Visual literacy: Train safety

Key Learning Area	Unit or lesson title and main focus questions	Most appropriate level and suggested number of lessons
History	Visual literacy: Train safety 'A picture is worth a thousand words': What is this cartoon telling us?	Stage 3
English		2–3 lessons

Teacher briefing

Students analyse several visual and text sources exploring ideas around train safety past and present. This activity offers a challenging and original way of teaching critical literacy skills, using Freebody and Luke's Four Reader Roles of text analysis: code-breaker, text-participant, text-user and text-analyst. The cartoon (Source 1) can also be used as an individual source study.

Requirements for these lessons

Sources 1, 2 and 3 (page 126)

Activity sheets 1–5 (pages 127–131).

Key terms and vocabulary

Visual literacy skills: colour, shots, layout, salience, design and framing

Text de-coding skills: cartoon, cartoonist, author, text, artefact, source, visual source

The Four Reader Roles: code-breaker, text-participant, text-user, text-analyst.

Background information

Freebody and Luke (1990) identify the roles literate people take on in text reading as: code-breaker, text-participant, text-user and text-analyst. For more information on Freebody, 1990 'reader roles', see web links. Students practise these four interrelated dimensions of language use in these lessons.

Web links

What successful readers know and do – My Read
Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training
http://www.myread.org/what.htm

Using the Four Resource Model to Map Out Plans for a Literacy Lessons
http://www.simandan.com/using-the-four-resource-model-to-map-out-plans-for-a-literacy-lessons/

Free cartoon making iPad App
https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toontastic-3d/id1145104532?mt=8

English K–10

(EN3–1A) communicates effectively for a variety of audiences and purposes using increasingly challenging topics, ideas, issues and language forms and features

(EN3–3A) uses an integrated range of skills, strategies and knowledge to read, view and comprehend a wide range of texts in different media and technologies

(EN3–7C) thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and ideas and identifies connections between texts when responding to and composing texts

(EN3–8D) identifies and considers how different viewpoints of their world, including aspects of culture are represented in texts.

History K–10

(HT3–2) describes and explains different experiences of people living in Australia over time.

Lesson 1: Critical literacy – Visual code-breaker

Learning experiences

Focus question

What is this cartoon telling us?

Step 1 – Introduction

Teacher displays Source 1, the *Sydney Punch* cartoon 'The Steam Fiend' by Montagu Scott, 1881 on the interactive whiteboard and facilitates a brief class discussion about the illustration, using these questions as a guide:

- What is this cartoon depicting?
- What is the subject matter of this cartoon?
- What techniques have been used to create the cartoon?
- What is the cartoon's purpose?
- What can we find out from this cartoon?

Step 2 – Group activity (three to four students)

'Analyse the image'.

Each group is given a copy of the *Sydney Punch* cartoon 'The Steam Fiend' by Montagu Scott, 1881, and a Visual Analysis Chart (Activity sheet 1, page 127). Each group brainstorms ideas, discusses the cartoon and reports back to the class.

Topic Two:
Linking the nation

The chart questions are:

- Who created this cartoon?
- Where did he live?
- When did he live?
- Why was this cartoon created?
- Who was the intended audience?
- Who or what is the central image in the cartoon?
- What is the message in the cartoon?
- What is the cartoonist's point of view?

Step 3 – Class activity

'Breaking the image code.'

Groups report their findings to the class and key points are documented on the interactive whiteboard. Teacher and students add and further develop each group's ideas. Teacher links explicitly the students' ideas with visual literacy metalanguage such as, colour, shots, layout, salience, design and framing.

Lesson 2: Critical literacy – Text code-breaker

Focus question

What is text telling us that the cartoon could not?

Step 1 – Introduction activity

Teacher displays Source 1, the *Sydney Punch* cartoon 'The Steam Fiend' by Montagu Scott, 1881 on the interactive whiteboard, with Source 3, text by Harold Finch-Hatton. Teacher selects students to read the text out loud to the class. Teacher facilitates class discussion about the text and its relationship to the cartoon (image). Use these questions as a guide:

- What is this text about?
- What are the text's key points?
- How do we know this?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Where was the text printed?

Step 2 – Group activity (three to four students)

'Analyse the text'.

Each group is given one element of The Four Reader Roles text analysis charts (Activity sheets 2–5, pages 128–131): (code-breaker, text-participant, text-user, and text-analyst) and a brief description of the role.

Students need to familiarise themselves with these roles prior to undertaking this activity. For more information on Luke and Freebody, 1990 see web links. The Reader Roles and chart activity questions:

Code-breaker – Decoding the words and sentences in a text

- What does the title 'The Steam Fiend' mean?
- Why is some of the language difficult to read?
- How can difficult words be de-coded?
- Do we know where the suburbs in the text are located?

Text-participant – Constructing meaning from the text

- What is the literal meaning of the text? (What is it specifically talking about?)
- What is the inferential meaning of the text? (What is the writer hinting about?)
- How does the illustration and the text combine to create literal and inferential meanings?

Text-user – Understanding the social purposes of the text

- What is the social purpose behind this text?
- How does the text and illustration combine to create the social purpose?
- Is there a social message? What is it?

Text-analyst – Deciphering the writer's point of view.

- Who is the writer?
- Where did the writer live?
- Is the writer's message/ point of view the same as the illustrator's? Why/why not?

Step 3 – Class activity

'Breaking the text code'.

Groups report their findings to the class and key points are documented on the interactive whiteboard. Teacher and students add and further develop each group's ideas. Teacher links explicitly the students' ideas with the Four Reader Role elements.

Step 4 – Class activity

'Linking the visual and text'.

Teacher facilitates class discussion about the different and similar inferential and literal meanings behind both the cartoon and the text. How do the two elements of the cartoon combine to create a message, the writer's point of view and a meaning for the reader? Teacher reiterates the purpose of the text (for example, social awareness of train safety issues).

Lesson 3: Train safety in the 1800s and today

Learning experiences

Focus question

So what can two pictures tell us?

Step 1 – Introduction activity

Teacher displays Visual Source 2 'Artist's impression of a Sydney Metro Northwest underground train station' on the interactive whiteboard for one minute only. Students are given two minutes to write down all the visual elements of the illustration they can remember or were significant to them. Students share their findings with the class.

Step 2 – Class activity

Teacher redisplays Source 2 on the interactive whiteboard and facilitates a discussion about the visual elements of this illustration (for example, visual literacy elements include colour, shots, layout, salience, design and framing). Use these questions as a guide:

- Who or what is most important in this illustration? Why?
- What is the role of the other characters?
- What is happening in this illustration? How do you know this?
- What is the story behind this illustration? How do you know this?
- Is there a message in this illustration? What is the message? How do you know this?

Teacher explicitly discusses the artist's message of a clean, safe and efficient public transport system and environment. For example:

- Large open space
- Clean tiled surfaces
- Brightly lit station with overhead lights reflecting off the train roof
- Platform screen doors.

Step 3 – Group activity

Creating a train safety Venn diagram.

Groups are given a printout of Source 1 and Source 2 and butcher's paper and pens. Groups create a Venn diagram detailing different and similar train safety issues represented in each source. Groups present Venn diagram to the class, and the teacher and students discuss and extend on each group's ideas.

Teacher may need to explain Venn diagrams to the class if they are unfamiliar with them. For example:
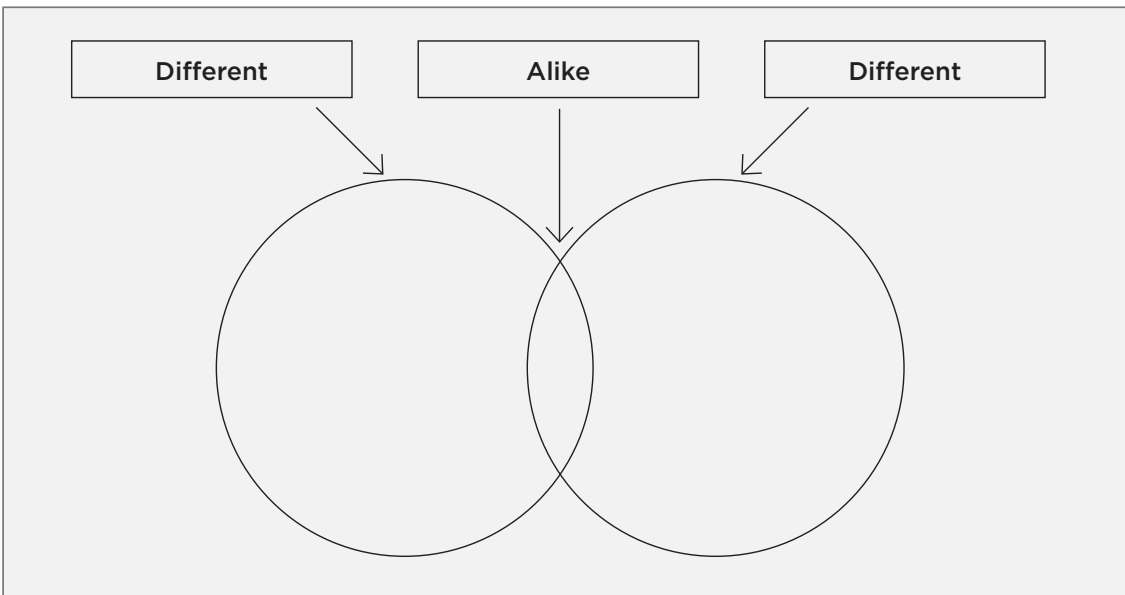

Figure 14: A Venn diagram can help the class make lists of differences and similarities.

Extension work

Individual activity

'Create your own train safety cartoon'.

Students design and create a train safety cartoon in one or more frames.

Some cartoon ideas:

- Create a cartoon using technology
- Produce a cartoon using different mediums and techniques
- Use illustrations and text
- Use illustration only
- Make an animated cartoon using the iPad (see web links).

Sources

Visual literacy – Train safety

Source 1

Figure 15: Cartoon: 'The Steam Fiend', Montagu Scott, *Sydney Punch*, 1881.

Source 2

Figure 16: Tallawong Station's new platform safety doors, September 2018.

Source 3

Sydney's steam powered trams

Steam powered trams were introduced to Sydney in 1879 to coincide with the International Exhibition. Four Baldwin trams were imported from the United States and ran on tracks laid from Hunter Street along Elizabeth Street to the Devonshire Street Station. The system was cheap, efficient and relatively simple to install because the steam trams each carried their own source of power. During the next few years the service was extended to Woollahra, Waverley, Glebe, Forest Lodge, Camperdown, Leichhardt and Annandale.

Apart from noise and dirt, a major disadvantage of the small heavy machines was their inability to stop quickly. This meant they often ran down pedestrians with tragic results. One commentator said that they 'rush down the most crowded thoroughfares, terrifying horses and killing on an average, about two foot-passengers a week.' The same sentiment is expressed in this contemporary cartoon and within a decade the steam trams were referred to by the people of Sydney as the 'murderers'.

Quoted: Harold Finch-Hatton, *Advance Australia*, 1885.

Source: *Going Places – A Bicentennial Pictorial History of Transport in NSW*, Alan Davies, Warren Wickman, Andrew Wilson, NSW Ministry of Transport, 1988.

Northwest

Activity sheet 1

Visual Analysis chart

Question	Evidence (How do you know this?)	Ideas (your thinking / your understanding)
Who created this cartoon?		
Where did he live?		
When did he live?		
Why was this cartoon created?		
Who was the intended audience?		
Who or what is the central image in the cartoon?		
What is the message in the cartoon?		
What is the cartoonist's point of view?		

Northwest

Activity sheet 2

Text Analysis Chart: Code-breaker – decoding the words and sentences in a text.

Question	Evidence (How do you know this?)	Ideas (your thinking / your understanding)
What does the title 'The Steam Fiend' mean?		
Why is some of the language difficult to read? How can the difficult words be de-coded?		
Do we know where the suburbs in the text are located?		

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Northwest

Activity sheet 3

Text Analysis Chart: Text-participant – constructing meaning from the text.

Question	Evidence (How do you know this?)	Ideas (your thinking / your understanding)
What is the literal meaning of the text? (What is it specifically talking about?)		
What is the inferential meaning of the text? (What is the writer hinting about?)		
How does the illustration and text combine to create literal and inferential meanings?		

Northwest

Activity sheet 4

Text Analysis Chart: Text-user – understanding the social purposes of the text.

Question	Evidence (How do you know this?)	Ideas (your thinking / your understanding)
What is the social purpose behind this text?		
How does the text and illustration combine to create the social purpose?		
Is there a social message? What is it?		

Northwest

Activity sheet 5

Text Analysis Chart: Text-analyst – deciphering the writer's point of view.

Question	Evidence (How do you know this?)	Ideas (your thinking / your understanding)
Who is the writer?		
Where did the writer live?		
Does the author have the same point of view as the illustrator?		

Northwest