. How does the author develop ideas in the text? Narration? Description? Definition? Comparison? Analogy? Cause and effect? Example? Why does the author use these methods of development?
7. What kind of sentence structure does the author use? Declarative? Imperative? Interrogative? Exclamatory? Are they simple? Compound? Complex? Compound-complex? Short? Long? Loose? Periodic? Balanced? Parallel? Are there any patterns in the sentence structure? Can you make any connections between the patterns and the writer's purpose? How does his/her sentence structure influence your reaction and understanding of the text?
8. Is the author's word choice formal or informal? Does the author use technical terms, jargon, slang? Is the language connotative or denotative, or both? Give examples. How does the language contribute to the author's purpose?
9. Are there vivid images that stand out in the text? How do vivid images contribute to your response to and understanding of the text?
10. Are devices of comparison used to convey or enhance meaning? Which tropes – similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, etc. – does the writer use? When does he/she use them? Why?
11. Does the writer use devices of humor? Puns? Irony? Sarcasm? Understatement? Parody? Is the effect comic relief? Pleasure? Hysteria? Ridicule?
12. How does the verbal text comment on culture and society?