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**INTERACTIVE TEXT-IMAGE CONCEPTUAL MODELS FOR
LITERARY INTERPRETATION AND COMPOSITION IN THE DIGITAL
AGE**

by

BETH NIXON WEAVER
M.A. Rollins College, 2006

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of English
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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2010

Major Professor: Craig Saper

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on text-image conceptual models for literary interpretation and composition in the digital age. The models investigate an interactive blend of textually-based linear-sequential approaches and visually-based spatial-simultaneous approaches. The models employ Gestalt-inspired figure-ground segregation models, along with other theoretical models, that demonstrate the dynamic capabilities of images as conceptual tools as well as alternate forms of text. The models encourage an interpretative style with active participants in open-ended, multi-sensory meaning-making processes. The models use the flexible tools of modern technology as approaches to meaning-making with art strategies used for research strategies as well as a means to appreciate reading and writing in the context of an increasingly visual environment.

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Dr. Dan Jones

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF TEXT-IMAGE ANALYSIS	1
Introduction.....	1
Proposal.....	1
Methodology.....	16
Conclusions.....	22
The Roles of Texts and Images.....	25
Multiple Teaching Approaches and Comprehensive Learning	29
Fundamental Shift toward Spatial Teaching Methods.....	29
Balancing the Three Primary Learning Systems	35
Media as Extensions of the Primary Senses	41
Text, Image, and New Media Taxonomy	47
CHAPTER TWO: IMPLEMENTING TEXT-IMAGE ANALYSIS	54
Text-Visual Analysis Applicable to English Instruction	54
Adopting the IRA and NTCE Resolution	54
Exploring New Methods to Interconnect Texts and Images.....	61
Familiarizing Students with Art Education Practices	64
Applying Visually-Oriented Interpretive Methods.....	68

Applying Gestalt-Inspired Models to Text-Image Analysis	71
Comparing Aspects of Figure-Ground Segregation Models	78
Privileging Meaning through Figure-Ground Segregation Models	85
CHAPTER THREE: EXPLORING ALTERNATING PERSPECTIVES	91
Cognitive-Poetics and Literary Analysis	91
Model 1: Alternating Aspects and Contextual Position.....	94
Model 2: Alternating Aspects and Character Perspective	99
Exploring Figure-Ground Dynamics through Conflict.....	101
Model 3: Alternating Aspects and Visualizing Conflict.....	108
Discovering Thematic Connections through Alternating Aspects of Conflict.....	113
Model 4: Exploring Theme through Contrasting Symbols in Yeats’ “Lines Written in Dejection”	116
Model 5: Alternating Aspects and Visualizing Theme.....	118
Model 6: Creating Stories through Alternating Aspects using Visual and Textual Clues..	120
Discovering Epiphany Moments through Alternating Figure-Ground Perspectives	122
Model 7: Discovering Foreshadowing Clues in James Hurst’s “The Scarlet Ibis”	125
CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THROUGH JUXTAPOSITION .	127
Generating New Perspectives through Juxtapositioning	127
Visualizing Theme through Juxtaposed Images	132

Model 1: Visualizing Settings through Contrasting Details	134
Understanding Character through Juxtapositioning.....	140
Model 2: Creating Foils through Visual Details	143
Determining Foils through Rhythmic Patterns in Hamlet	147
Model 3: Creating Character Narratives through Juxtapositioning	149
Juxtaposing Divergent Points of View through Braided Narratives.....	153
Model 4: Creating Double-Braid Narratives through Visual Cues.....	154
The Effect of Previous Knowledge on Perception in Foil Relationships	155
Model 5: Exploring the Dividing Line in Protagonist-Antagonist Relationships.....	158
CHAPTER FIVE: JUXTAPOSITIONING AND DRAMATIC REVERSALS	162
Creating Irony through Juxtaposition	163
Model 1: Visualizing Comedy through Irony.....	167
Model 2: Visualizing Social Commentary through Irony.....	169
Creating Oxymorons through Juxtaposition	171
Model 3: Creating Oxymoronic Titles	173
Foregrounding Hidden Aspects through Figure-Ground Shifts.....	175
Model 4: Making the Invisible Visible in Photographs	178
Visualizing Hidden Aspects of Carpe Diem.....	180
Model 5: Visualizing Carpe Diem and “Kennedy’s Final Days”	181

Photo-epigrams and Bertolt Brecht.....	186
Model 6: Visualizing Hidden Perspectives in Brecht’s War Poems.....	188
CHAPTER SIX: VISUALIZING THE WHOLE FROM CONTEXTUAL DETAILS	191
Contextual Positions and Visualizing the Overall Structure.....	191
Model 1: The Blind Men Who Cannot See the Elephant	192
Exploring Theme through Clues	197
Model 2: Interpreting Theme through Visual Cues	198
Creating Fully-Rounded Authentic Characters from Distinct Aspects.....	201
Model 3: Visualizing Character from Character Aspects	204
Model 4: Visualizing Character through Textual Details	209
Model 5: Describing Fully Rounded Characters through Images.....	211
Creating Round Characters in Fully Realized Settings.....	215
Model 6: Creating Character and Setting through Visual Details	216
CHAPTER SEVEN: FRAMING MEANING	222
Framing Meaning through Contextual Positions	222
Model 1: “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Poem”	223
Model 2: Framing, Point of View, and Story Development	226
Model 3: Framing Character	233
Images as Sites for Investigation	236

Model 4: Framing and Setting the Scene	238
Creating New Frames of Reference	241
Model 5: Framing and Creating New Orders.....	242
Model 6: Generating Perspectives through “Cutting out Shapes”	245
CHAPTER EIGHT: VISUALIZING PATTERNS OF SIMILARITY	248
Seeking Similarities through Text and Image.....	248
Seeking Similarities through Sound Patterns.....	249
Model 1: Visualizing Art Elements through the Law of Similarity.....	254
Model 2: Visualizing Similarities through Similes.....	262
Model 3: Writing Story Beginnings from Similes	263
Model 4: Visualizing Similarities through Metaphor	264
Discovering Differences within Similar Literary Categories	265
Model 5: Discovering Connotations within Denotations.....	266
Model 6: Determining Differences within Similarities: What is a Face?	269
Model 7: Discovering Details through Anagrams	276
CHAPTER NINE: EXPLORING NEW DIMENSIONS OF SPACE.....	279
Revealing Hidden Aspects through Textual Space Deformance Exercises.....	281
Model 1: Deformance of “Lying Low”.....	285
Model 2: Deformance of Charles Dickens’ Hard Times	288

Visual Language and The Law of Proximity	292
Creating Visual Language.....	293
Visual Language and the Law of Proximity	293
Model 3: Visual Interpretation and the Law of Proximity.....	295
Visual Language and Concrete Poetry	298
Model 4: Shaping Words to Fill Images	303
Concrete Poetry and Visual Presence	306
Model 5: Creating Concrete Poems from Classic Verses	307
Model 6: Visually Creating Sound through Spatial Arrangements	313
Textual Analysis and Visual Poetics.....	315
Model 7: Determining the “Personality” of Fonts	316
Typographical Innovations and Visual Language	319
Model 8: Analyzing Spatial Versions of e. e. cummings’“In Just”	321
Model 9: Creating Concrete Poems from Charles Dicken’s Hard Times.....	324
Model 10: Creating Original Concrete Poetry through Visual Imagery	327
The Emergence of Digital Poetry and Future Directions for Literary Studies	329
APPENDIX A: COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS.....	332
APPENDIX B: THE BASICS OF ART DESIGN.....	339
END NOTES.....	351

LIST OF REFERENCES..... 359

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Mexican Wearing a Sombrero.....	10
Figure 2: "Chinese Character"	40
Figure 3: “Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hazard” (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance) by Stephane Mallarmé, 1897	44
Figure 4: "Veil" by Charles Bernstein, 1979	49
Figure 5: “Rubric for Digital / Visual Literacy”	60
Figure 6: "Rubin's Vase"	72
Figure 7: "FedEx Logo"	73
Figure 8: “Rabbit or Duck?” J. Jastrow, 1900	87
Figure 9: "School of Visual Arts" by Tony Palladino	94
Figure 10: "Life is a Dome”	96
Figure 11: "How Small"	96
Figure 12: "Life is a Beautiful Lane"	97
Figure 13: “Flamingoes” by Sara Weaver	99
Figure 14: “Cool Colors”	104
Figure 15: “Warm Colors”	104
Figure 16: "My Two Faces"	109
Figure 17: “Marine Debut” by Burke Uzzle	109
Figure 18: “Homeless Man Begging for Food”	110
Figure 19: "After the Apocalypse" by Rodrigo Arangua.....	110

Figure 20: "Clarence Wool, 11 year-old spinner in North Pownal Cotton Mill, 1910" by Lewis Hines	111
Figure 21: "Silent Homage to Fallen Coast Guard Man" by NARA, 1942	111
Figure 22: "Judge" by Gilliam, 1894	114
Figure 23: "Forever Always" by Octavio Ocampo	115
Figure 24: "Shades" by Katie Weaver	118
Figure 25: "Firebird" by Farrell Grehan	121
Figure 26: "Frog?"	123
Figure 27: "Horse?"	123
Figure 28: "The Red Wheel Barrow"	128
Figure 29: "Factory Workers" by Stephen Wilkes	129
Figure 30: "Red Chameleon" by Takko Jima	130
Figure 31: "Bullet Proof" by Elliot Erwit	130
Figure 32: "Taking Strides" by Elliot Erwit	131
Figure 33: "Dreams of Youth" by Nana Sousa Dias	131
Figure 34: "La Raie" by Jean-Baptiste Chardin	134
Figure 35: "Woman in a Red Bodice and Her Child" by Mary Cassatt, 1901	135
Figure 36: "Views, Objects: Egypt" by T. H. McAllister	135
Figure 37: "The Physician's Visit" by Ignacio León y Escosura, 1881	136
Figure 38: "Cots Await Evacuees of Hurricane Katrina," FEMA/Photo, 2005	136
Figure 39: "Floor with Laundry No. 3" by Sylvia Plimack Mangold	137
Figure 40: "Kiss Me and You'll Kiss the Lasses" by Lilly Martin Spencer	137

Figure 41: “Two Cars” by Joel Sternfeld.....	138
Figure 42: "Traffic at Night"	138
Figure 43: “Compare Contrast Squares”.....	142
Figure 44: “The Angel Michael Binding Satan: Circle Limit IV” by M. C. Escher	142
Figure 45: “The Rice Merchant”.....	144
Figure 46: “The Man in Waiting”	144
Figure 47: "The Flower Seller" by Julian Alden Weir, 1879	145
Figure 48: "The Two Colleagues (Lawyers)" by Honoré Daumier, 1870.....	145
Figure 49: "The Fitting" by Mary Cassatt, 1890.....	146
Figure 50: “The Ship 1”	150
Figure 51: “The Ship 2”	150
Figure 52: “The Steerage” by Andrew Carnegie	152
Figure 53: "On Vacation" by Jeff Sirmons	154
Figure 54: “My Wife and My Mother-in-Law” by W.E. Hill	156
Figure 55: “The Peace Highway”	157
Figure 56: “Bonds of Fear” by Jim Kean.....	159
Figure 57: “Three Worlds” by M C. Escher	162
Figure 58: "Patrolman Meets Belly Dancer" by Grey Villet	168
Figure 59: "Bread Line During Flood, 1937" by Margaret Bourke-White.....	170
Figure 60: “Fresh Widow” by Marcel Duchamp.....	172
Figure 61: “Little Man” by Lewis Hine	173
Figure 62: "Community" by Thomas Wrede	174

Figure 63: “Lightning Storm in Boston” NOAA.com	174
Figure 64: “Independence Day” by Ralph Crane	175
Figure 65: “Architectural Elements I” by Alexandre Arrechea.....	179
Figure 66: “Kennedy’s Final Days” by Arthur Rickerby	182
Figure 67: "Gather ye Rose Buds While ye May"	184
Figure 68: "Adolf Hitler Greeting Woman, 1943”	186
Figure 69: "Japanese Soldier, 1943" by Ralph Morse	188
Figure 70: “Brick Wall”	193
Figure 71: “Oriental Weapon”	193
Figure 72: “Coral Snake”	193
Figure 73: “Pine Bark”	194
Figure 74: “Red Fan”	194
Figure 75: "Rope"	195
Figure 76: “Elephant Collage” by Beth Weaver.....	195
Figure 77: “Rhythm” by Mark Grieves	197
Figure 78: “Eternity” by Mark Grieves	198
Figure 79: Daisy Boman 1	199
Figure 80: Daisy Boman 2	199
Figure 81: Daisy Boman 3	200
Figure 82: “Pair of Shoes” by Vincent Van Gogh.....	201
Figure 83: “Diamond Dust Shoes” by Andy Warhol.....	202
Figure 84: “The Potato Eaters” by Vincent Van Gogh.....	203

Figure 85: “Not Made For Walking” by Cindy Revell.....	204
Figure 86: "Harriet's Last Dance" by Suzanne Saul	205
Figure 87: “Jukebox Lights" by Suzanne Saul	205
Figure 88: “Water Bottle Sandals”	206
Figure 89: "Beach Feet"	206
Figure 90: "Nike Women's Running Shoe	207
Figure 91: “Dutch Wooden Shoes” by Sicko Atze van Dijk	207
Figure 92: "Corporate Ladder" by Suzanne Saul.....	208
Figure 93: "The Seal-hunter, Noatak" by Edward S. Curtis	213
Figure 94: “Mrs. F. M. Kendall” by Horace Bristol, 1939	213
Figure 95: “Marine in Korea 1950” by David Douglas Duncan	214
Figure 96: “Four-Year-Old Carrying Water” by Brent Stirton, Ghana, 2008	214
Figure 97: "Katrina Survivors in Houston Shelter," by Andrea Booher, 2005.....	218
Figure 98: "Carnival Time"	219
Figure 99: “McLean, Virginia, December 1978” by Joel Sternfeld	219
Figure 100: "Cityscapes"	220
Figure 101: “Vernal Baker” by Andy Hernandez. Arizona, 1986.....	220
Figure 102: “The Execution of Maximilian” by Edouard Manet	227
Figure 103: “Maximilian”	228
Figure 104: “The Executioner”	229
Figure 105: “Ocean”	231
Figure 106: “Door”	232

Figure 107: “House of Slaves” by Shahidul Alam	233
Figure 108: “The Couple”	234
Figure 109: "The Couple in the Catacombs" by Elliot Erwitt	234
Figure 110: “The Child”	235
Figure 111: “The Children at the Puppet Show” by Alfred Eisenstaedt.....	235
Figure 112: “Eye Socket” by Stephen Gibb	236
Figure 113: "Rough Wooden Surface"	238
Figure 114: "Unemployed Man Eating in Soup Kitchen"	239
Figure 115: “Dawn” by Bill Binzen. New Hampshire, 1965	239
Figure 116: "/Children Playing at White Lake"	240
Figure 117: “Marcel Duchamp” by Eliot Elisofon, 1952	242
Figure 118: "Face"	243
Figure 119: "Feet"	243
Figure 120: “Floating Market at Damnoen Saduak Canal, Thailand” by Craig J. Brown	245
Figure 121: "The Smell of Fresh-cut Grass"	246
Figure 122: “Small Boy, Big Umbrella"	246
Figure 123: "Women on Separate Boats Unite"	247
Figure 124: "The Law of Similarity"	248
Figure 125: “The Rooftop Ballerina” by Joe McNally.....	254
Figure 126: “Cotton-Candy Vendor" by Douglas Faulkner	256
Figure 127: "Fiery Sunset"	256
Figure 128: "Navajo Indian," by William M. Pennington and Wesley Rowland, 1914.....	257

Figure 129: "Windows and Walls"	257
Figure 130: "Indian Colors"	258
Figure 131: "Summer Daze" by Katie Weaver.....	258
Figure 132: "Pablo Picasso" by Irving Penn.....	259
Figure 133: "Turtle Smile"	259
Figure 134: "New England" by Paul Strand.....	260
Figure 135: "Young Man" by Paul Strand.....	260
Figure 136: "White Angel Breadline" by Dorothea Lange, Winter 1933.....	261
Figure 137: "Solitary Existence"	261
Figure 138: "Armchair" by George J. Hunzinger, 1869	267
Figure 139: "Easy Edges" by Frank Gehry.....	267
Figure 140: "Armchair No. 810" by Richard Meier	268
Figure 141: "DCM" Side Chair" by Charles Eames and Ray Eames	268
Figure 142: "Study of a Boy 1" by Loretta Lux.....	271
Figure 143: "Dad, Hampton Ponds III" by Mitch Epstein.....	271
Figure 144: "Snoop Dogg" by Andres Serrano.....	272
Figure 145: "Frances with a Flower" by Consuelo Kanaga.....	272
Figure 146: "Girl in Fur Hood" by Abbott H. Thayer Abbott	273
Figure 147: "A Friend" by Sarah Cowell LeMoyne, 1880	273
Figure 148: "Self-Portrait 1908" by Abraham Walkowitz.....	274
Figure 149: "Child Laborer" by Lewis Hines	274
Figure 150: "Sniper Alley" by Tom Stoddart.....	276

Figure 151: "Harder Times" by Beth Weaver.....	292
Figure 152: "Law of Proximity"	293
Figure 153: "Young Farmers" by August Sanders, 1914	294
Figure 154: "The Connoisseur" by Norman Rockwell.....	295
Figure 155: "Cops and Headlights" by Jane Dickson.....	296
Figure 156: Scene 1	297
Figure 157: Scene 2	297
Figure 158: Scene 3 of "A Dog's Day" by Elliot Erwitt.....	297
Figure 159: "Once Emerged from the Gray of Night" by Paul Klee, 1918.....	299
Figure 160: "Il Pleut" by Guillaume Apollinaire, 1918	301
Figure 161: "Kitty Black" by John Hollander	303
Figure 162: "Eagle with Prey"	304
Figure 163: "Cow"	304
Figure 164: "Child Jumping"	305
Figure 165: "Silencio" by Eugen Gomringer.....	307
Figure 166: "Wind" by Eugen Gomringer.....	308
Figure 167: "Poetamenos. Vivavaia 71" by Augusto de Campos	311
Figure 168: "The Sea" by Edward Kamau Brathwaite.....	320
Figure 169: "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r" by e. e. cummings.....	321
Figure 170: "Painted Smoke" by Beth Weaver.....	326
Figure 171: "Intermedia Chart" by Dick Higgins, 1995.....	330
Figure 172: "Lines of Roofs"	341

Figure 173: "Shapes: Santa Monica Beach"	342
Figure 174: "Forms"	342
Figure 175: "Moth or Two Men with Thumbs Up?"	343
Figure 176: "Texture"	343
Figure 177: "Color Wheel"	344
Figure 178: "Madame Marquise de la Pompadour" by Francois Boucher	345
Figure 179: "The Parthenon" by Jeff Sirmons	346
Figure 180: "Green Coca Cola Bottles" by Andy Warhol, 1962.....	347
Figure 181: "World's youngest swimmer, Julie Sheldon" by Edward Clark.....	348
Figure 182: "David and Goliath" by Caravaggio	349
Figure 183: "Cafe Terrace at Night" by Vincent Van Gogh.....	350
Figure 184: "Water Lily Pond, Symphony in Green" by Claude Monet.....	350

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF TEXT-IMAGE ANALYSIS

Introduction

Proposal

This dissertation focuses on literary interpretative models that conceptually link texts and images to promote comprehensive learning. These models are designed to assist students in understanding literary terminology, interpreting passages, and composing poems and prose by blending traditional linear-sequential learning styles with spatial-simultaneous learning styles. The goal is to foster students' ability to see beyond the "rhetoric of transparency" to the underlying "logical mechanisms" that Jerome McGann asserts comprise both texts and images. McGann defines the rhetoric of transparency as the superficial "presentational form of texts and images" that affects interpretive processes without the benefit of deeper analysis. Arguing that deeper analysis exposes the rich, multiple meanings within a text, he challenges instructors to find new methods to discover the connective threads between texts and images that are often missed when one relies strictly on traditional approaches (*Radiant Textuality* 1).

McGann asserts that "[i]n the effort to articulate meaning, affective as well as conceptual, one necessarily installs the visible resources of language." Every text is therefore "comprised simultaneously of a beauty of inflections as well as a beauty of innuendoes." At the same time, he insists that "the graphic deployment of [a] text is every bit as significant in terms of 'meaning' as the linguistic elements" (2). He emphasizes interpretive practices that recognize the

physicality of texts as essential to the meaning-making process. McGann insists that combining textual and visual methods of literary analysis sets these “modes of exegesis on a new footing” by stimulating higher order thinking skills as well as encouraging students to become active participants in the open-ended meaning-making processes (106).

While instructors do not have to rely on digital tools to create meaningful interpretive practices, McGann encourages them to take advantage of the flexible capabilities digital tools offer to uncover visual aspects of literary works. Poems, for example, are “inherently nonhierarchical structures that promote attention to varying and overlapping sets of textual designs, both linguistic and bibliographical,” McGann states (“Making Visible and Invisible Books” 298). Digitally examining a poem through multi-layered fields enables instructors to focus on the visual aspects of a poem as much as the textual aspects. Some of my conceptual models are adaptations of McGann’s “deformance” exercises, his term for text and image alteration. According to McGann, artists recreate a world of primary human conversation by manipulating perceptual fields “to generate certain dominant rhetoric or surface patterns that will organize and complicate our understandings” (288). Creating interpretive methods that *dislocate* or *deform* the dominant patterns allows the underlying patterns to emerge “so as to open doors of perception toward new opportunities and points of view,” he maintains (288).

McGann’s insights have shaped my belief that interpreting literary concepts through an interactive combination of texts and images strengthens the student’s ability to comprehend and incorporate literature concepts in analysis and composition practices. In addition, multimedia approaches are vital and necessary in the digital age where spatially-oriented learning styles predominate and contribute to comprehensive learning.

I also ground my conceptual models on N. Katherine Hayles' insights into the interactive capabilities of text-image relationships afforded by new technologies. She asserts that whether on "one side or another of the generational divide separating print from digital culture, we cannot afford to ignore the dynamic, frustrating, zesty, and intriguing ways in which the two cognitive modes interact. Our responsibilities as educators, not to mention our positions as practitioners of the literary arts, require nothing less" (*Electronic Literature* 15). She urges instructors to see beyond the flat, surface dimensions of words as text into the multi-dimensional realms of cyberspace where words and images commingle as material entities. Like McGann, she also asserts that not all meaningful interpretive practices need occur in cyberspace; rather, she encourages participatory approaches that go beyond narrow print-based methods that view texts primarily as vehicles of information.

Hayles claims that the "embodiment" of words through various kinds of materiality, such as creating words as visual images, enhances the memory system as well as develops higher order thinking skills. Drawing on the research of Andy Clark, who argues that material objects "do not merely facilitate thought; rather, they actually become part of the human cognitive system,"¹ Hayles compares the expanded space afforded by cyberspace to memory palaces popular in the Renaissance. "By imaginatively placing items in a spatially imagined room, the memoirist could associate the items with physical objects arranged in familiar spaces, thus using the properties of the material world to 'chunk' things he wanted to recall so they could be manipulated conceptually as easily as one might stroll through a house," she notes ("The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext" 31). Hayles claims that even when the material objects are taken away and replaced by abstract representations, the chunking

process allows the learner to function more efficiently in complex ways that extend beyond simple recall.

According to Hayles, hypertext readings offer learning strategies for text to be chunked and linked to create multiple reading paths. “One purpose enacted by the ‘chunked’ units of hypertext narrative is to give us material handles that allow us to move concepts around easily,” she states (31). She adds that the material objects serve as “anchors” for thought processes and thus enable us to “to negotiate higher levels of abstraction much more quickly and flexibly than if we were trying to do it by introspection alone” (31). For example, Hayles invites the reader to imagine an art gallery complete with a picture on the wall and the pedestals we associate with the display of art objects. Yet instead of physical objects, “here the pedestals are occupied by rivers of text, a move that imaginatively cycles us through the (absent) object to arrive at the words. The text reenacts this displacement by proclaiming ‘in/her room/sat abstract/art,’ a punningly appropriate phrase since it performs what it names, abstracting the missing artifact into ‘abstract art,’” she notes (32).

Hayles maintains that the resulting displacement “acts as a chunking accomplished by cycling through the (representation of) a material object, which allows us to formulate the thought at a more abstract level than the individual art work” (32). Reading thus becomes more than a cognitive activity when it offers a visual language based on embodied forms of representation that interact with one another. Such practices transform “our sense of how language functions,” Hayles states (37).

Hayles’ ideas draw upon the work of Edwin Hutchins, who claims that the ability of material objects to serve as anchors for thought enables us to negotiate higher levels of

abstraction more quickly and flexibly than through introspection alone. Hutchins bases his claim on the premise that the conceptual structure that underpins thinking processes “must be represented in a way that allows some parts of the representation to be manipulated, while other parts [to] remain stable” (1557). An example of a stable component would be a familiar cultural model because cultural models are supported and reinforced by the behavior of a group, he notes. “Part of the cognitive power of metaphor derives from the fact that it is possible to reason effectively about unfamiliar concepts, which would otherwise be unstable, if they can first be blended with stable familiar concepts,” he adds (1574).

Hutchins asserts that the minimal informative structure in a material space is individuation, which means that the material element is different from other elements. Words are simple forms of material anchors, based on a pattern of sound or a written shape, while abstract symbols that have arbitrary relations to their referents appear as the weakest type of material anchors: “Grammatical forms, such as agreements between modifiers and words modified, between predicates and subjects, and between functions and arguments, may rely on a greater contribution of the material form,” he adds, especially when the relationship involves a cause and an effect (1572). Images often present stronger material anchors, he asserts, such as the image of a hand upon which numbers are calculated. Hutchins maintains that the dynamic relationships between components provide a necessary framework for complex thinking skills. The process of attaching meaning to material structures is called “conceptual blending.” Giles Fauconnier claims that conceptual blending involves two mental spaces to yield a third space, the blend. He claims that the emergent structure arises in three interrelated ways: composition, completion, and elaboration. The composition makes “new relations available that did not exist in the separate

inputs;” the completion, which includes knowledge of background frames, as well as cognitive and cultural models, “allows the composite structure projected into the blend from the inputs to be viewed as part of a larger self-contained structure in the blend;” and the elaboration “consists of cognitive work performed within the blend, according to its own emergent logic,” he explains (150–51).

Hutchins builds upon Fauconnier’s framework of conceptual blending to affirm that interpreting complex mental images that have material anchors “permit[s] people to substitute robust and fast perceptual processes for slow and vulnerable conceptual processes” and that “people are capable of conceptual feats supported by material anchors that could not be undertaken using mental resources alone” (1575). He bases his ideas on the assertion that while conceptual blending is often viewed as an entirely internal cognitive process, “the same kinds of processes operate in situations where one or more of the input spaces to the blend contains material structure” (1576).²

My conceptual models illuminate literary concepts through dynamic text-image relationships that demonstrate conceptual blending by merging linear-sequential styles favored by textually-based strategies and spatial-simultaneous styles favored by visually-based strategies. Based on visually-oriented material structures that variously view texts as embodied images and images as embodied texts, my models encourage collaborative, participatory methods that focus on open-ended discovery processes instead of fixed results. The interactive properties are founded on Gestalt-inspired principles that demonstrate the dynamic possibilities of images as conceptual learning tools. Gestalt psychology was established in 1910 by three German psychologists, Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Kohler, who resisted the precise

analysis of empirical science. Gestaltists maintain that sensory perceptions are influenced by the contextual arrangement of the perceived elements and that the mind unifies and orders the perceptual environment in holistic ways. They also believe that humans seek sensory balance as a means of achieving order.

The fundamental principle of the Gestalt Theory is the law of *prägnanz*, which states that people seek order through balance and respond to experiences holistically. Gestaltists equate the law of *prägnanz* to the smooth, continuous flow of movement one perceives when watching a film, even though a film actually consists of thousands of individual still pictures. Koffka—one of the founders of Gestalt psychology—defines *prägnanz* as follows: “Of several geometrically possible organizations that one will actually occur which possesses the best, the most stable shape” (*Principles of Gestalt Psychology* 138). The theory is based on the concept that the whole is different from the sum of its parts, with its parts possessing intrinsic qualities that fall outside conventional categories of labeling. Instead, the parts are dynamically interconnected from within, presenting differing qualities within a cohesive entity.

Apprehending the whole is a matter of perceiving and interpreting the relationships between the parts and between the parts and the whole. As a result, a Gestalt configuration is an idea or experience that is so unified that its aspects cannot be determined from a simple summation of its parts. The German psychologists identified five main laws of grouping: proximity, similarity, continuity, closure, and common fate. These laws fall under an overriding law of simplicity. The psychologists also developed the figure-ground segregation principle which involves distinguishing an object from its surroundings.

According to Roy Behrens, the influence of Gestalt in the modern-day field of psychology is “unobtrusive in the sense that its findings have all been absorbed by more recent viewpoints;” however, in the fields of art design and education, Gestalt principles have had “an enormous and lasting effect” (301). Behrens claims that the influence in art design and education began with Wertheimer’s “Theory of Form” essay (1923). Illustrated with abstract patterns of dots and lines, the essay supports Wertheimer’s assertion that people have an innate tendency to “constellate” elements that are similar (“similarity grouping”), close together (“proximity grouping”), or have structural economy (“good continuation”).

Wertheimer notes that the interplay of these groupings includes the following three qualities: the appearance of parts is determined by wholes, judgments about similarity or proximity are always comparative, and in compositions as intricate as paintings, parts may be purposely made to connect by one dominant grouping tendency, such as similarity of color (301).³ Noteworthy books fueled the interest in the fields of art design and education, including *Language of Vision* by Gyorgy Kepes, a Hungarian graphic designer, and *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* by Rudolf Arnheim, a Berlin Gestaltist.

In *Language of Vision* Kepes asserts that design is an abstract, formal activity, with text added only after the visual form is mastered. “Just as the letters of the alphabet can be put together in innumerable ways to form words to convey meanings, so the optical measures and qualities can be brought together . . . and each particular relationship generates a different sensation of space,” Kepes states (23). He asserts that the perception process of these visual images “implies the beholder’s participation in a process of organization” (23). Thus, he views art design as a language founded in abstraction, with visual language possessing a purely sensual

meaning. The language consists of a “vocabulary” of design elements, such as dots, lines, shapes, colors, and textures, as well as a “grammar” of contrasts, such as Instability versus Balance, and Dark versus Light.

Arnheim’s claim that one cannot think in words as one can think in circles, or rectangles, or other shapes led him to assert that “[t]houghts need shape” and that shape must be derived from the visual “medium” of the mind (226). He argues that the best visual frameworks upon which to shape thoughts are Gestalt-inspired models, claiming that they exemplify “the clearest and most incisive expression of a work’s meaning” because they “purify perceptual form” (“The Two Faces of Gestalt” 821). Since the 1950s Arnheim has urged instructors to combine visual perception skills, which involve cognitive mechanisms, with theoretical thinking practices that rely on imagery, through an “abstraction” process to balance what he considers an overreliance on verbal and numerical skills. Arnheim explains that “abstraction” involves the use of images as nonfigurative forms of representations that trigger “the relevant features of the subject matter” to emerge in the mind where they are then translated into “visually comprehensible form” (12). For example, he argues that the following image of a Mexican wearing a sombrero is not a “valid representation” because it does not refer to the “visual concept” of a Mexican. Instead, the image requires the accompanying caption in order to be understood (Arnheim qtd. in Kepes 62).

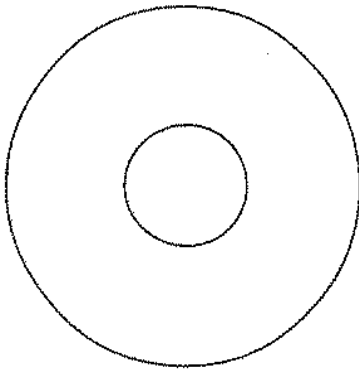


Figure 1: Mexican Wearing a Sombrero

Theorists continue to dispute many of Arnheim's claims, especially his assertion that only visual images can serve as the medium for highly productive thinking processes.⁴ For example, Ellen Lupton and Abbott Miller argue that while Arnheim "aimed to extend the premise . . . that one's understanding of the world is assembled out of purely 'visual' perceptions, with language playing the role of a subservient filing system for sense data," in everyday life "perception is filtered by culture;" thus, the concept of an object is built from conventional views as well as its attributes (69).

Nonetheless, Arnheim's assertion that visual art is "a fundamental means of orientation, born from man's need to understand himself and the world in which he lives" and that teaching visual sensitivity to art is an indispensable foundation for every educator (315), prompted scholars to consider art as a "visual language" of its own right. Harold McWhinnie states that Arnheim's ideas created "the necessary transition from attending to perceptual style alone to treating it as one aspect of an individual's overall cognitive style," yet notes that much work still needs to be done to enable students to take advantage of the image-oriented digital environment technological advances have fostered (31).

Arnheim's Gestalt-inspired ideas form the basis for creating innovative architectural design, according to a study by Richard Coyne, Adrian Snodgrass, and David Martin. Architectural design students juxtaposed visual metaphors in a figure-ground framework to create metaphoric relationships as a method of inquiry. The inquiry process included "setting goals, defining design space, establishing decision points, and ordering actions" (113). "Metaphors carry entailments," the authors assert. "In so doing, they reveal and conceal. Seeing one thing as another reveals something about the thing: a problem to be solved, an action to be undertaken, a scenario to be acted out" (114). Thus, according to the authors, the employment of visual metaphors allows the designer to see the design "as particular things during its development. The entailments of these 'metaphoric projections' prompt actions that change the design situation and our understanding" (114).

For example, Coyne, Snodgrass, and Martin point out that drawing a simple square often involves much more: "As we act according to various entailments, new shapes and figures emerge. There are new metaphorical projections and new actions . . . The drawing of a diagonal line through the square may reveal triangles, the recollection of a motif, [or] a spatial ordering" (115). The authors conducted a study in which students employed the figure-ground segregation principle through visual metaphors. This principle maintains that in a field of vision one aspect dominates the other, even though both remain constant. The students first discussed figure-ground oppositions within an existing house. While the discussion pointed out obvious oppositions, such as upstairs and downstairs, and how the idea of "privileging" has changed throughout time periods, the discussion also "raised the question of what would happen if the privileging were reversed, the opposition were reversed, or the opposition were dissolved" (122).

The students then created new house designs through figure-ground metaphors. These designs included reversing public and private functions, reversing modernist preoccupations by extricating the form from the function of the house, locating the traditionally female parts of the house to a place of privilege, and deliberately “misreading” a floor plan so that a water tank becomes a fireplace, courtyards become rooms, and walls appear as water channels.

The art design study concluded that “to reverse an established opposition or to challenge an accepted metaphor through figure-ground dynamics does not result in chaos or caprice”; rather, “different and innovative” types of structures emerge that represent “a new set of design challenges” (123). The study also noted “the power of a metaphor and how an understanding of its involvement with difference can be appropriated in the formulation of a valuable educational program.” Furthermore, the study pointed out the various ways that the notion of privileging “comes through in language and in our drawing and designing practices” (123).

According to Coyne, Snodgrass, and Martin, the conclusion makes three major points: “[T]here is a close relationship between design and metaphor that provides insights into effective design education, metaphor operates through privilege, [thus] directing concern and the identification of difference, and design involves the generation of action within a collaborative environment in which there is the free play of enabling metaphors” (113). Above all, according to the authors, the study demonstrates the power of the metaphor as a significant Gestalt-based visual learning tool.

Literary scholars have also incorporated Gestalt-inspired models for a number of years. Most of these models are also based on the figure-ground segregation principle applied to metaphors. The earliest literary models originate from the Interaction Theory of Metaphor

advanced by I. A. Richards in 1936. He claims that “when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active[ly] together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction” (93). He asserts that the interaction process is similar to a figure-ground relationship where we tend to shift back and forth between both aspects as we strive to combine the two.

In 1962 Max Black built upon this assertion to propose that if one claims a man is a wolf, one intends to attribute the wolf’s characteristics on the man, such as fierce, hungry, and predatory. “The wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others—in short, organizes our view of man,” he states (41). Black adds that “if to call a man a wolf is to put him in a special light, we must not forget that the metaphor makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would” (44). Thus, both subjects are affected through their interaction into a Gestaltist state in which the whole is different from the sum of the parts.⁵

According to Walter Ong, the “twinning process” of metaphorical relationships forms the basis of all thought processes. He claims it results from the intellect’s need for simplicity. The human mind “yearns to reduce everything to one principle, one starting point, not two . . . It wants a plenary or elemental experience of truth which is absolutely simple, a one” (196). Ong asserts that we generate truth by pairing a concept with a material object in such a way that the resulting metaphor “does not abandon one signification for another but rather stands related to two significations at once” (196). Thus, we base truth not on a compound that is the result of perception, but on one simple object. Ong notes that the best metaphors unite two concepts holistically: “The metaphor is thus an intellectual monad and dyad all at once. In it the mind senses the twinning suggestive of the enunciation, by which it is best equipped to lay hold of

truth intellectually, but it senses this twinning in one single term, so as to suggest that the mind is, for once, functioning with single, not with double vision” (198-99).

Joseph Glicksohn and Chanita Goodblatt maintain that the characteristics of a metaphor “enable both the study of metaphor and Interaction theory itself to fall within the scope of Gestalt psychology” (84). They offer two guidelines for the critical analysis of poetic texts studied through Gestaltist approaches: “There is an emphasis on viewing the metaphor as an emergent whole (i.e., the metaphor is different from the sum of its parts) that is, in addition, construed within the greater whole of the poetic text” and “There is an emphasis on the fact that comprehending a metaphor involves an act of perceptual restructuring” (89). They claim that the kinds of works best suited for Gestalt-Interaction approaches require a complete textual analysis of a single metaphor in order to clarify the interaction between its primary and secondary subjects, such as evident in Dylan Thomas’s Sonnet VII, from his “Altarwise by Owl-Light.” Thomas generates one image from another to produce a chain of continually changing shapes and meanings. “I make one image . . . let it breed another, let that image contradict the first, make, of the third image bred out of the other two together, a fourth contradictory image, and let them all, within my imposed formal limits, conflict,” Thomas states (281). Glicksohn and Goodblatt suggest that Gestalt Interaction approaches work best when metaphors are used in context, especially within a poetic text. Furthermore, “[i]f the poet has invested energy in condensing a number of metaphors and meanings within a metaphor chain, it is incumbent upon the reader to try to unravel this chain to reveal poetic structure” (95).

Current English curriculums often include reading and writing requirements based on print-based theories developed during the twentieth century. Yet students today are immersed in

a visually-dominated digital world where new definitions of reading blend spatial-simultaneous and linear sequential styles of learning. To facilitate the transition to more visually-oriented reading styles, I propose learning strategies that demonstrate the dynamic interactive capabilities of texts as images and images as texts. These Gestalt-inspired approaches blend the visual strategies of art design instructors with the textual strategies of literary scholars to add a visual dimension to the “unraveling process” that reveals poetic structures. These approaches can also be expanded upon to teach key literary terms applicable to AP Language Arts instruction.

The AP English Development Committee offers parallel instruction in Language Arts: Language and Composition and Literature and Composition. My learning strategies focus primarily on Literature and Composition. Both courses of study allow the student to earn college credit while still in high school if she performs well on the subsequent exam. According to the College Board’s AP English Literature and Composition course description, to prepare for the exam the student must carefully read and analyze imaginative literature and “consider a work’s structure, style, and themes, as well as such smaller-scale elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone” (51). The student also analyzes how graphics and images “both relate to written texts and serve as alternate forms of text themselves,” based on the “increasing importance of graphics and visuals published in print and electronic media” (53). By introducing a series of visually intensive and culturally relevant conceptual models that link text and image based on the ideas of modern theorists, I propose to deepen the study of AP Literature and Composition course materials as well as to broaden the scope of literary studies consistent with the digital age.

Methodology

This dissertation begins by exploring how the increase in visual information creates a fundamental shift in the way students learn toward more visual methods. It next examines the differing learning needs of today's students and investigates how the interconnective capabilities of new media address these varying needs. It then studies the text-image interrelationship from a variety of theoretical and literary perspectives. Next, it proposes interactive text-image learning strategies that analyze literature and composition through Gestalt-inspired principles.

The visually-based strategies require a basic understanding of the elements of art design and composition, which are included in Appendix B. These strategies recognize art as a vital form of communication, as well as a means to increase students' ability to read and write in an increasingly visual environment. Abigail Housen's assertion that visual literacy occurs through a sequence of stages similar to how readers become literate underscores these strategies, as well as Philip Yenawine's assertion that the development of visual literacy supplements the development of other meaning-making systems. Thus, this dissertation maintains that visual literacy increases students' ability to understand the foundational literary terms and concepts that underlie Language Arts.

The College Board insists there are no required or sequential lists of literary terminology to assist students in passing the AP Literature and Composition exam. Instead, they advise students to focus on understanding the interrelationship between structure, style, theme, point of view, setting, character, conflict, tone, and the use of figurative language. Thus, the learning strategies presented employ a series of comparative methods, beginning with figure-ground segregation models, to study the interrelationships between these major literary terms and

concepts. The learning strategies are grouped in the following major categories: “Exploring Alternating Perspectives,” “Comparing and Contrasting Through Juxtaposition,” “Juxtapositioning and Dramatic Reversals,” “Visualizing the Whole from Contextual Details,” “Framing Meaning,” “Visualizing Patterns of Similarities,” and “New Dimensions of Space and Text-Image Relationships.”

“Exploring Alternating Perspectives” explores major literary concepts by introducing Reuven Tsur’s work in *Cognitive Poetics* as a method to engage the reader in a close analysis of a text or image through a conceptual metaphor while acknowledging the role context plays in the formation of meaning. Although Tsur’s early studies in New Criticism emphasized that close-readings of poems were the only worthy critical activity, Tsur believed there was something important missing in this method, which he later called the “perceived effect.” He developed a poetic interpretational theory that went beyond the traditional analysis of the structure of the text to assert that one had to have a “perceiving consciousness” to appreciate the full range of poetic expression. He drew upon L. C. Knights’ insight in *Notes on Comedy* that “the only generalizations which are useful are those . . . which suggest how the mind works in certain classes of experience” to develop a subjective position toward the analysis process. From there he formulated “a twofold assumption from Gestalt theory: that one could distinguish between the structure and the regional quality of a perceptual object; and that the two could be systematically related” to create meaning through comparatives (par. 2).

Tsur concurs with Frank Sibley’s assertion that aesthetic qualities cannot be inferred through sets of rules from non-aesthetic elements. Instead, he maintains that the interpretive process is best achieved when grounded on literary critic Viktor Shklovsky’s premise: “The

technique of art is to make the object unfamiliar, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (Shklovsky qtd. in “An Interview with Reuven Tsur” par. 4). Thus, Tsur claims that strictly following empirical rules does not yield rich interpretations. Instead, he agrees with Roman Jakobson’s claim that “[t]he function of poetry is to point out that a sign is not identical with its referent” to suggest there is a Gestaltist quality involved in which the reader makes a qualitative leap from one aspect to another to arrive at a whole that exceeds the summation of the parts” (Jakobson qtd. in par. 5). Tsur notes that this process involves an aesthetic experience that cannot be quantified. “What is figural at any one moment depends on patterns of sensory stimulation and on the momentary interests of the perceiver” (par. 1). Tsur asserts that the importance of shifting perspectives “is not so much the ‘message’ conveyed, but the insight resulting from the shift of mental sets” (par. 1). The learning strategies expand upon Tsur’s ideas by introducing images as an essential aspect of the figure-ground privileging process. Through comparative models, the student explores literary structure, perspective, style, and theme by examining shifts in mental sets.

“Comparing and Contrasting through Juxtaposition” builds upon the binary and aesthetic frameworks established by figure-ground comparative models to explore new perspectives generated through juxtapositioning. The strategies are grounded on N. Katherine Hayles’ assertion that what we first “see” reflects only one aspect of a deeper realization that is generated through an interaction with differing aspects. The strategies are based on Hayles’ suggestion that students pay close attention to “what happens at the dividing line [of differing positions], where one side meets the other side” (“Theory of a Different Order” 33).

Hayles encourages interpretive practices that transcends dichotomies “imprisoned” in strictly empirical systems by creating spaces outside closed systems, which she asserts are “always richer than any distinction can possibly articulate” (29). She bases her observations on the premise that “our interaction with what is [unknown] can be known” (31). Thus, interactive relationships between varying positions, which she defines as *reflexivity*, demonstrate how one can use one’s contextual position as a material anchor from which to expand one’s knowledge. Hayles asserts we come to know the world because we are “anchored” into our position. “Acknowledging that position and exploring precisely what the connections are between the particularities of that position and the formations of knowledge that we generate is a way to extend knowledge,” she claims (33).⁶ The comparative models allow the student to assume a rich range of contextual positions from which to compare and contrast alternating perspectives as well as expand her base of knowledge.

“Juxtapositioning and Dramatic Reversals” builds upon comparative models to explore how dramatic shifts in figure-ground comparatives generate fresh perspectives. The chapter investigates Marcel O’Gorman’s claim that foregrounding any aspect no matter how seemingly insignificant challenges existing commonplace orders. Thus, by focusing on aspects embedded within a text or image, the models demonstrate how bringing these aspects to the foreground add new levels of insight. Students are encouraged to write *about* images instead of *through* them to note the small, easily missed aspects that O’Gorman claims complete the collective image. The learning strategies visually exploit the readiness of viewers to switch back and forth between figure and ground as a comparative method to assess the full range of meanings within a text or

image, to include even the most obscure aspects. The student thus gains an understanding of how complex literary concepts such as irony can be fully expressed.

“Visualizing the Whole from Contextual Details” explores analogous relationships between the details of texts and images and the greater, thematic whole through the Gestalt-inspired concept of “emergence.” Emergence involves the mind’s ability to discover how qualities within parts combine through patterns of organization to create holistic identities. This chapter explores how varied contextual positions create starting points for the comparative processes to occur from which to create the holistic identities. O’Gorman encourages practices that focus on the element of contraction that emerges within the varying aspects of these new identities: “[Although c]ontraries may oppose one another . . . they are not to be separated or divided into immutable categories or headings as in, for example, the Ramist dichotomization of knowledge. Nor are the contraries to be reconciled for the sake of sameness, but wedded into an eternally antagonistic marriage,” he states (62). Ramist dichotomization of knowledge refers to the logical interpretive practices Peter Ramus proposed in the 1500s, which are based on the idea that knowledge is created through a process of assimilating truths through argumentation. According to Walter Ong, the art of Ramist thinking is “a kind of commonplace yielding the various parts of itself which in turn yield more parts through a series of successive openings, like a Chinese puzzle” (202).⁷

O’Gorman argues that the protean nature of digital media creates an environment that fosters post-Ramist scholarly methods that consider the wealth of symbolic and iconic visual languages inherent in images.⁸ Drawing on Johanna Drucker’s assertion that the most potent aspect of typography’s form is “its refusal to resolve into either a visual or verbal mode” (37), he

encourages new forms of expression that create dynamic text-image interrelationships. The models in this chapter support his view of images as tools for invention that allow the student to explore the boundaries between texts and images as she creates holistic identities.

“Framing Meaning” examines point of view through sharply delineated frames of references. The student creates boundary lines and explores perspectives from within and without these particular frameworks to examine Sergei Eisenstein’s claim that no image is boring. The framing selection process investigates Barthes’ claim that meaning is an order “with chaos on either side; one that is essentially a division” (*The Elements of Semiology* 116). The student explores differing frames of references that create new orders by concentrating on what the details within a specific frame of reference mean and how they function as signs to make explicit what is implicit. This process involves looking beyond the surface level to the “third” level in order to find the “obtuse” meaning. It examines Barthes’ claim that “a photograph is always invisible; it is not it that we see” (*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 6). Creating models that privilege particular details within a cohesive frame in both predictable and arbitrary ways, such as randomly “cutting up” images into pieces, challenges the student to re-examine how the creation of frames delineates boundary lines between order and chaos.

“Visualizing Patterns of Similarities” investigates the multi-layered ways humans link similarities visually and textually. Founded on the Gestalt law of similarity which states that the mind tends to group similar elements into collective entities or totalities, the learning strategies examine similar literary terms and concepts within texts and images to examine Tsur’s claim that the importance of shifting perspectives “is not so much the ‘message’ conveyed, but the insight resulting from the shift of mental sets” (1). By understanding the many complex “mental sets”

that underlie the decision making processes we often take for granted, the student gains an awareness of how similarities combine to create a cohesive effect.

“Exploring New Dimensions of Space” investigates learning strategies that embody texts as images through print-based and digital-based approaches. Hayles points out that print culture does not disappear in the flexible realms of cyberspace where words and images coexist; instead, print culture “mutates.” Her assertion that the computer “restores and heightens the sense of word as image—as image drawn in a medium as fluid and changeable as water” establishes the basis for strategies that explore the interconnective properties of text and image (*How We Became Posthuman* 26). Images, according to Hayles, refer to either actual pictures or verbal formulations that evoke mental pictures. This chapter begins with a section on deformation as a figure-ground means of foregrounding aspects of texts and images that are often first perceived as “ground,” and then analyzes how these hidden aspects add dimension to the meaning-making process. It then examines visually-based poetry as a viable genre for understanding and interpreting literature and composition in the digital age.

Conclusions

Interpreting literary terminology and concepts through interactive text-image conceptual models that combine traditional linear-sequential learning styles with spatial-simultaneous learning styles provides comprehensive strategies to promote in-depth learning applicable to AP Literature and Composition instruction. The goal is to foster the student’s ability to see the underlying “logical mechanisms” that McGann asserts comprise both texts and images. The combined learning styles reflect a fundamental shift in the way the modern student learns both inside and outside the classroom toward more spatial methods. The models support Howard

Gardner's argument that students possess multiple types of intelligence which they use concurrently and that complement one another. By adapting Gestalt-inspired models that literary scholars have been using for decades by adding a spatial dimension, my models value images as necessary tools for conceptual analysis and not as mere instructional "aids." The learning strategies employ texts and images as material anchors from which the student can construct meaning in ways that support art as an increasingly vital means of communication. The strategies are discovery-oriented, inspired by theorists such as McGann, Hayles, O'Gorman, and Barthes, who challenge us to examine the deeper roles of images as rich conveyers of multiple meanings.

The literary terms and concepts are designed to be taught through either print-based means (as presented in this dissertation) or digitally-based means, such as projecting the text-image models on a large screen in a classroom environment and manipulating the texts and images with flexible digital tools. This style encourages a group of students to respond concurrently to the same visual cue as a point of inquiry that leads to multiple paths. Because of the spatial nature of the models included in the learning strategies, images with figure-ground dynamic potential applicable to specific literary concepts have been selected. Irony, for instance, can be a difficult concept for the high school student to grasp when taught strictly through textual approaches, as the student must linearly build the concept. Yet when first shown a figure-ground image such as a rich, well-fed rice merchant comfortably perched next to his overflowing wares juxtaposed beside a starving beggar, the student can quickly grasp the concept of opposition involved by visually comparing and contrasting the varying aspects.

Thus, when asked to read find ironic threads of contradiction woven in textual works such as *Romeo and Juliet*, the student can use the conceptual cue as a model to find similar

textual patterns, such as the ironic timing of Romeo slaying Tybalt hours after wedding Juliet. Flexible digital tools also allow the student to go beyond the scope of the immediate assignment to create images and captions that visualize ironic connections. The student can also apply her knowledge by creating her own ironic stories. Through such methods, the student participates in the open-ended discovery aspects of learning while improving her literary interpretation and composition skills.

Some of the conceptual models have more potential than others, such as the self-generating algorithmic approaches McGann recommends that focus on the learning process instead of the fixed result. After growing up thinking of literary terminology as a list of dreaded terms that had to be memorized and then defined by filling in the blanks on an answer sheet, I became an instructor to high school seniors who performed low in reading skills. Not until then did it occur to me that literary terms were powerful visual concepts that could generate a wealth of literary ideas. My experiments with digital tools invited new ways to teach literary concepts, such as freeze framing a full screen image from *Lord of the Flies* and asking the students to explain what a pair of shattered glasses might symbolize.

Visual clues galvanized the class by bringing focal points to discussions that linked specific images with underlying concepts. Instead of students falling asleep in a darkened room as a movie paraded on the screen, by capturing specific images I generated lively discussions, such as the ironic connotations a warship might represent as a symbol of civilization. Upon noting that the students were fascinated with the game of discovering literary terms embedded in visuals, I realized the potential of combining texts with images as a method to conceptually interpret literary terminology. Many scholars and theorists have helped guide my way ever since.

Those included in my dissertation consider learning as a method of inquiry that seeks to generate new perspectives and fresh connections rather than “contain” knowledge in fixed results.

My strategies are only a starting point toward accommodating learning trends that address increasingly multi-sensory environments that virtual forms of reality are creating. While traditional linear-sequential styles remain necessary and valid approaches to the meaning-making process, combining these styles with more spatially-oriented methods results in comprehensive learning practices that address the paradigm shift toward the visual environment characteristic of the digital age. Hayles observes, “If it is true that ‘reality is what we do not see when we see,’ then it is also true that ‘our interaction with reality is what we see when we see’” (“Theory of a Different Order” 33). As the student journeys into new worlds where the real and virtual collide and come together, and where the embodiment of texts spawns new kinds of visual languages, it is vital that instructors create and implement rich, multi-sensory learning strategies that engage new ways of seeing and communicating effectively.

The Roles of Texts and Images

This dissertation focuses on learning strategies that consider texts as images and images as texts as a method to expand upon print-based practices. The strategies involve understanding how visually dominating digital technologies affect the dynamics between texts and images as conveyers of meaning. According to Michel Foucault, since the advent of the printing press, words have maintained such a controlling effect that “[p]eople make the mistake of believing language is their servant and fail to realize that they are instead the servants of language, forever submitting to its demands. “Standing above all these words,” Foucault writes of a Borges story, “is the rigorous and sovereign language which recovers them, tells their story, and is actually

responsible for their birth” (Foucault qtd. in *Language Alone* 50). Foucault asserts that “language has the full range of subjective attributes, being at one end lordly and overbearing, and at the other end ephemeral and self-effacing, that ‘softest of voices, that nearly imperceptible retreat, that weakness deep inside and surrounding every thing and every face’” (50). He ultimately views language as a model for all human activity.

In today’s digital environment in which images form the basis of visually oriented languages, David Staley points out that texts continue to find new ways to endure: “Text can send us from one place to another in our imagination: backward and forward in time, from one realm of thought to another, from inside one mind to inside another. It can burst with emotions, with dreams, with the impossible” (6). Staley notes that even if linear-based forms of communication is limited in our modern visually rich world, new technologies offer hypertext, which “creates the paradoxical impression of material both simultaneous and sequential” as well as computer graphics that interweave text and image (7). He stresses that computers create a level of flexibility with both text and image that has never been possible before. For this reason, he maintains that whatever stance theorists assume in the text-image relationship, it is imperative that they collaborate to explore the expanded range of expression that new technology affords for both texts and images.

Jay David Bolter asserts that visual technologies must “assume” the task of “subverting” the dominant model of prose in order to “break free” of the “constraints” of verbal rhetoric that he claims they have now (“Degrees of Freedom,” par. 6). He observes that texts and images are already deeply combined through praxis (theory and practice), remediation (the appropriation of previously used mediatory forms), and performance, and will continue to be more so in the

future, in ways that empower the image as an alternative text. Yet while ancient and modern rhetoric “depend upon” the act of “subordinating images to words,” Bolter claims that in the digital age, when neither the written nor the spoken word dominate language practices, an inversion of traditional practices is occurring which results in ekphrasis. “Ekphrasis is the description in prose or poetry of an artistic object or striking visual scene; it is the attempt to capture the visual in words,” he notes. Thus, “as the visual and the sensual are emerging out of verbal communication, images are given the task . . . of explaining words, rather than the reverse,” he claims (*Ekphrasis* 264). Bolter asserts that this trend continues to alter the power words have over people.

Bolter’s insights re-examine W. J. T. Mitchell’s observation that language and image remain equally important models for communication and that one form of expression does not dominate the other—rather, a necessary interplay exists between both forms. The “spatial, static, corporeal, and shapely qualities” of the visual arts are not the exclusive domain of the visual any more than “the arguments, addresses, ideas, and narratives” are exclusive domain of the text, he asserts (12). “[P]aintings can tell stories, make arguments, and signify abstract ideas; words can describe or embody static, spatial states of affairs, and achieve all of the effects of ekphrasis without any deformation of their ‘natural’ vocation,” he adds (12).

Noting that the Greek definition of ekphrasis literally means to “speak out,” Mitchell emphasizes that it is important for texts and images “to speak to one another” in ways that deepen appreciation for more than one type of expression. He emphasizes that the true power of ekphrasis is its ability to act as an intermediary between texts and images in a way that values the

ancient rhetorical past while balancing the needs of the future, in which the image—as Bolter notes—plays a major role.

Wendy Steiner points out that our desire to combine poetry with the visual arts reflects a basic aesthetic need to discover artistic forms of expression that approximate the full sensory range of human experience. Taking into account the Greek poet Simonides' assertion that “poetry is vocal painting, as painting is silent poetry” (Simonides qtd. in Grube 11), Steiner notes that both forms of art “approach each other by appropriating a crucial feature from the other that [each] lacks—visuality in poetry, motion in painting” (12). She adds that as literature has attempted to embody stillness through concrete imagery, certain forms of visual arts have attempted to include motion.

Steiner claims that the Cubist movement, for example, attempted to “to raise to the level of subject matter the process of visual concretization in which time is a factor” even though genuine motion is possible only in three-dimensional art (49). She asserts that there are many artists today who are equally attuned to finding new pathways to express the full range of human potentiality as were the Cubist painters. Steiner encourages instructors to discover new methods to link text and image as a serious method of interconnecting the rich possibilities both realms offer to comprehensive learning.

Richard Lanham views emerging electronic writing as a kind of human “sensorium” that will replace Bolter's remediation, which he considers a stigmatized term. He welcomes the visual realm new media affords as a chance to expand text into new forms of expression. He views the sensorium as “one single spectrum of expressivity” that will involve a whole new kind of prose. “[P]rinted prose is based on an aesthetic of black and white linear renunciation. We use

‘figures of speech,’ but we never let the figures realize themselves in their native iconic form . . . We talk about the ‘colors of rhetoric,’ but our texts are all in ‘black and white’” (129). According to Lanham, introducing color in literature and composition practices might be one way to interweave play and purpose, which he views as a key component in future styles of writing: “Word, image, and sound will be inextricably intertwined in a dynamic and continually shifting mixture, as is happening in the world of work,” he states, adding that the result will be an interconnection on multiple sensory levels (130). Thus, although the creation of text-image literary analysis is only the starting point toward embracing more comprehensive learning strategies, it is a vital one in a technologically-driven era where word and image co-exist as languages.

Multiple Teaching Approaches and Comprehensive Learning

Fundamental Shift toward Spatial Teaching Methods

The increase in visual information brought about by new technologies has created a fundamental shift in the way students learn both inside and outside the classroom toward more spatial methods. Sian Byane asserts that images have become so ubiquitous that “[t]he knowledge society . . . has become a society of images” (Byane qtd. in “Higher Education as a Visual Practice,” par. 1). The shift underscores a deeper commitment to visual literacy as a valid and necessary approach toward literary studies. Byane notes that the shift has been emerging for decades within a broader theoretical context, to include “Barthes’ ‘Rhetoric of the image’ (Barthes 1977), Berger’s *Ways of seeing* (Berger 1972), Jay’s ‘scopic regime’ (Jay 1988), Haraway’s ‘visual gluttony’ (Haraway 1991), Lacan’s gaze (Lacan 1977), Debord’s *Society of*

the spectacle (Debord1977), Foucault’s panopticism (Foucault 1979) and Virilio’s ‘vision machine’ (Virilio1994)” (par. 1). Byane claims that the interconnection between cyberspace and visuality results from the “visualized nature of our culture” (par. 1). Technological advances have pivoted around “an economy of watching” for at least a century, he asserts, and the need to conceptualize frameworks for describing and critiquing visuality is “intense,” as every image is a way of both seeing and occluding others and is therefore never neutral (par. 2).

Jerome McGann argues that the unstable nature of digitally reproduced texts coupled with the flexible nature of digital tools provides instructors with innovative visual methods to analyze texts in ways that combine verbal and visual styles while tapping into the digital environment. Additionally, by altering the spatial arrangements of texts or reading images as alternate forms of texts, McGann insists that the student can understand complex concepts through concise visual means. These methods assist the student in interpreting both texts and images as potent languages, he adds. He also claims that the volatility and open-ended nature of electronic texts characterizes oral societies more than print societies and that the lack of closure creates learning strategies that appeal to the process of analysis instead of the fixed result. By allowing texts to expand beyond their established role as “containers of meaning” into “sets of rules,” he asserts that the student can use spatially-oriented, mathematical models to generate multiple answers to the same question. Thus, according to McGann, instead of “submitting to one point of view,” the student can discover varied perspectives to include opposite points of view and subtle shades of differences within a single work, thus significantly enhancing her ability to become active participants in the meaning-making process.

Finding new methods to engage the student in reading practices is essential considering how viewing habits continue to rise while reading scores remain unchanged for most age groups. Nielsen's findings show that the "screen time" of the average American (all types of viewing and interaction, to include TV and computer) is at an historical high, exceeding more than 127 hours per month, and expected to increase. At the same time, reading performance has not improved for teens in spite of the increase in screen time, as well as a growing trend of more teens having access to computers. (qtd. in "National Assessment of Educational Progress," par. 7).

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the national trend in reading has shown improvement across most reporting metrics at age 9 since 1971. Older students, however, have shown very little or no improvement. Students at age 13, for example, have shown no significant improvement in recent years, although scores are slightly higher than in 1971. At age 17, no measurable differences in performance were found between 1971 and 2004 for any reporting metric. Yet, the percentage of 13-year-olds with access to computers in schools increased from 12 percent in 1978 to 57 percent in 2004, while the percentage of 17-year-olds with access to computers in school increased by 33 percentage points between 1978 and 2004. In 2008, the percentage of students ages 13 through 17 with access to computers in school was 99%, with more than 90% of students in grades 6-12 using computers regularly during school hours (par. 7-8).

Marc Prensky claims that these statistics reflect the way students engage in new technologies. For example, the average child, before he leaves for college, will have spent "over 10,000 hours playing videogames; over 200,000 hours [sending and receiving] emails and instant messages; over 10,000 hours talking on digital cell phones; over 20,000 hours watching TV (a

high percentage fast speed MTV);” and will have watched “over 500,000 commercials.” Prensky observes that in sharp contrast, the average child “at the very most” will have spent only “5,000 hours of book reading” (1). He emphasizes that today’s students, familiarized with the “twitch-speed, multitasking, random-access, graphics-first, active, connected, fun, fantasy, quick-payoff world of their video games, MTV, and Internet” become bored by most of today’s instructional methods, no matter how well-intended they may be. He claims these statistics point toward an increasingly widening gap in the future between hours spent reading and hours engaged in visual screen activities. Furthermore, “the many skills that new technologies have actually enhanced (e.g., parallel processing, graphics awareness, and random accessing)—which have profound implications for . . . learning—are almost totally ignored by educators,” he adds (2).

According to Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, today’s advanced societies communicate through a blend of words and images to such an extent that “[t]he Internet, movies, television, and commercial advertising consistently conflate the verbal and the visual” (191). The same digital tools that allow for parallel processing, graphics awareness, and random accessing foster new methods of expression that artists and students are quick to embrace. “With the advent of hypertext and formats that allow the digital combining and overlaying of images, writing, and sounds, and the digital technology that allows for the nonlinear sequencing of links to other data banks and information sources, another area of exploration has opened up for artists in the twenty-first century,” they claim. Thus, “[e]ach person logged on to the computer becomes both reader and viewer, scanning the screen and participating in the control of information that flows before her, along her own path and at her own pace,” they maintain (191-92).

John Weber notes that “[t]eaching students to learn and author in ways that incorporate the visual, nonlinear, and lateral space of digital media and the Internet [presents] a huge challenge for higher education, but . . . an unavoidable one” (par. 5) as more students become immersed in digital environments. He encourages instructors to seek visually-oriented methods to combine the verbal with the visual in the nonlinear hyperspaces of a computers where “one can move in all these directions, in a manner . . . both figurative and yet real” (par. 7).

According Edmund Feldman, the shift toward more visual methods necessitates a deeper understanding of how images can be “read” and incorporated into literary practices. “Obviously, every natural or man-made object can be seen as an image. But there does not appear to be any visual alphabet. Nor is there any visual grammar—no syntax, no semantic conventions, no dictionaries listing the definitions of images, no rules for the combination and transformation of images, and so on. It would appear that the language of images operates in a chaotic universe,” Feldman observes (196).

Nonetheless, Feldman asserts that reading images involves its own logic, “a sampling or trial of several logical sequences before the viewer finds one that is capable of carrying him through a whole visual organization with some degree of formal, sensuous, or cognitive satisfaction” (197). He notes that reading images bears similarities to reading words as both originated in visual images. “The earliest written symbols were not copies of sounds; they were pictures of objects— pictographs,” he explains (200). They then evolved into “pictures of ideas” called ideograms. “Phonic symbols—images of syllabic sound—grew out of the connection of pictographs with the sounds of the words used to designate objects, ideas, or events. In learning to read phonic symbols—letters—it was and is necessary to forget what symbols look like and to

remember only the sounds they stand for, sometimes only an initial consonantal sound,” he adds (200).

Feldman claims that once we learn to read well, we deliberately forget the visual operations that take place at the subcortical level. Words no longer resemble the ideas or objects they stand for. “We read [words], first by recognizing them as symbols of real ideas or things; second by noting their arrangement in space, that is, their sequential position; and third by interpreting the relationship between the symbolic meanings of the words and their sequential or syntactic meanings based on their positions in a word string or sentence,” he states (197).

Feldman argues that because reading images is a fundamentally similar process to reading words, it is therefore a “language,” although a more spatially-oriented one that is “closer to the life of the senses” (199). He encourages all instructors to incorporate visual methods of communicating into their curriculum, foreseeing a struggle “between those who wish to educate truly, that is, maximize the individual’s capacity to choose among alternatives; and those who wish to govern mass behavior (for profit or power) by controlling the consumption of images” (200).

Marcel O’Gorman argues that a shift toward more visual learning styles requires a thorough change in the current pedagogical practices. “[S]haping a new apparatus . . . involves more than a scholarly remediation of printed texts,” he states. “A large-scale institutional change of the type I am envisioning can only come about with a careful and deliberate implementation that targets not only a discourse of scholars, but that of students and classrooms (including ergonomics), administrators and buildings (including architecture), campuses and cities (including urban planning),” he adds (xv-xvi).

Sanders Bustle claims that part of the change involves the recognition of visual

representation as a “valued tool for learning.” She defines visual representation as a purposefully wide-ranging representation of “meaning-making devices and symbols” (420). She insists that learning is not confined to one modality; rather, it occurs through *transmediation*, which she defines as meanings that are formed in one communication system that are recast in the context and expression planes of a new sign system. For example, by allowing students to visually expressive their reactions to such intense issues as human rights through painting, drawing, and other forms of art, they can emotionally connect with other people on a deep, complex level, she asserts. Art thus serves as “a powerful tool for expressing emotional responses to information” in ways that go beyond the scope of words, Bustle adds (421).

Bustle’s ideas underscore Rudolph Arnheim’s description of art as a “means of understanding the conditions of human existence and of facing the frightening aspects of these conditions” and as “the creation of a meaningful order offering a refuge from the unmanageable confusion of outer reality” (170). Bustle’s ideas also emphasize the potential of text-image interactive models as strategies to examine even the most complex literary concepts. If pedagogy expands its range to embrace visual learning strategies that view images as rich conveyers of meaning, she claims that even the most advanced English student will benefit.

Balancing the Three Primary Learning Systems

Expanding learning strategies to include visual and textual styles advances sensory-based learning as well. Humans experience the world through the five physical senses: vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Researchers have split into three primary groups the way we use our senses to acquire information: the visual system (the things we see), the kinesthetic system (the

things we feel, taste, and smell), and the auditory system (the things we hear). The visual system specializes in spatial processes that mentally represent and combine ideas holistically in space, intuit ideas, and merge information into new patterns. These processes are enhanced through practices involving synthesis, graphic awareness, parallel processing, and random accessing. The kinesthetic system specializes in physical processes that actively explore the world through touching, tasting, and smelling. Researchers assert that muscle has memory and that kinesthetic learners remember by recalling physical processes, such as clapping out rhythms and acting out dramatic roles.

The auditory system specializes in step-by-step linear processes that order the world through sound and language. “Language attributes individual signs to individual concepts and describes thoughts and experiences as sequential events,” states Rudolph Arnheim (*Visual Thinking* 251). A. L. Becker adds that when words are detached from perceptual imagery they are joined in chains, not networks as are images, and they operate in sequential steps, not holistically as in images. “Words and the other categories of language presuppose perceptual images and serve them by giving them tags and by limiting the numbers of tags so that there is a stability in our experience,” he states (119). Although students visually “see” words, they must sequentially unlock each word and string them together like beads before they can assimilate the meaning.

According to Addie Cusimano, “When we read we must listen and process information we say to ourselves, even when we read silently. If we do not attend and listen to our silent input of words, we cannot process the information or recall what we have read. Therefore, even silent reading involves a form of listening” (par. 3). This skill involves “listening” to the repetition of

the words inside the brain. Researchers note, however, a type of visual reading called “chunking” in which students read “chunks” of information at a time, extracting the basic concept all at once. The simultaneous processing of information involves spatial learning. Computer adapted reading programs encourage students to read text in formats that spatially separate sentences into small groups of meaningfully related words. Thus, students simultaneously process ideas similar to how they interpret images, by conceptually grouping the art elements and principles of composition into an overall cohesive impression. Chunking is an attempt to combine the visual and auditory learning systems to increase comprehensive learning.

Sanjaya Mishra claims that the percentages of students that learn primarily through a particular system vary per study. Liu and Ginther (1999) found that about 20-30% of American students learn through the auditory system, about 40% learn through the visual system, and the remaining 30-40% learn through the tactual / kinesthetic or visual / tactual system; Vincent and Ross (2002) found that about 50% of American students learn through the auditory system, about 30% learn through the visual system, and the remaining 17% learn through the kinesthetic system. Mishra asserts that “because individuals have different sensory preferences or cognitive styles, learning remains more effective when multiple sensory channels are involved” (136-37).

Mishra adds that when there is a “mismatch” between a student’s cognitive style and her type of instruction, her performance is reduced. Mishra finds this particularly true for students who are not aware that they favor a particular cognitive style or a particular combination of styles. Visually-oriented learners, for instance, may have difficulty processing verbal instructions, but would benefit greatly from seeing images that conceptually reveal a process, Mishra states. She quotes Aristotle who said, “[W]ithout image, thinking is impossible,” to

underscore her assertion that visual strategies result in a greater degree of learning for most all students, whether they are primarily auditory, spatial, or kinesthetic learners (Aristotle qtd. in Mishra 137).

Psychologist Linda Kreger Silverman, who asserts that nearly a third of all students today are predominantly visual-spatial “right hemisphere” learners, considers the differences in cognitive styles as innate. She states that “most researchers agree that integration of both hemispheres is necessary for higher-level thought processes” as all students use both hemispheres, but not with equal facility. “Instead of trying to remake one or the other style of learning, we need to accept these inherent differences in perception, and appreciate their complementarity since we inhabit a spatial-temporal reality” (8). She emphasizes that there is dissension when these differences are not understood, yet when they are honored, they “enable an exchange of information that forms a more complete conception of reality than can be gained by either perspective in isolation” (9).

Introducing his theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) in 1983, Howard Gardner argues that there are seven types of intelligences that are used concurrently and that typically complement each other as individuals develop skills or solve problems. These types include: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. Gardner asserts that logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences (based on the auditory system) are overemphasized in traditional models of human intelligence, which he claims is a cultural artifact. He asserts that in other life circumstances, different kinds of intelligences would gain priority

A leading proponent of holistic learning, Gardner asserts that instructors need to

incorporate strategies that include multiple kinds of intelligences for comprehensive learning to take place. For example, he maintains that auditory skills such as reading are significantly improved by including visual models in the learning process. “[O]nce we realize that people have very different kinds of minds . . . then education, which treats everybody the same way, is actually the most unfair education. Because it picks out one kind of mind, which I call the law professor mind—somebody who’s very linguistic and logical—and says, if you think like that, great, if you don’t think like that, there’s no room on the train for you” (“Howard Gardner: Biographical Profile,” par 1-4). Gardner emphasizes the need for teaching strategies that strengthen learning capacities for each type of intelligence as well as methods that add balance to all the learning capacities.

According to Lesley K. Sword, Director of Gifted and Creative Services in Australia, “Visual-spatial thinking is the hallmark of creativity.” However, “this style of learning may not be understood in an educational environment which favors logical thinking and having the right answer,” he adds. He claims that while traditional techniques that involve skill and drill may be ideal for sequential learners, they are not well suited for visual learners. “Once spatial learners create a mental picture of a concept and see how the information fits with what they already know, their learning is permanent. Repetition is . . . irrelevant to their learning style. Visual thinkers and learners can literally see pictures in their heads while auditory thinkers and learners hear streams of words,” he maintains (“The Power of Visual Thinking” par 3-4).

Linda Lohr notes that because images and words have different cognitive representations, the brain uses separate memory systems to store them. “[Psychologist Alan] Paivio indicated that when verbal information is acquired from sensory memory, it moves to verbal processors.

Likewise, when visual information is acquired, it moves from sensory memory to visual processors,” Lohr states. She insists that “[t]he more pathways learners use to remember information, the more cues learners can use to recall that information later on.” Thus, memory systems are enhanced at the crucial point “when information in either processor . . . activate[s] the information in the other processor” (Lohr qtd. in “A Review of Learning Theories from Visual Literacy” par. 4-5).

Alan Meyer recommends pedagogical strategies that draw on verbal and visual research sources more equally. He notes that although “visual data have traditionally been used because subjects lack verbal skill or literacy,” Meyer encourages their use “because informants often possess more copious and meaningful information than they can communicate verbally” (224). He asserts that images afford a clear, precise means of communicating that provides an immediate link to language. “Ideographs,” he claims, “are processed as images, and thus afford more direct access to meaning than English words” (224). Meyer offers W. Wang’s description of the Chinese character for *horse* as an example of how images provide material structures for words: “The sequence of letters spelling ‘horse’ has meaning only through the mediation of the sounds they represent.... [but] to a Chinese the character for ‘horse’ means horse with no mediation through the sound *ma*” (58). Wang insists the image is “so vivid” that “one can almost sense” the figure “galloping across the page” (58):



Figure 2: "Chinese Character"

Meyer argues that although verbal and image-based memory codes are independent, they are “additive in their effect on recall” (223). Thus, the verbal and image aspects of an ideograph form a rich basis for interplay. “By specifying a unique symbol for each concept, ideographs enable writers to transmit many concepts in a limited space,” he notes (223). Meyer persuades researchers to emulate ideographic writers by gathering and incorporating visual data into instructional practices to complement verbal data collection as a comprehensive source for creating “richly interconnected organizations” (220). I argue that learning strategies that encourage students to understand key literary terms such as theme, metaphor, and symbol through text-image analysis also benefit the student by embracing multi-sensory approaches.

Media as Extensions of the Primary Senses

Embracing multi-sensory learning approaches is a key component for comprehensive learning, according to Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan argues that the media is the primary learning source for students and that all forms of media are extensions of the primary senses. He argues that when we rely too heavily on one kind of sensory input at the expense of another we alter our overall sense of balance. Thus, when our senses become imbalanced, we seek to restore our overall balance by finding ways to engage those senses that are lessened. Media in its ideal state engages all the senses in a state of equilibrium, he claims. Thus, he argues that the most effective learning strategies engage more than one of the senses concurrently.

McLuhan insists that to assess the impact of any new technology on pedagogical practices one must examine both the figure, which he defines as whatever captures the student’s attention, as well as the ground, which he defines as whatever initially escapes her notice. He encourages instructors to use practices that draw upon as many of the senses as possible in order

for comprehensive learning to occur. To facilitate comprehensive learning, he promotes strategies that uncover the hidden ground in any area of communication as a means of understanding sensory counterpoints. “Simply knowing in advance which transformations to expect, knowing where and how to look, lets you predict the effects of any new device or technique before they actually appear in time and experience,” he notes (*Laws of Media: The New Science* 8). By becoming aware of how each new form of media will affect sensory balance, instructors can create learning strategies that do not privilege one type of sensory input, he claims.

“Visual man likes to assume a merely neutral transportation process as between the figure and the ground, ignoring the complex changes that take place in both figure and ground during all communication,” McLuhan notes (qtd. in “Further Notes On Figure, Ground & Causality,” par.4). Yet, unless pedagogical practices focus on the complex changes that take place as one kind of communication system is replaced by another, McLuhan argues that instructors are not able to maximize each new form of communication system as an effective learning tool. To understand the complex changes that take place involves the knowledge that “the ground of any technology is both the situation that gives rise to it as well as the whole environment (medium) of services and disservices that the technology brings with it,” McLuhan claims. “These are side-effects and impose themselves willy-nilly as a new form of culture” (*Understanding Media* 11). Instructors must therefore pay close attention to the “side-effects” that result in sensory imbalances as well as unintended consequences.

Accordingly, McLuhan claims that all advancements in technology require a rethinking of old technologies to assess the impact on sensory balance. For instance, McLuhan points out

that during the black-and-white silent film era the audiences already envisioned the addition of color to restore visual sensory balance. He draws upon Sergei Eisenstein's film directing notes—"As the silent film cried out for sound, so does the sound film cry out for color"—to make an analogy for all media: "As the printing press cried out for nationalism, so did the radio cry out for tribalism" (12). McLuhan asserts that Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats were a mid-twentieth century attempt to return to tribalism through the mass-media of radio. He adds that it is essential for all societies to foresee where each new media will lead in order to avert the unfavorable consequences that result from sensory imbalances. "The fact that [media] interact and spawn new progeny has been a source of wonder over the ages. It need baffle us no longer if we trouble to scrutinize their action. We can, if we choose, think things out before we put them out," he emphasizes (48-49). This "thinking process" involves determining which senses are altered and need to be restored through sensory balance, he adds (49).

McLuhan had a special admiration for writers who used symbols and metaphors to break commonplace associations and construct new ones through concrete imagery, noting concrete poetry as a potential avenue for text-image expression. For example, he praised the Symbolists for using symbols and metaphors to recreate an awareness of the "potencies of language" as a visual form of representation as well as a textual form. He also admired their use of the modern press as a vehicle for generating spatial patterns. Symbolist Stephane Mallarmé, for instance, whom McLuhan considered the modern Daedalus, created visual layouts that were inherent to the meaning of his poems. Mallarmé's shift from the literal meaning of words to the visual meaning based on typographical arrangements gave rise to visual poetry as a study in self-awareness.

Graham Coulter-Smith points out that by foregrounding typography over the more “romanticized” medium of handwriting in Mallarmé’s 1897 poem, “Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hazard” (“A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance”), Mallarmé “effectively breaks out of conventional constraints . . . of lines and verse” (par. 4). He adds that “[n]on-linear narrative can be viewed as a license to not make sense, which is to say to combine elements in a composition without any concern for making sense,” yet the concepts of “sense” and “nonsense” carry implicit value judgments that “disappear when we shift terminology and refer instead to the ‘foregrounding of form’” (par. 5). Coulter-Smith notes that in Mallarmé’s case, the abstract poem “A Throw of the Dice” draws on the hidden powers of visual language as a new source of meaning. Through juxtapositioning, Mallarmé reveals the contrasting figure-ground relationships:



Figure 3: “Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hazard” (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance) by Stéphane Mallarmé, 1897

In Mallarmé's visual poem, McLuhan notes that the word "CHANCE" arrests the viewer's attention through its bold font embodiment and random placement on the page. By visually altering our sensory balance, the layout reinforces the literal meaning of the word, "chance" to emphasize the theme of the act of "throwing a dice." The visual layout also expresses Mallarmé's ability to visually characterize the modern presses as a "discontinuous juxtaposition of unrelated items made necessary by the influx of news stories from every quarter of the world," McLuhan adds (McLuhan qtd. in *Essential McLuhan* 66). Thus, by combining image and text concurrently, Mallarmé creates a powerful multi-sensory experience.

As the visually-oriented digital age emerged, McLuhan also admired artists such as Picasso who foresaw new dimensions of space as the next media phase in the quest for sensory balance. McLuhan states that decades before the computer emerged as a multi-dimensional realm, Picasso visualized new ways to incorporate the illusion of form and shape within visual fields through his experiments with Cubism. While McLuhan considered the printed book as a medium that reduces all forms of expression to a "single descriptive and narrative plane," he considered electronic media as a powerful way to "release" art from the "straightjacket" of print by allowing it to roam about in new spaces, much like Cubism began to inflate itself beyond its flat, two-dimensional realm to simulate the depth and dimension of a three-dimensional area.

McLuhan compared the meeting point of the printed book and the electronic media as a moment of truth similar to an epiphany moment when a previously hidden aspect suddenly emerges, lending a sudden, dramatic revelation. According to McLuhan, electronic media forms the foundation where "new form is born." He adds that "the parallel between [the] two media holds us on the frontiers between forms that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. [It] is a

moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses” (56). He maintains that new forms of printed books require the added capabilities of the visual environment that electronic media affords. Applying this observation directly to the field of literature, he argued in the 1970s that if it was to survive beyond a scholastic discipline for a select few, it must transfer its techniques of “perception and judgment” to new media formats more pictorial in nature. He claims that only then would the imbalances created through an overemphasis on linear-sequential systems be restored.

According to John Seely Brown, “[t]he ability to communicate and express oneself with images (still and moving), sound, and other media is a crucial aspect of the new [pictorial] literacy” that McLuhan predicted (70). Seely notes that while today’s visually-oriented students have developed their own screen language for their digital culture, few instructors are adapting instructional methods that recognize these “profound shifts” toward the visual. Seely adds that “[t]he Internet and other technologies honor multiple forms of intelligence—be they abstract, textual, visual, musical, social, or kinesthetic—and therein present tremendous opportunities to design new learning environments that enhance the natural ways that humans learn” through their senses (76). He claims that embracing multi-sensory technologies, such as combining texts and images, is a critical step toward “engaging all the senses in a state of equilibrium” which McLuhan maintains is the ideal state of media.

According to Nicole Herz, students “already use the postmodern language of images with a virtuosity that surpasses our most dedicated theorists of visual culture” (86). She describes postmodern language as “a language of visual eloquence and stylistic wit that was born in the late-nineteenth century” (86). Herz asserts that Western societies have been constructing

themselves with images since the nineteenth century and therefore need to understand how the logographic to visual shift in learning styles brought about by new technologies took place, as well as where it will lead in the future. She challenges instructors to “bridge the ‘digital divide’ that separates the virtual from Voltaire” by reassuring young people “that the value of authors and poets lies not in the fact that their reprinted books sit in libraries and bookstores, but that they take us on amazing journeys” in ways that expand beyond the printed word (89).

Seely cautions that as new technologies continue to replace earlier forms of communication, they are not panaceas that will resolve the many issues that instructors face in embracing new learning approaches. At the same time, he claims that new technologies provide instructors with methods that enable instruction to “reshape itself and play an important role in the future of our society. Whether that role is ultimately fulfilled will depend on fresh, creative thinking and a firm commitment to move teaching, learning, and the university into the digital age,” Seely adds (85).

Text, Image, and New Media Taxonomy

Part of the reshaping process involves establishing organized systems from which to interconnect texts and images as viable sources for learning. According to Ron Burnett, images assume such a prominent role in the digital age that we have become “spectators” as we attempt to “navigate our way” through the ever-flowing winding mazes of visual systems. “Images are not one isolated expression among many and are certainly not just objects or signs . . . images are both the outcome and progenitors of a vast and interconnected image-world” that increasingly modifies the way we think, Burnett adds (21). He claims that we need to establish new ways of

organizing images as they “are too rich to be merely categorized as mirror-like representations of humanity; rather, they invite the mind to look beyond the surface of all representations of human expression” (21).

Craig Saper argues that we need to expand our notion of taxonomy to take advantage of all the spatial capacities new technology affords for both texts and images. New media has opened up “new paths for art and poetry,” he states, with many of these paths involving the “effort to find new language systems and new forms of expression” (*Networked Art* 152-53). He notes that these paths lead to rich, fully-dimensional methods to explore and create literary works. One such path is to create the digital equivalent of typewriter poetry, a variant of visual poetry popular in the 1970s. The typewriter poets turned the manual typewriter—the ultimate icon of mechanized, linear-sequential communication—into an artistic tool. The resulting poetry was “not intended to represent an author’s voice, but to directly imprint a process and a visual aesthetic that has no equivalent in speech,” Saper notes (“The Socio-Poetics of Typewriting” 24). He adds that the typewriter poets sought to add a “tactical visceral literacy” as seen in the following example by Charles Bernstein:

i" I became a consultant to the
 (world) outside that wasn't mean
 it was a simple idea that happened after a
) Some people had been back at the
 leg: he had been down in the
 for the benefit of those who may
 not understand the long range poi
 nt of American foreign policy.
 there are lots of easier ways of
 out called it than straight forward wa
 ys of speaking straight forward wa
 y work such things in the world
 make an appearance on the side of
 where ever the words is not heard an
 end to hear the words: alters but an
 voice: power: and: alters: but: that
 voice: power: and: alters: but: that
 important that the words: alters: but:
 s the diacritics of emotionalism
 and the words: alters: but: that
 ap breath & wait for something to
 far: so: come: along: we: ve: got: to
 almost: wait: that: the: even: betwe
 an: last: val: that: the: even: betwe
 an: last: val: that: the: even: betwe
 do: let's: not: get: tight: together
 with: each: other: (together: I: had: t
 tried: to: say: that: we: tramped: on
 that: we: say: that: we: tramped: on
 that: we: say: that: we: tramped: on
 that: we: say: that: we: tramped: on
 before: you: ve: actually: made: someth

Figure 4: "Veil" by Charles Bernstein, 1979

Bernstein creates a veil by overtyping several layers of poetic compositions. The veil is a metaphor of the ironic nature of language. "Our language is our veil of language, but one that too often is made invisible," Bernstein notes. "Yet, hiding the veil of language, its wordiness, its textures, its obstinate physicality, only makes matters worse," he adds (Bernstein qtd. in Golding 273). Bernstein's art calls attention to the fact that the ultimate power of language lies in its ability to carve its own path, one that is shaped by its author. Thus, the "logic" of language can be understood in heuristic as well as hermeneutic terms.

Saper claims that by conforming to a series of tight constraints, the typewriter poets found freedom in the challenge of the "game." They created visual aesthetics that fostered expression through tactical methods that surpassed words. Saper points out that using the typewriter to create art is analogous to contemporary efforts to make art from digital sources,

such as David Byrne's artistic endeavors using the PowerPoint program. Most importantly, Saper observes that typewriter poetry fostered the idea that a ubiquitous icon of machinery can be viewed from a whole new perspective—as a creator of an alternative literacy that moves beyond its original purpose as a “slave of longhand script” to a new mode of expression “beyond speech's anchor.” Saper states that “[w]e live in an era so immersed in electronic technologies that now all writing passes through an electronic stage of computers, phones, iPods, and other devices.” He claims that in the shift away from logocentric writing, words “no longer have priority over other visual imagery. Some of the poems are figurative; many seek to explore possible effects of the machine not noticed outside these artistic and poetic uses” (“The Socio-Poetics of Typewriting” 16).

Saper adds that the culture of organized systems demands that words matter, but for the typewriter poets, as well as for those who follow their footsteps in the digital age, words “as matter” create a literacy in which aesthetics and a tactical sense are not an ornamental value but crucial to the meaning. This concept reinforces the idea that words do not just represent mental images, but that the very display of words—the “image” embodied in the physical layout as a material structure—also conveys meaning.

Creating interconnected systems to link text and image deepens the analysis process as well, according to Peter Stallybrass. As modern technology allows a wealth of image-based materials to be included in databases, such as rare paintings, photographs, images of texts from various time periods, personal letters, and artifacts, Stallybrass claims that students are able to understand texts in greater depth by analyzing the visual materials that accompany texts. He states that the number of people who use the Public Record Office (PRO) in London has

substantially increased since photography of the materials has been permitted. “Permitting photography . . . encourages readers who may only be able to spend an hour or two in the library to work for days or years afterward on deciphering and understanding the materials they have photographed,” he notes, underscoring the significance of using visual analysis to deepen textual analysis (1583).

For example, by taking photographs of differing versions of actual texts, students are able to compare and contrast the visual aspects to note differences in the artist’s perspective, Stallybrass maintains. He invites students to look at the images in two versions of Genesis 3.7. In the first version he asks the students if “Adam and Eve [are] naked, wearing a fig leaf, or wearing fig leaves tied together.” In the second version he asks the students if “Adam and Eve [are] naked, wearing leaves, or clothed when they are expelled from Eden” (1583). By comparing and contrasting the visual aspects of both versions, Stallybrass argues that students gain additional perspectives, such as the author’s purpose, the intended audience, and the historical context in which the versions were written, that they would not gain if they studied the textual features only. Stallybrass encourages students to compare and contrast visual images on the websites of the leading museums and galleries as well, such as the handwritten notes of leading authors. He asserts that adding the visual component to the interpretive process “disrupts” traditional linear-based analytical approaches to allow added perspectives that exceed the scope of one learning system.

N. Katherine Hayles points out that the disruption process also enhances the range of narrative expression by symbiotically connecting the linear and spatial realms into a broader base. She claims that image-laden databases complement the temporal qualities of the narrative.

“For the narrative, the syntagmatic order of linear unfolding is actually present on the page, while the paradigmatic possibilities of alternative word choices are only virtually present,” she explains. Yet for databases she observes that “the paradigmatic possibilities are actually present in the columns and the rows, while the syntagmatic progress of choices concatenated into linear sequences by SQL commands is only virtually present” (1606).

Arguing that just as time and space coexist as natural symbionts, Hayles claims that narrative and database align themselves with time and space as well to coexist “in symbiosis with each other” (1606). She adds that “while constant expansion of new data accounts for an important advantage that relational databases have over narratives,” the multitude of narrative voices made possible by the information society remains “the necessary others to database’s ontology” (1607). Databases that are rich with textual and visual sources create a fertile ground for text-image narrative expression, thus allowing narratives to “gesture toward the unknown hovering beyond the brink of what can be classified and enumerated,” Hayles emphasizes (1607).

The next chapter focuses on new methods to teach AP Literature and Composition by combining texts and images in light of the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English resolution to include more visually-based instructional practices. I argue that since the resolution passed in 1996 much more work needs to occur to fully embrace the resolution. Part of this process includes a deeper understanding of the pedagogical roles that texts function as images and that images function as texts. In the following chapters I analyze a variety of theoretical perspectives and then offer text-image strategies to include learning

approaches and student models based on Gestalt-inspired principles. These methods encourage the student to become an active participant in the open-ended learning experience.

CHAPTER TWO: IMPLEMENTING TEXT-IMAGE ANALYSIS

Text-Visual Analysis Applicable to English Instruction

Adopting the IRA and NTCE Resolution

Implementing visual literacy into English instruction has been a goal of the International Association of Reading (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) since they jointly passed a resolution in 1996. While these goals are noteworthy, much more work needs to be accomplished to fully integrate textually based styles of learning with visually based styles. In particular, visual styles need to emphasize the role of images as inherent to the learning process and not as mere visual aids. This chapter discusses the goals of the resolution, and then introduces ideas that promote visually-oriented learning strategies as valid approaches toward effectively meeting these goals. The strategies focus on the discovery process of learning and not the fixed result. They emphasize inventive methods that favor perceptual styles of learning over strictly logical styles as a means of encouraging sustained, comprehensive learning.

According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), “Electronic technologies, perhaps more than any other recent innovation, have heightened our sense of the need for reform and have raised our expectations of what students must know and be able to do in English Language Arts” (“NTCE Passes Visual Resolution,” par. 1). In 1996 the NCTE issued an official Statement of Visual Literacy: “Resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English through its publications, conferences, and affiliates support professional development and promote public awareness of the role that viewing and visually representing our world have as forms of literacy” (par. 1). The resolution reflects the impact of globalization as well as the

increased capabilities of new media, such as recursive hypertext, random accessing, and heightened graphic awareness, which are emerging in the changing dynamics of communication systems. It states that “[t]o participate in a global society, we continue to extend our ways of communicating. Viewing and visually representing . . . are a part of our growing consciousness of how people gather and share information. Teachers and students need to expand their appreciation of the power of print and nonprint texts” (par. 1). The resolution adds that “[t]eachers should guide students in constructing meaning through creating and viewing nonprint texts” (par. 1). At the time the resolution was announced, Michael Day, Chair of the NCTE’s Assembly for Computers in English, urged instructors “to preserve textual notions of literacy” while embracing visual media. “The critical media literacy we need to teach must include evaluation of these media, lest our students fail to see, understand, and learn to harness the persuasive power of visual media,” he noted (par. 2).

The resolution incorporates twelve standards for the teaching of English. These standards reflect a core belief that the “[c]hanges in technology and society have altered and will continue to alter the ways in which we use language to communicate and to think” as well as [our] commitment that students must be prepared to meet the changing literacy requirements of the future” (“Standards for the English Language Arts” 2). Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 12 directly affect visual literacy which the council defines as “the fabric of contemporary life”:

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the

workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to

communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (3)

Collectively, the standards encourage students to make effective use of a range of spoken texts, study and create visual texts, and understand the text-image relationship. Visual texts include narrative and documentary films, television, advertisements, maps, illustrations, multimedia / CD resources, and other graphic displays. The council seeks learning approaches that enable students to understand how visuals are “powerful languages” that communicate ideas and shape thoughts and actions (20).

IRA and NCTE assert that there is no “set list” of literary terminology, yet they maintain that a working knowledge of the basic terms is essential. “Once students learn, for example, the

concepts of paradox or archetype, or once they understand that enjambment generally does not occur by accident but serves a purpose in poetry, their analyses inevitably deepen” (Greenblatt 5). The IRA and NCTE assert that the key emphasis for instructors involves examining how the terms interrelate, with new ideas spawning from associative patterns that stimulate higher order thinking skills. For example, “[S]tudents should become familiar with the uses of irony (dramatic, verbal, in situations), hyperbole, and understatement . . . Knowing what a foil is helps to illuminate discussions of fiction and drama, while being able to recognize stream of consciousness or a soliloquy raises interesting questions about how authors represent the interior lives of their characters” (5).

The IRA and NCTE also encourage advances in technological capabilities that strengthen new forms of writing that explore structure and form. They assert that today’s writing styles are recursive and not necessarily linear, with students focusing on many aspects of a composition at once: “Writers move fluidly from whole to part and back again, shaping and defining their overall purpose as they develop specific examples and refine passages” (32). They also maintain that recursive writing is a type of higher order problem-solving skill. The organizations also note that flexible writing environments help students become confident about their ability to shape compositions according to audience and purpose through a rich variety of approaches.

The IRA and NCTE recommend that learning approaches include traditional styles, such as “left-to-right directional flows, phonetically matching letters to sounds, and varying the sentence length through rhythm and emphasis,” as well experimental styles, such as the “careful study” of illustrations as a method to incorporate the formal characteristics of art education (art elements and composition) into literary interpretation (26). For example, “A seventh-grade

teacher in Philadelphia . . . asks his students to depict the moods evoked in Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* by cutting colored paper into shapes that convey the tone of the chapter, and then explaining their artistic depictions" (26). According to the IRA and NCTE, students who explore cross-disciplinary connections as they develop a working terminology to describe language structure become "thorough readers" and "effective writers" (26).

The IRA and NCTE place overall emphasis on teaching approaches that encourage the interrelationship of all six forms of Language Arts communication: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and presenting, with each type of learning expanding upon the other. While their resolution invites new methods that embrace a rich interweave of various disciplines as well as an engagement of spatially-oriented associative approaches in concert with traditional linear-sequential approaches, I argue that much work needs to be done to fully achieve these goals. For example, note the wording of their visual literacy rubric requiring students to forge a relationship between texts and images:

RUBRIC FOR DIGITAL/VISUAL LITERACY

	4	3	2	1
General use of computer	Student shows excellent skills in the use of the computer.	Student shows good skills in the use of the computer.	Student shows fair skills in the use of the computer.	Student shows little or no skill in the use of the computer.
Use of ReadWriteThink.org (RWT) tools	Student shows excellent independent use of RWT tools.	Student requires some assistance with the use of RWT tools.	Student requires much assistance in the use of RWT tools.	Student requires one-on-one assistance in the use of RWT tools.
Use of images	Images add meaning to the text and beyond the text.	Images add meaning to the text.	Images add little meaning.	Images are rarely used and if used are randomly placed and add no meaning.
Use of color, fonts, and text placement	Use of color, fonts, and text placement show excellent organization and add to the readability.	Use of color, fonts, and text placement show good organization and add to the readability.	Use of color, fonts, and text placement show fair organization but add little to readability.	Poor use of color, fonts, and text placement.
Zine cover	Student provides an excellent summary of contents through the cover images and text.	Student provides a good summary of contents through the cover images and text.	Student provides a fair summary of contents through the cover images and text.	Student does not provide a summary of contents through the cover images and text.
Overall project	Presentation is very attractive and provides an excellent overview of topic.	Presentation is attractive and provides a good overview of topic.	Presentation is attractive and provides a fair overview of topic.	Presentation is poor and fails to provide an overview of topic.

Figure 5: “Rubric for Digital / Visual Literacy”

Observe that under the category, “Use of Images,” images are scored in relation to how effectively they contribute to the meaning of the text. To score the highest rating, images must add meaning to the text and *beyond* the text. This concept suggests that texts and images are inherently connected as part of the meaning-making process.

This concept also underscores the College Board’s assertion that in AP Literature and Composition courses, the role of images are considered *alternate* forms of text themselves. Yet, under the category, “Use of colors, fonts, and text placement,” to receive the highest rating, colors, fonts and text placement need only show “excellent placement” and “readability.” These phrases imply that the visual layout is primarily intended to enhance the textual aspects. Many theorists argue that the visual aspects should be considered as inherent to the meaning-making process instead of “enhancements” toward achieving readability.

Exploring New Methods to Interconnect Texts and Images

According to Jessica Helfand, when designing the visual layout of text, the layout should be considered as equally important as the text. As such, the layout should start with the typography as a basis for both textual and visual interpretation. “We need to look at screen-based typography as a new language, with its own grammar, its own syntax, and its own rules. What we need are new and better models, models that go beyond language or typography per se, and that reinforce rather than restrict our understanding of what it is to design with electronic media,” she asserts (par. 9). She urges designers to begin the process by looking “to our own innate intelligence and distinctive powers of creative thought.” She states that “[t]o cultivate and adequately develop this new typography . . . we might do well to rethink visual language altogether, to consider new and alternative perspectives” (par. 10). She claims that finding alternate perspectives should be formulated on Aristotle’s equation that “spoken words are the symbols of mental experience” and “written words are the symbols of spoken words” (Aristotle qtd. in Helfand par 11). She adds that this equation should then consider the following questions: “What happens when written words can speak? When they can move? When they can be imbued

with sound and tone and nuance, with decibel and harmony and voice?” (par. 12). She maintains that as designers explore the creative parameters of new media, their goal should be to use the fullest capacities of technology by visually emphasizing the dramatic aspects of text. “Of what value are typographic choices—bold and italics, for example—when words can dance across the screen, dissolve, or disappear altogether?” (par.12-13). Seymour Papert add that “[l]iteracy should not mean the ability to decode strings of alphabetic letters” which Papert defines as *letteracy*. Instead, he argues that the flexible tools of new media offer a smooth transition to decipher the formal properties of language beyond narrow dimensions (Papert qtd. in Helfand, par. 9).

In *How We Became Posthuman*, N. Katherine Hayles notes that “information technologies operate within the realm in which the signifier is opened to a rich internal play of difference. In informatics, the signifier can no longer be understood as a single marker, for example an ink mark on a page. Rather it exists as a flexible chain of markers bound together by the arbitrary relations specified by the relevant codes” (31). In *Writing Machines*, she adds that “[l]iterature was never only words . . . never merely immaterial verbal constructions. Literary texts, like us, have bodies, an actuality necessitating that their materialities and meanings are deeply interwoven with each other” (5). Hayles experiments with a variety of fonts in *Writing Machines*, providing each style with a distinct “voice” to allow the words to emerge as physical embodiments of the ideas they convey. Her ideas underscore a need to include more visually based approaches to English instruction.

Visual interpretation remains in the discipline of art education, with students learning the elements of design and how the composition of these elements affects the overall meaning. Yet

the College Board's claim that graphics and visuals are of "increasing importance" as well as "alternative forms of texts themselves" (53), along with the IRA and NCTE's resolution that "teachers should guide students in constructing meaning through creating and viewing nonprint texts" underscore a growing need to find methods to assist students in interpreting images as alternative forms of texts (par. 1).

While most high school syllabi of AP Literature and Composition courses echo the goals of the IRA and NCTE's resolution, few include sources to assist students in visual analysis. Geraldine Wood urges students to "get an overall impression" as well as to consider what is included—and more importantly—what is missing in an image. "An artist or photographer shapes reality by picking and choosing its content, though not always consciously," she notes. "For example, if you see a homelike setting . . . you're probably thinking of a family. If no people appear, you may perceive loneliness," she observes (8).

Wood states that if the image contains text, then the student should examine how text and image relate to each other. "Details matter and you should be conscious of what you're looking at" (93). She also encourages students to focus on the picture's most important element as well as to consider the values or priorities presented, stating that "[t]he words may alter the way you perceive nonverbal elements and vice versa" (95). She claims there are significant trends toward a more visual learning environment in academics, such as the synthesis essay, which must contain at least one visual source. While Wood's insights compel instructors to seek new methods to blend texts and image in literary analysis, I argue that more interactive practices need to be encouraged to allow a fully reciprocal relationship between texts as images and images as texts.

Familiarizing Students with Art Education Practices

According to Philip Yenawine, the key to blending texts and image is to familiarize students with arts education practices. Students would thus become engaged with more interdisciplinary approaches as well as more spatially-oriented approaches. “The literalness and constant presence of some types of imagery . . . build a certain perceptual and mental development in most people,” he states. “[T]here is evidence that learning to interpret and discuss works of art promotes thinking critically and creatively as well,” he notes (5). He adds that developing visual literacy “enhances the development of other meaning making systems” yet observes “there are no visual literacy programs that recognize that visual interpretation is a process of stages similar to reading” (1).

Yenawine encourages instructors to create an accepted system of visual arts instruction based on sequential stages that address the varying needs and abilities of individual students. He asserts that instructors “need to understand the long period comparable to ‘reading readiness’ that predates skillful construction of meaning from images” as well as “the turning point which might be called ‘functional literacy.’” He observes that part of this process involves the ability to “assess the equivalent of ‘reading for comprehension’ and the ability to describe other observable, measurable stages or phenomena” (2).

For instance, Yenawine claims that “[r]eading levels are understood as gradual and slowly evolving, allowing for large and small developmental changes in skills, understanding, and involvement. Visual literacy should be seen as a similarly slow-developing set of skills and understandings that progress unevenly, with each step building on earlier ones, each dependent

on certain kinds of exposure and instruction” (2). He encourages instructors to provide visual learners with “long term, graduated support, like that provided to readers” (2). He cites the experimentations of Abigail Housen as evidence that visual literacy is acquired through sequential stages, with each stage including aesthetics as an essential component.

In 1987 Housen conducted an empirical study of the viewing habits of museum audiences. She concluded that there are five stages of aesthetic development that influence the meaning-making process. She considers the first two stages pre-literate. In Stage One, the viewer is captivated by the “concrete and obvious aspects of the content, subject matter or color,” Housen asserts (2). The viewer is guided by a subjective point of view, based on her own life experiences, Housen continues. Thus, if she sees a dog in a painting and she likes dogs, she may conclude the painting is “good.” According to Yenawine, teaching effectively at this stage involves presenting images that evoke a familiar context that encourage narrative readings. “Ask [students] to look and think about what they see, then to look again, and to share and compare their perceptions and responses with others. This viewer can quickly learn to observe more and ground [her] stories in evidence within the picture rather than simply in [her memory or imagination],” he observes (3).

In Stage Two, the viewer builds a framework for observing art by comparing the image to her own familiar world. She enters an educable stage as she develops curiosity. “This interest in realism is paralleled by a practical outlook,” Housen claims, as a work of art must serve a functional purpose. According to Housen, the function “may vary from the moral and didactic to the mundane and worldly,” with the key consideration centered on how much the work is “worth” (3). Yenawine asserts that the viewer can add strategies, as well as and compare and

contrast. For example, she can break down what she sees “to determine how colors or materials contribute to meaning,” he states. She can also “be taught to ferret out the . . . choices artists make in choosing subjects . . . or ways of creating space,” Yenawine adds (3). By the end of Stage II, Yenawine maintains that the viewer has developed basic skills, learned essential concepts, has a small information base, and can begin to comprehend what she encounters in art to approach “functional literacy.”

At Stage III, the viewer classifies works of art. This process involves decoding “the artist’s intentions and historical influences by analyzing the clues left by the artist on the canvas,” Housen states (3). “Those clues, the formal elements of line, color, and composition, form the criteria by which [she] perceives, decodes, and judges a work of art,” she adds. At this stage, the viewer “confronts the work of art directly and objectively,” as personal history and affect are suppressed. She identifies the work in terms of period, school, and style, Housen maintains (3). Yenawine recommends that art history, art criticism, and studio courses be introduced to broaden the viewer’s knowledge, as Stage III marks the transitional stage from functional literacy to visual literacy.

At State IV, “[t]he viewer responds to a work of art in an individualized and immediate way” by fully decoding, analyzing, classifying various works of art, and seeking “less literal and objective goals,” Housen points out (3). Aware of the role affect-laden memories play in her interpretation of art symbols, the viewer searches for more meaningful messages. She begins to give credence to her own emotional response, expressing for instance, “The art work gives me feelings of being in New York with my father when I was young,” Housen states. She claims that “[e]very fresh encounter with the work of art becomes a catalyst for the viewer, occasioning a

new consciousness of both self and work” (3). Yenawine adds that at Stages IV and V, the viewer, “having made art one’s major focus in life, usually one’s profession, requires no intervention from ‘educators.’ Further learning is ongoing and self guided” (3).

At Stage V, the viewer suspends disbelief and treats objects as if they have a life of their own. “While the viewer knows that the sailboat in the painting is not going to sail away, he may respond to the boat as if it could,” Housen observes. The boat transforms into a “semblant” of reality, with the viewer approaching the boat as a “friend.” The viewer considers all formal characteristics of the painting, with each detail reflecting “an intricate facet of the work as a whole,” she notes (3). Additionally, “[T]he encounter with the work demands that the viewer make equal use of all his faculties; perceptual, analytical, emotional,” she adds. Housen concludes that in the end, based on what the viewer sees, knows, and feels, she reconstructs the work of art for herself “again and anew” (3).

Based on Housen’s findings, Yenawine claims that “it is incorrect . . . to assume that [students] learn to negotiate meaning in imagery simply by exposure. Increased capacities require time and broad exposure as well as educational interventions of various sorts” (3). He states that instructors need to address visual literacy as a valid approach toward teaching higher order thinking skills, as evidenced in Housen’s study of a sequential progression from “simple identification to complex interpretation on contextual, metaphoric and philosophical levels” (1). He maintains that her study serves as an important foundation upon which to build visual literacy programs that teach higher order thinking skills.

Applying Visually-Oriented Interpretive Methods

The NRA and NCTE support the College Board's Advanced Placement Program (AP) and share many of the program's goals. The program is described by the College Board as "a collaborative effort among motivated students; dedicated teachers; and committed high schools, colleges, and universities" that offers 37 programs of study to high school students for college credit (6). The program includes a course followed by an exam. "Most colleges and universities in the United States, as well as colleges and universities in more than 40 other countries, have an AP policy granting incoming students credit, placement, or both on the basis of their AP exam grades. Many of these institutions grant up to a full year of college credit (sophomore standing) to students who earn a sufficient number of qualifying AP grades," the College Board states (6). As an overview, students interested in taking AP Literature and Composition "should be interested in studying literature of various periods and genres and using this wide reading knowledge in discussions of literary topics," the College Board adds (6).

To prepare students for AP Literature and Composition exam, the College Board recommends that instructors provide assignments that "help students develop critical thinking standards in their reading and writing" (51). The College Board recommends that students "read widely and reflect on their reading through extensive discussion, writing, and rewriting" (52). The overall goals require students "to make careful observations of textual detail, establish connections among their observations, and draw from those connections a series of inferences leading to an interpretive conclusion about a piece of writing's meaning and value," the College Board maintains (52).

To prepare for the Literature section, the College Board expects students to carefully read and critically analyze imaginative prose and poetry beginning from the sixteenth century onward. Students are asked to “consider a work’s structure, style, and themes as well as such smaller-scale elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone,” the College Board states (53). Students are also encouraged to “read deliberately and thoroughly,” to analyze how “meaning is embodied in literary form,” and to consider a work’s “literary artistry,” the College Board advises (51). The approach to close readings involves the experience of literature, the interpretation of literature, and the evaluation of literature. “By experience, we mean the subjective dimension of reading and responding to literary works . . . By interpretation, we mean the analysis of literary works through close reading to arrive at an understanding of their multiple meanings. By evaluation, we mean both an assessment of the quality and artistic achievement of literary works and a consideration of their social and cultural values,” the College Board explains (51-52).

To prepare for the Composition exam, the College Board encourages students to acquire “a wide-ranging vocabulary . . . a variety of sentence structures . . . a logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques of coherence such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis; a balance of generalization with specific illustrative detail; and an effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, maintaining a consistent voice, and achieving emphasis through parallelism and antithesis” (53). The official study guide does not include any visually-based exercises to help students achieve these goals. There is, however, mention of the importance of analyzing images, which is included in the goals statement of the Composition section. Along with the need to understand the connections between writing and interpreting reading passages,

students are expected to *concurrently* “reflect [upon] the increasing importance of graphics and visual images in texts published in print and electronic media,” the College Board advises (53). Students are also asked “to analyze how such images both relate to written texts and serve as alternative forms of text themselves,” the College Board adds (53).

The word *concurrently* implies an equal status with the other needed skills listed. Yet, while the study guide focuses on ways to master other required skills, it offers no methods to interpret these very skills it considers of equal importance. Although many instructors are making important strides in developing visual literacy programs and other methods to tap into visual environments, according to Jerome McGann, visual interpretation remains for the most part in the discipline of Arts Education, with students learning the elements of design, such as color, line, shape, texture, and shading, and how the composition of these elements, such as whether or not they are balanced or asymmetrical, affects the overall meaning of a work of art.

Yet McGann’s assertion that “the general field of humanities education and scholarship will not take the use of digital technology seriously until one demonstrates how its [flexible] tools improve the ways we explore and explain aesthetic works—until, that is, they expand our interpretational procedures” (xii), coupled with the College Board’s claim that graphics and visuals are of “increasing importance” as well as “alternative forms of texts themselves,” strongly endorse the importance of visuals as inherent elements of literature and composition practices (52-53). These endorsements underscore a continuing need to find methods to interpret images as “alternative forms of texts.” In the next section I examine the pedagogical roles of texts and images applicable to AP English instruction.

Applying Gestalt-Inspired Models to Text-Image Analysis

Many of the learning strategies I propose are based on Gestalt-inspired models. The theory began in the early twentieth century as a reaction against Structuralism, a branch of psychology established by Wilhelm Wundt in 1879 that claims that stimuli are perceived as parts which are then compiled. Wundt defines Structuralism as “the study of immediate experience or consciousness which could be analyzed into the psychical elements or atoms—sensations and feelings” (Wundt qtd. in Singh 93). Thus, conscious experience can be broken down into basic conscious elements.

Inspired by John Locke’s assertion that all knowledge comes from experience, Structuralists maintain that the mind and body are parallel but not interacting systems. Conscious experience consists of two primary elements, sensations and feelings, which are combined through association. The elements of experience combine by means of association. In other words, “elements may fuse into complexes so that one simultaneously arouses the other or it may fuse together in such a way that whenever one idea appears, another idea immediately follows,” Arun Singh explains (99). The resulting combination, which can be simultaneous or successive, is based on the principle of *creative synthesis*. “Based on the analogy of a chemical compound, the principle explains that the elements of consciousness might form such a complex or compound, whose characteristics were different from the characteristics of the component elements,” Singh claims (99).

The Gestalt psychologists (Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Kohler), challenged the principle of creative synthesis, claiming that the perception of the whole exceeds the parts, such as when two hydrogen atoms are combined with an oxygen atom to create

water—a pure, homogeneous substance consisting of two or more different elements in definite proportions that cannot be separated by physical means. Thus, to a Gestaltist, “[t]he perception of whole is not the sum of perception of its parts” any more than a chemical compound is a mere summation of its component elements”; instead, “the whole exceeds the sum of its parts,” Singh explains (99). Gestaltists equate the overriding law of *prägnanz* with a psychological premise that claims that “[w]hatever occurs to an individual human shapes that individual and influences all aspects of that person” in ways that cannot be empirically measured (*Learning theories, A to Z* 149). Literary scholars and art designers incorporate Gestaltist principles into their fields as well.

The law of *prägnanz* applies to the figure-ground segregation principle, in which humans tend to distinguish an object from its surroundings. When shown an image in which two parts remain constant, humans tend to perceive one part as the foreground (figure) and the other part as the background (ground) even though the relationship between both parts remains constant. Thus, when one observes “Rubin’s Vase,” one’s eye tends to gravitate toward *either* the two faces or the vase, even though both aspects appear simultaneously:



Figure 6: "Rubin's Vase"

According to Paul Martin Lester, the brain makes “a conscious decision whether to see a face or a vase” within the greater whole (54). He claims that there are four visual cues that activate the brain’s response: color, form, depth, and movement. The brain discovers these forms within an image and classifies them in discrete groups. Yet, what we see when we look at an image, the way we perceive these groupings remains a subjective process, determined by “what we have seen in the past and what we want to see,” Lester asserts (53). For example, Edgar Rubin noted that the symmetrical shape, the curved form, the familiar subject, and the vertical orientation influenced most people to see the faces as the figure and the vase as the ground.

The process nonetheless invites a dynamic interaction between both aspects. This interaction is especially apparent when a submerged aspect comes to dominate an image. For example, Lester notes that the designer of the FedEx logo incorporated an arrow between the “E” and the “x” that is impossible not to see once the illusion is revealed:



Figure 7: "FedEx Logo"

FedEx is a Registered Trademark

The subliminal message of FedEx as a fast and efficient company emerges to dominate the viewer’s thought processes. Although Gestaltists have been criticized for describing perceptions rather than giving explanations as to how these perceptions give meaning to an image, Lester

claims that scientists have discovered that the human eye is constantly in motion as we scan an image. “These quick focal fixations all combine within the viewer’s short-term memory to help build a mental picture of the scene. The viewer constructs the scene with short-lived eye fixations that the mind combines into a whole picture,” Lester emphasizes (53).

The figure-ground segregation principle therefore becomes a dynamic model for interpreting texts and images as it incorporates dual images within a cohesive whole, inviting varying perspectives and insights that result from the act of shifting. According to Shaun P. Vecera, Edward K. Vogel, and Geoffrey F. Woodman, we tend to learn not the literal things before us, but the relationships between those things. “Determining which regions are figures and which are grounds is an important visual process because everyday visual scenes contain multiple objects that often overlap and partially occlude one another,” they claim (194). Thus, we constantly compare one aspect to the other as a method of evaluating our surroundings.

The comparative process was first investigated in 1839 by French chemist, Michel-Eugene Chevreul, who discovered that the appearance of a color appeared to change depending on its background. Red, for instance, exhibits a different intensity when contrasted with a green background than it does when contrasted with an orange background. Roy Behrens notes that “[a]s a result of this phenomenon, there is no easy answer to the question ‘What is the true appearance of a color?’ Simultaneous contrast anticipated holism, in the sense that Gestaltists are likely to say that all such appearances of a color are legitimate, because we always experience perceptual wholes, not isolated parts. We never see figures . . . alone, only dynamic ‘figure-ground’ relationships” (300).

Figure-ground segregation models are based on the existence of parallelism, an essential quality of all language. Parallelism includes the notion of opposition, one of the three basic principles of Prague linguistics (the other principles are function and actualization). According to Lubomír Doležel and Jiri Kraus, poetic language continues to be defined along the lines of the Prague scholars, with “maximal actualization,” or foregrounding of the text, the goal. “A literary work of art is characterized by a dynamic balance, by tensions and automatized components. Automatization and actualization are not to be considered as two categories excluding one another, but rather as two antithetic powers which continually struggle for hegemony without the complete victory of either party,” they note (39-40).

Doležel and Kraus’s observation draws on Jakobson’s dictum that the poetic function “projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination” (Jakobson qtd. in Werth 24). While many of the theoretical ideas and methods of analysis advanced in the poststructuralist period drew on the structuralist thought of the Prague school, poststructuralists set out to revise structuralism. Peter Werth claims that there are limits in relying on structuralist approaches, especially concerning the concept of equivalence. For example, if lexical selections are based on equivalences such as similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, Werth argues that not “all linguistic parallelisms extracted from poetry necessarily have poetic relevance” (24) and that a literary work’s meaning is therefore not always derived from opposing aspects.⁹

Werth maintains that the effects in poetry that result from opposing aspects are closely bound up with the meaning of the poetry, thus any poetic analysis has as a prerequisite a semantic analysis. Yet while “[w]e can then distinguish between semantic effects (mimesis),

emphatic effects, and euphonious effects . . . the notion of ‘effect’ is still essentially subjective and beyond the present capabilities of linguistics,” Werth states (72). Furthermore, “since there are always a large number of different ways of expressing the same meaning, the choice of grammatical and phonetic combinations may be a wide one,” he adds (63).

In deconstruction, which was advanced by Jacques Derrida, binary oppositions are defined by their difference from each other, yet the “difference” can never be exactly defined. Instead, ultimate meaning is perpetually deferred. However, Derrida asserts that the aspects that form the dualistic opposition are mutually defining as each aspect complements the other, similarly to Rubin’s Vase. Binary oppositions are also hierarchical, with one aspect dominating the other. According to Susan Hubbard, from a deconstructionist perspective, there is not one inherent universal meaning in a text, as the positivist would like to proclaim, but rather two, which are at constant odds with each other. Meaning is derived through the process of “deferring’ to one another’s difference . . . from the opposition, as each one is what the other is not and with both parts acting as regulators for each other,” Hubbard states (par. 11). Hence, meaning involves an attached, contextual relationship between two aspects, with the aspect that assumes the literal “face value” meaning usually considered the dominant of the two.

Derrida argues that deeper, implied meanings are symbolically represented by the other aspect. “By allowing for two meanings to exist in tandem and to retain the meaning for both simultaneously without regard for dominance,” he asserts that we “deflate the hierarchy” and thereby alter the dynamics to prioritize the underlying meaning. Thus, through the “death of absolute proper naming” we recognize in a language “the other as pure other, invoking it as what it is, the death of pure idiom reserved for the unique,” he adds (110). He observes that

“deconstruction holds in it its power a sense of freedom—for it offers an almost limitless way of seeing how meaning may be created, perceived and appropriated . . . By recognizing the open-ended indefiniteness of textually—thus placing it in the abyss (*mettre en abime*), as the French expression would literally have it—shows us the lure of the abyss as freedom” (lxxvii).

Hubbard notes that Derrida’s ideas have been incorporated into today’s broader and less radical definition of deconstruction to include a bricolage of “feminist deconstruction, Marxist deconstruction, and the deconstruction techniques used by psychologists to affect a cure by studying a patient's personal narrative” (par. 14). While critics point out that deconstructive practices avoid clear concrete language and undermine clarity, deconstructionists claim that other values have taken precedence; mainly that textual interpretation involves a “multiplicity of meaning, thereby granting the reader a much richer experience than the one offered by the positivists,” she adds (par. 17).

My figure-ground segregation models provide a material structure that invites multiple ways of viewing the inner dynamics within a single work. By expanding the parameters to include the elements of art and composition as part of the literary interpretive process, the focus shifts to the discovery process of finding the multiple ways texts and images lend themselves to dualities of meaning, instead of focusing on one specific way. The dualities may overlap, contradict, or blend, adding a rich base to the interpretive process. Providing a figure-ground segregation model of a particular conflict, for example, allows students to pay close attention to “what happens at the dividing line [of differing positions], where one side meets the other side,” as Hayles asserts is essential to the meaning-making process (“Theory of a Different Order” 33).

Conflict, defined as the struggle between opposing forces, characters, or emotions, varies

from the subtle nuanced shifts in rhythm, tone, or perspective (divergence), to the intensity of a full-fledged war between two forces (clash). In all cases, conflict is considered the core ingredient of fiction as it reflects the point of difference between both aspects. By visually focusing on the point of difference within a duality, students can observe the contradictory qualities from which resolutions can then be generated. In most literary works there is more than one source of conflict. Some of these sources of conflict overlap or blend. Thus, several dualities can be considered at once.

The process involves bringing underlying dynamics to the foreground that may not be apparent in a traditional reading, yet when brought to the reader's attention generate added perspectives. Color-coding is one of the simplest ways to employ figure-ground analysis. Foregrounding selected words or phrases creates visible patterns from which students can compare and contrast various aspects. For example, the student might easily discern rhythmic patterns that shift between verse and prose, or beginning word sounds that shift between hard and soft, alliterative and non-alliterative sounds that underscore an author's purpose. By comparing and contrasting various elements within a work, students can obtain a comprehensive understanding of how a variety of elements combine to create meaning. Thus, figure-grounding works best when one does not rely on a single duality from which to study a work, but the combination of several dualities to allow a range of perspectives.

Comparing Aspects of Figure-Ground Segregation Models

Figure-ground analysis of literary terms through the presentation of visual images requires a basic understanding of how the elements of art and composition combine to create a

visual “language.” For example, on the color wheel, the “cool” colors combine with the “warm” colors to form a cohesive whole. By visually comparing and contrasting both aspects, with one aspect considered the “figure” and the other aspect considered the “ground,” the presence or absence of warm or cool colors in a literary work communicates a mood. The mood communicated involves an implied comparison with the aspect missing from the cohesive whole. Other art elements that can be compared and contrasted to evoke a response include line, shape, form, space, texture, and tone. The arrangement of the elements is called the composition. To interpret the composition of a work of art one considers the balance, gradation, repetition, contrast, harmony, dominance, and unity of the elements. A basic tutorial of the art elements and composition is included in Appendix B to assist students in understanding the qualities of each.

G. K. Chesterton asserts that the visual language of the painter is generated from patterns similar to those found at the origin of any kind of communication. “There is at the back of every artist’s mind something like a pattern or a type of architecture. The original quality in any man of imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of his dreams; the sort of world he would like to make or in which he would wish to wander; the strange flora and fauna of his own secret planet; the sort of thing he likes to think about,” Chesterton observes. “This general atmosphere, and pattern or structure of growth, governs all his creations, however varied,” he adds (53). Chesterton stresses that although the “colors” of remembered imagery fade with time, the forms that shape them remain fixed in every artist’s or writer’s mind, readily available to “speak out” both visually and textually.

Ezra Pound employed figure-ground analogies within his poems to evoke sharp images in the reader’s mind. He considered images as “patterns of forces” that underlie human existence,

with the “manipulation of symbols” lying at the heart of literary expression. By symbolically connecting an idea to an image, he created emotionally-charged, image-based poems, with one aspect yielding to another through a comparative discovery process. These “discoveries” result in clear, sharply delineated image the reader creates in her mind. The figure-ground process is evident in his Imagist poem, “In a Station of the Metro.” Pound reportedly saw many lovely faces one day at the Paris Metro and wrote down his visualization in near haiku form, foregrounding images as the dominant mode of discourse: “*The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough*” (Pound qtd. in Higginson 135).

In his first version of the poem, Pound used a colon to separate both lines, but later changed the colon to a semi-colon. The semi-colon reinforces the idea that one line does not merely reflect the other, but that both lines are distinct complementary aspects of the cohesive whole. The semi-colon also accentuates the symmetrical relationship between both lines as the reader shifts her focus from the description of faces to the mental image of faces, thus emphasizing the dynamic interplay of text and image. The interplay of text and image also underscores Pound’s definition of an image as “that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (Pound qtd. in Gillies 48). Thus, images are as inherent in texts as texts are inherent in images.

Pound argues that it “is the presentation of such a ‘complex’ instantaneity which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art” (48). He insists that images play a prominent role in thinking as well because they stimulate the flow of emotional energy into two kinds of mental patterns, subjective and objective. Subjective

images are created either externally or when “[i]ntense emotion causes patterns to arise in the mind,” he notes. The patterns can be caused by outside causes which, when drawn into the mind, become “fused, transmitted, and emerge in an Image unlike themselves,” Pound states (374). Objective images are created when an “[e]motion seizing up some external scene or action carries it intact to the mind” where it is purged except for “the dominant or dramatic qualities,” in which it then emerges similar to the original image, Pound adds. In either case, Pound asserts that “the Image is more than an idea. It is a vortex or cluster of fused ideas and is endowed with energy (Pound 374-75).

Pound believed images are as charged with meaning as is great literature. The “charge” comes from a current of raw, fully-felt, emotional energy. “[E]motion is a[n] organizer of form, not merely of visible forms and colors, but also of audible forms,” he states. “Poetry is a composition or an ‘organization’ of words set to ‘music,’” he adds (375). By juxtaposing concepts with mental imagery, he creates holistic, organized patterns that follow the same dynamic interplay between word and image as evident in figure-ground segregation models. His ideas underscore how figure-ground segregation models can assist readers in visualizing meaning whether through textual conceptual means or text-image analysis.

Jerome McGann asserts that when “pure, nonlanguage ideas” function textually, they commit themselves to fields of perception as well as to systems of conception” (178). He maintains that his scholarly explorations of textual space through deformance exercises that he began in the 1980s offer visual methods “to negotiate [the] disambiguated, fully commensurable signifying structures” (176) inherent in the physical organized patterns of texts. By

foregrounding hidden aspects, he brings to the reader's attention aspects she may have missed through a traditional textual interpretation.

His analysis of the "self-generation" and "self-transformation" in Gerard Manley Hopkins's sonnet, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire," as observed through its overlapping structure and complex systems of recursion, led him to define text as a simultaneous perceptual and conceptual event. McGann notes that while "[i]nformational texts seek to minimize their perceptual features in the belief that texts calling attention to their vehicular forms interfere with the transmission of their ideas," the material form is also subject to in-depth analysis (174).

McGann insists that works of art can also be analyzed through visual methods that discover underlying patterns. He cites an experiment he made applying filters to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings and noting how a number of his pictures and "almost all of his famous portraits of women, are dominated by patterns of interlocking vortices and spirals" (174). He surmises that Rossetti "plays numerous variations on these patterns, which are evidently the result of conscious purpose" but one which "has not been previously noticed or commented upon," but only "leaps into prominence when these random deformations are passed through the pictures" (174). He uses this example to offer a new process to analyze the hidden meanings of an image that demonstrate their multi-variate nature. First, he suggests we "expose characteristic formal features of pictorial works" as a means "to release perception from the spell of precisely these kinds of characteristic formal patterns." He asserts that this process allows for "a perception of different arrangements and patterns" that would yield multiple textual, pictorial, and auditory responses (174).

McGann applies the same methodology to textual interpretation: “While [text] may deploy ordered, even hierarchical structures of ideas, its object . . . is to play with and within such structures and not be consumed by them” (174). He notes that “all good writers learn to exploit the spatial fields of their texts” to generate meanings within the spatiotemporal fields (179). These fields are thus considered the “physical context” from which meaning is drawn—and are as such necessarily image-based.

McGann’s pioneering work in textual spatiotemporal fields has sparked discussion among media theorists since *Radiant Textuality* was published in 2001. Marjorie Perloff also sees the rich potential of the flexible tools of technology as a means to reveal fresh insights within texts and images, yet maintains that “no medium or technique of production can in itself give the poet (or other kind of artist) the inspiration or imagination to produce works of art.” Poets, in particular, employ language “that is somehow extraordinary” that can only be interpreted through careful re-readings. “Consequently,” Perloff notes, “the ‘new’ techniques whereby letters and words can move around the screen, break up, and reassemble, or whereby the reader / viewer can decide by a mere click to reformat the electronic text or which part of it to access, become merely tedious unless the poetry in question is, in Ezra Pound’s words, ‘charged with meaning’ (1). At the same time, Perloff sees a historical pattern of resistance every time “new” styles are introduced into the mainstream.¹⁰

McGann nonetheless argues that deformance exercises allow texts to expand beyond their established role as “containers of meaning” into “sets of rules (algorithms) for generating themselves: for discovering, organizing, and utilizing meanings and data” (138). He adds that the volatility and open-ended nature of electronic texts characterizes oral societies more than print

societies and that the lack of closure creates learning strategies that appeal to the process of analysis instead of the fixed result. Many of McGann's work in deformance and visual-space pattern exercises follows the playful spirit of OULIPO (French for OUvroir de LItterature POtentielle), founded in 1960 by French writers and mathematicians seeking to create new types of literary works.

The OULIPO group defines "littérature potentielle" as "the seeking of new structures and patterns . . . by writers in any way they enjoy" ("OULIPO" par. 6). The group argues that by following strict mathematically based rules designed to trigger ideas and inspiration, literature can be taught through intellectual games. For instance, *Exercises in Style*, written by Raymond Queneau, one of the founders of OULIPO, includes 99 retellings of a man witnessing a minor fight on a bus. Each story reflects a different style and tone, thus collectively demonstrating how one incident (the constraint) generates multiple points of view. McGann places particular emphasis on OULIPO games that combine linear-sequential thinking skills with spatial awareness as a combined approach to the development of higher order thinking skills. In the poem, "Snowball," for instance, each line is a single word, and each successive word is one letter longer. The name "Snowball" transforms into the visual theme of the poem, as the verb *snowball* means to *mount*, *soar*, or *increase*. Thus, the visual layout manifests the meaning.¹¹

McGann bases these exercises on the figure-ground segregation principle as well. By focusing on the hidden aspects of a literary work through various text alteration methods, he argues that new insights emerge. In the poem "Snowball" for example, the hidden aspect would include *any* aspect of the poem the student comes to realize through the interpretive process, such as the visual aspect of the theme, *snowball*, emerging while the student concentrates on the

theme emerging in the text. McGann stresses that comprehensive learning includes conventional as well as unconventional insights gleaned from text-image interconnections.

Privileging Meaning through Figure-Ground Segregation Models

The aspects within a story or image that captivate our attention also yield conventional as well as unconventional insights. Providing students with learning strategies that demonstrate how we intentionally or unintentionally privilege certain aspects adds a deeper dimension to understanding the text-image relationship. According to John Szarkowski, the early photographers of the late nineteenth century sought to use the details of a photograph as a method to tell the truth of a situation. A photographer “could not, outside the studio, pose the truth, he could only record it as he found it, and it was found in nature in a fragmented and unexplained form—not as a story, but as scattered and suggestive clues” (*The Photographer’s Eye* 3). The dilemma arose when the photographer could not assemble the fragments into a cohesive story, but only document each fragment in isolation.

Yet, by attempting to photograph fragments in ways that denoted meaning, photographers privileged information that had hitherto escaped attention. “The compelling clarity with which a photograph recorded the trivial suggested that the subject had never before been properly seen, that it was in fact perhaps not trivial, but filled with undiscovered meaning. If photographs could not be read as stories, they could be read as symbols,” Szarkowski notes (3). These emerging symbols challenged assumed positions of knowledge and had a profound affect on the meaning-making process. He claims that in today’s world, the photographer who succeeds in creating

meaning beyond simple significance exemplifies an artist “who seeks new structures in which to order and simplify his sense of the reality of life” (5).

However, in order to create “authentic” images, Szarkowski acknowledges that a photographer’s decision-making process of what fragments to include and what fragments to exclude reflects the photographer’s ability to use her “extended eye” (the lens) to find an “ideal point in space” that has no ideological bias as it captures “significant form.” Szarkowski concedes that this process remains a privileged point of view that is motivated by a “will to see” and thus, privilege, certain aspects in the framing process. Thus, how well a photographer succeeds in capturing an authentic instant in time without bias ultimately rests on the subjective decisions she makes to prioritize certain aspects, and is never a completely objective process (*Photography Until Now*, par. 15-18).¹²

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, writers undergo a similar subjective process of privileging information as they select words. He maintains that language is composed of complex propositions that can be deciphered into simple propositions that “picture” certain facts over others. Sentences are thus composites of “pictures of reality” (*Tractatus* 10). He maintains that the selection process, whether intentionally or otherwise, reflects the author’s previous store of knowledge. Likewise, the receiver’s individual store of knowledge affects the interpretive process. Since a store of knowledge varies from person to person, all levels of interpretation undergo a subjective process.

Wittgenstein uses the figure-ground analogy of the “Rabbit or Duck” illustration to demonstrate that the first image perceived in any figure-ground relationship reflects the viewer’s particular background as an essential part of the privileging process:

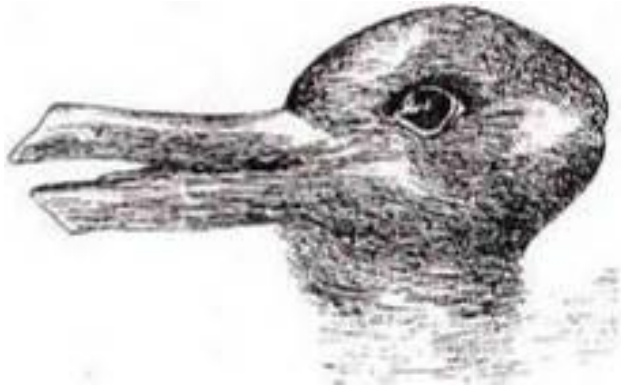


Figure 8: “Rabbit or Duck?” J. Jastrow, 1900

“I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience ‘noticing an aspect,’” Wittgenstein observes as he assumes the role of the viewer. The viewer then must “distinguish between the ‘continuous seeing’ of an aspect and the ‘dawning’ of an aspect,” Wittgenstein adds (193). In other words, the viewer concurrently sees two pictures, a rabbit and a duck, and does not notice that they are the same image. “Does it follow from this that I see something different in the two cases? It gives us a reason for using this expression, ‘I saw it quite differently; I should never have recognized it!’” he adds (193-94). Wittgenstein describes the alteration or “change of aspect” as similar to acts of perception in that the object appears to alter before the viewer’s eyes. Thus, “the expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a new perception and at the same time of the perception’s being unchanged. I suddenly see the solution of a puzzle-picture,” he notes (*Philosophical Investigations* 194-96).

Wittgenstein stresses that the point of *alteration* when one aspect emerges to dominate the initially more privileged aspect, provides both text and images with their richest potential. Once a viewer or reader becomes aware that all relationships are to some degree subjective and

that there is no absolute objectivity, the act of alteration—variously defined as change, difference, divergence, modification, shift—invites the audience to go beyond seeing text and images from one particular context to discover how meaning lends itself to other possibilities. Although Wittgenstein makes clear that “to be able to say that a point is black or white, I must first know under what conditions a point is called white or black” (*Tractatus* 10), his willingness to discover the conditions for a particular point of view includes a concurrent willingness to discover the conditions for a different point of view.¹³ Images studied in such ways thus become rich conveyers of meaning limited only by the “limits of the human mind” (10).

Roland Barthes also explores the potential of images as conveyers of multiple meanings. In *Image, Music, Text*, he challenges viewers to look beyond the informational and symbolic levels of images or texts to the “third” level in order to find the “obtuse” meaning. The obtuse meaning is based on the idea of the “punctum” which he defines as “a personal memory based on a private repertoire” that “stings the viewer” on an unconscious level through a detail or accident in the photograph. It “occurs when there is a match between a signifier in the scene (in the photograph), and a scene in the memory,” Barthes states (45). He urges the viewer to concentrate on what the seemingly insignificant details mean and how they function as signs to make explicit what is implicit. He also asserts that words and images do not occupy separate classes; rather, they participate in the cultural contexts that characterize the rich range of verbal language.¹⁴

Barthes’s insights invite supplemental heuristic methods of analysis that go beyond traditional hermeneutic practices, with the goal of fostering comprehensive learning. As Craig Saper points out in *Networked Art*, “[t]he literate ‘rhetorical stance’ presumes that rationality is an ‘essential characteristic’ of all people. This rationality depends on a sender-receiver model

with a tripartite distinction among writer, audience, and text . . . The text, or logos, is conceived of only in terms of logic. That logic, limited to either inductive or deductive reasoning, necessarily depends on a priori existence of a ‘probable’ reader” (6). For years, theorists have challenged that this is the only valid type of logic, especially when applied to artistic endeavors, where perception plays a key role, Saper states.

To facilitate the study of networked art, Saper proposes a new kind of rhetoric, an inventive rhetoric “that makes use of the variations, substitutions and multivalence without deciding on how these choices support a particular truth or argument.” Instead, it would build on “the fascinations or manias usually discarded by conventional reading practices” and allow “for the intensity, patience, and enigmatic disorganization necessary for generating associations” among the unconventional and less privileged aspects (7). Finding creative ways to generate fresh associations is an important approach toward fostering the student’s ability to critically read the “emotional language” inherent in images, as well as interpret the deeper meanings of images beyond the surface, conscious level, Saper maintains.

The ensuing chapters present interactive text-image learning strategies designed to generate fresh associations through privileging as a comprehensive approach to teaching AP Literature and Composition in the digital age. Some of these strategies are illuminated with student-oriented conceptual models. The models are followed by a theoretical analysis to explain their effectiveness in a classroom situation. The learning strategies begin by examining literary structure through figure-ground segregation analogies based on Reuven Tsur’s theories of cognitive poetics. Through structural models, the student is encouraged to understand the role contextual position plays in the meaning-making process. Basic literary terms such as point of

view, style, conflict, and theme are then introduced through figure-ground structures, with each learning strategy building upon the previous example. The visual examples include well-known paintings and photographs and the textual examples include similar literary passages that the student can expect to find on the AP Literature and Composition exam. The strategies focus on the discovery process of learning as a method to uncover the deeper meanings of texts and images beyond the surface level.

CHAPTER THREE: EXPLORING ALTERNATING PERSPECTIVES

Cognitive-Poetics and Literary Analysis

Reuven Tsur's "cognitive-poetic" concepts form the foundation of the figure-ground learning strategies in this chapter. While Tsur's methods are applied to the study of poetry, this chapter expands upon his ideas to include the study of text-image relationships as the basis for literary analysis. Tsur's models are grounded on reader-response methods that use Gestalt-inspired cognitive psychology strategies to analyze literary works. This method engages the reader in a close analysis of a text through a conceptual metaphor while acknowledging the role context plays in the formation of meaning. As noted in Chapter One, Tsur argues that the importance of shifting perspectives "is not so much the 'message' conveyed, but the insight resulting from the shift of mental sets" (par. 1).

Tsur observes how the alternating perspectives between figure and ground determine meaning in poetry. Noting that what is figural at any one moment depends on patterns of sensory stimulation and on the momentary interests of the perceiver he uses an analogy of the figure-ground relationship: "There was an old joke in Soviet Russia about a guard at the factory gate who at the end of every day saw a worker walking out with a wheelbarrow full of straw. Every day he thoroughly searched the contents of the wheelbarrow, but never found anything but straw. One day he asked the worker: "What do you gain by taking home all that straw?" "The wheelbarrows" (par. 1).

Tsur explains that although humans are "used to" thinking of the wheelbarrow as the "ground" and the "straw" as the figure, the default interest is "in the act, not in the instrument"

(par. 3). Thus, the meaning-making process results from the interaction between both aspects. He uses the analogy of the wheelbarrow and the straw to demonstrate how Shelley's poem, "A Song," exploits the "readiness of human perceivers to switch back and forth between figure and ground" to achieve its poetic effect. Note how the widow bird asserts herself as the figure in the first lines, and then observe the interplay between the widow bird and the qualities of deprivation that surround her:

"A Song"

A widow bird sat mourning for her love

Upon a wintry bough;

The frozen wind crept on above,

The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,

No flower upon the ground,

And little motion in the air

Tsur claims that the quality of deprivation is threaded through the poem with phrases and words such as *There is no . . . No . . . And little*. This quality then emerges in the last line with the phrase, *And little motion*, which Tsur states "herald[s] an unqualified statement that generates a psychological atmosphere of great certainty" (par. 2).

Tsur adds that the subsequent preposition *except* makes a "substantial leap" to the end of the poem, *the mill-wheel's sound*, to foreground the presence of air, which serves to reinforce the quality of deprivation. Tsur argues that the emerging quality of deprivation replaces "the psychological atmosphere of great certainty with a psychological atmosphere of *uncertainty*"

thus contributing to the emotional quality of the poem. He maintains that the emotional atmosphere “has been generated by the abstraction of certain qualities from parallel concrete items in the description” akin to a figure-ground segregation model (par. 2). He also notes that the mill-wheel’s sound typically serves as ground to an aural figure. Thus, by “forcing to the reader’s attention a percept that typically serves as ground, the poem increases the emotional quality of the perception, and emphasizes that *there is no* figure to be contemplated, thus reinforcing the quality of deprivation. The poem ends with a ground alone that Tsur notes “fades away” (par. 2).

Tsur’s work serves as a structural foundation for learning strategies that exploit the “readiness of human perceivers to switch back and forth between figure and ground” to achieve their intended effect. By comparing a literary work to a figure-ground visual structure, I create the groundwork by which students can understand the inner dynamics of a particular work. My strategies are illuminated with progressive student-oriented models that demonstrate how the shifting process itself allows one to see more than a single perspective within a cohesive whole. Thus, by focusing on one aspect of an image, a student may perceive a different perspective than when she focuses on the other aspect of the image. The meaning-making process is deepened when she is able to alternate between differing perspectives from which to form a new position.

The underlying figure-ground structure is intended to create an awareness of how the elements of art and principles of composition combine with text to create a wide range of meanings. The “meanings” can then be discovered through the application of key literary terms. This approach expands upon traditional critical analytical methods by drawing upon the perceptive powers of observation to allow for what Tsur describes as a “perceiving

consciousness” as a means to appreciate the full range of an artist or author’s expression. In my first learning model, the student examines how the same work of art can be variously interpreted by privileging certain aspects through figure-ground shifts.

Model 1: Alternating Aspects and Contextual Position



Figure 9: "School of Visual Arts" by Tony Palladino

1. Note the two distinct aspects of the painting: the colorful tunnel and the white space at the end of the tunnel.

2. List the visual qualities of each aspect, such as the artistic elements of color, line, and shape.
3. Compare and contrast the visual qualities between both aspects.
3. Create a caption that considers the colorful tunnel as the figure.
4. Create another caption that considers the white space at the end as the figure. Compare and contrast the captions and note how each reflects a contextual position.
5. The caption under the painting that reads, “It’s not the light at the end of the tunnel, it’s the light within.” Consider whether the caption implies that the white space is the figure, the ground, or a combination of both.
6. Consider the tunnel to be a metaphor of life, with the white space at the end a metaphor of eternity and / or death. Then, read the following quotes juxtaposed against the art and determine how the elements and composition of the painting shape each particular meaning. Also note in each instance, whether the tunnel or the white space is perceived as the figure. If the tunnel is initially perceived as the white space, note the exact place in the text where it shifts to the ground. If the white space is initially perceived as the figure, note the exact place in the text where it shifts to the ground. Note as well if more than one shift occurs. If so, note the exact place(s) in the text. Explain the insights that result from the shift(s) of mental sets.



Figure 10: "Life is a Dome"

“Life, like a dome of many colored glass, stains the white radiance of eternity.” –Percy Bysshe

Shelley



Figure 11: "How Small"

“How small a portion of our life it is that we really enjoy! In youth we are looking forward to things that are to come; in old age we are looking backward to things that are gone past; in manhood, although we appear indeed to be more occupied in things that are present, yet even that is too often absorbed in vague determinations to be vastly happy on some future day when we have time.” –Caleb C. Colton



Figure 12: "Life is a Beautiful Lane"

“Life is a beautiful . . . lane, on either side bright flowers, beautiful butterflies, and tempting fruits, which we scarcely pause to admire and taste, so eager are we to hasten to an opening which we imagine will be more beautiful still. But by degrees, as we advance, the trees grow bleak, and the flowers and butterflies fall, the fruits disappear, and we find we have arrived –to reach a desert waste.” –George Augustus Sai

Analysis: By first observing two distinct aspects of the painting—the colorful tunnel depicted with bold colorful lines and the small white tunnel that occupies the lower center of the painting—the student becomes aware of how visual elements shape meaning. The striking contrast between the expressionist style of the bold, colorful lines juxtaposed against the small, static white space suggests a range of contrasting artistic qualities, such as still versus moving, closed versus open, and colorful versus monochrome. These artistic qualities lend themselves to various literary interpretations. For example, *still versus moving* might transfer to the contrasting moods of exuberance versus tranquility, *closed versus open* might transfer to the contrasting

moods of trapped versus free, and *colorful versus monochrome* might transfer to the contrasting moods of bright versus dull, and so forth.

The composition reinforces the distinction between both aspects as well, with the progressively smaller lines leading the eye toward the white space. By then presenting the student with various captions, she interprets a range of possible meanings that demonstrate figure-ground reversals in accordance with a particular text. For example, the caption that begins with *Life is Beautiful* draws the eye to the colorful tunnel as a metaphor of a beautiful life. Then, the reader's attention is arrested by the words, *which we scarcely pause to admire and taste*. As she continues to travel down the tunnel *by degrees*, the white space at the end emerges from the ground until it represents the anti-thesis of a beautiful life—a *desert waste*.

In contrast, the white space in Figure 10 represents the *white radiance of eternity* and the tunnel represents *a dome of many colored glass*. While both are brilliant representations of life and death, the word *stains* adds an equivocal note to imply that life stains the brilliant qualities of death. The word *stains* also represents a point of alteration when both life and death are affected by the presence of the other.

The next model builds upon Tsur's premise that in order to interpret a literary work the reader must first assume a contextual position. Thus, when the contextual base shifts, an alteration in the reader's initially privileged perspective occurs. Discovering differing perspectives within a cohesive whole allows the reader to understand the complex interrelationship between context and meaning. The student is invited to assume varied perspectives through figure-ground analysis and then create her own expressions to support each perspective.

Model 2: Alternating Aspects and Character Perspective



Figure 13: "Flamingoes" by Sara Weaver

1. Note the two distinct aspects: the lone white flamingo and the surrounding group of pink flamingos.
2. List the visual qualities of each aspect, such as the artistic elements of color, line, and shape.
3. Compare and contrast the visual qualities between both aspects. For example, observe how the lone white flamingo contrasts with the group of pink flamingos.
4. Assume the white flamingo is the figure. Create a series of captions for the painting, with each making a statement about an individual who stands out in a crowd. Vary the connotations of the captions to express a range of meanings that an individual that stands out against a crowd can

mean. For example, one caption might simply read, “Steadfast,” while another might read, “It Takes Courage to Speak your Mind.”

5. Assume the pink flamingos are the figure. Create a series of captions from the white flamingo’s perspective, assuming he is the ground. Vary the connotations of the captions to express a range of meanings that reflect an individual who is overwhelmed by a crowd. One caption might read, for example, “It’s hard to make friends when you don’t look or act like anyone else,” while another might read, “Nobody understands me.” A third caption might express ambivalence: “Being Different Has Consequences.”

6. Shift the perspective from the white flamingo to the group. First assume the group is the figure. Create a series of captions from the group’s perspective to reflect the solidarity of the group in contrast to the lone bird. Follow the previous example to vary the connotations to express a range of meanings.

7. Assume the group is the ground and create another series of captions from the group’s perspective to reflect how a single individual can overwhelm the majority.

8. Compare and contrast the differing captions to note how contextual position affects perspective.

Analysis: Model 2 encourages the student to become an active participant in the meaning-making process by creating contextual positions through a series of writing exercises. Thus, the concepts in Model 1 are reinforced through writing practices that focus on the discovery processes that result from the shifts of mental sets from one aspect to the other. For example, the lone flamingo can variously be perceived as a courageous individual who dares expressing her unique point of

view to an outcast shunned for being an anomaly. The varying visual connotations are reinforced by titles that reflect the themes of each interpretation. The rich range of perspectives demonstrates the interrelationship between meaning and context, with art playing a major role in the meaning-making process.

The next section explores the key literary term, conflict, through similar figure-ground dynamics. These dynamics explore how privileging certain aspects of texts and images affects the interpretive process of all types of conflict.

Exploring Figure-Ground Dynamics through Conflict

“Conflict is the fundamental element of fiction, fundamental because in literature only trouble is interesting. It takes trouble to turn the great themes of life into a story: birth, love, sex, work, and death.” –Janet Burroway, *Writing Fiction*

Conflict, the core ingredient in fiction, reflects the struggle that grows out of the interplay of two opposing characters, forces, and/or emotions. Conflict varies from the subtle nuanced shifts in rhythm, tone, or perspective, to the intensity of a full-fledged war between two forces. Internal conflict refers to the protagonist undergoing an emotional struggle, whereas external conflict refers to an antagonist or outside force preventing her from achieving her goal. Conflict provides the interest, suspense, and tension that drive the story. Janet Burroway defines conflict as “the raw material out of which plot is constructed” (*A Handbook of Literature* 115-16). The plot is the sequence of events in a story, with the climax considered the highest moment of conflict. The plot generally asks *What does my character want?* and *What stands in the way?*

The conflict consists of the obstacles that prevent the character from achieving her goals. Many writers consider conflict the most important ingredient of fiction. The ancient Greeks first described conflict in literature as the *agon*, or central contest in tragedy. In order to hold the reader's interest, the hero must have a single conflict against a villain. The word protagonist means "first fighter," which implies a struggle.

Modern critics argue that the *agon* is still the central unit of the plot. They assert that the greater the contest or dispute between two characters, the greater the value of the drama. In both internal and external conflict, the antagonist must challenge the protagonist and must appear to overpower her. Similarly, when superheroes enter the action, equally villainous characters must be created to counter them or the drama is not evenly pitted and loses its tension. Most forms of conflict are analogous to figure-ground relationships in which each point of view tries to assert itself as the figure and reduce the other to the ground.

Yet, strong narrative plots require both the figure and the ground to be richly complex and interactive before the reader predicts conclusions. In this sense, conflict requires an essential balance between both aspects. Conflict must also have the right dynamics to propel the reader forward in a quest to find out what happens next. According to Burroway, "Underlying any good story, fiction or true, is a deeper pattern of change, a pattern of connection and disconnection ... an emotional tide, the ebb and flow of human connection (38). Conflict reflects the point of divergence between both aspects, whether subtle or pronounced. The point of divergence generates friction between both aspects and forms the structural foundation for figure-ground analysis.

While most students can easily identify the core conflict within a story, it requires a discerning eye to discover the more subtle forms of conflict. In such cases, a visual analysis clarifies the point of divergence between two aspects. For example, one can explore the underlying conflict of Elizabeth Bishop's poem, "Sestina," by dividing it into the two main aspects that form the point of divergence: **Spring** and **Autumn**. **Spring** represents **Life** and **Autumn** represents **Death**. Thus, the conflict stems from the duality of **Life** versus **Death**. The old grandmother, who yearns to continue to nurture her young grandson, personifies the struggle as she faces—variously with "dark tears" and equanimity—her imminent death:

"Sestina" by Elizabeth Bishop
September rain falls on the house.
In the failing light, the old grandmother
sits in the kitchen with the child
beside the Little Marvel Stove,
(5) reading the jokes from the almanac,
laughing and talking to hide her tears.

She thinks that her equinoctial tears
and the rain that beats on the roof of the house
were both foretold by the almanac,
(10) but only known to a grandmother.
The iron kettle sings on the stove.
She cuts some bread and says to the child,

It's time for tea now; but the child
is watching the teakettle's small hard tears
(15) dance like mad on the hot black stove,
the way the rain must dance on the house.
Tidying up, the old grandmother
hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac
(20) hovers half open above the child,
hovers above the old grandmother
and her teacup full of dark brown tears.
She shivers and says she thinks the house
feels chilly, and puts more wood in the stove.

(25) *It was to be*, says the Marvel Stove.
I know what I know, says the almanac.
With crayons the child draws a rigid house
and a winding pathway. Then the child
puts in a man with buttons like tears
(30) and shows it proudly to the grandmother.

But secretly, while the grandmother
busies herself about the stove,
the little moons fall down like tears
from between the pages of the almanac
(35) into the flower bed the child
has carefully placed in the front of the house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.
The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove
and the child draws another inscrutable house.

The old grandmother in the story describes her tears as *equinoctial*, connoting the violent storm that occurs near the time of the equinox, the division that separates the year into two aspects, in this case between spring and autumn. Thus, *equinoctial* suggests a split between **spring** and **autumn**. The aspect of **spring** is personified by the **young grandson** and the aspect of **autumn** is personified by the **old grandmother**. Both aspects are inherently connected, much like the diametrically-opposed colors **green** and **red** are connected on the color wheel:

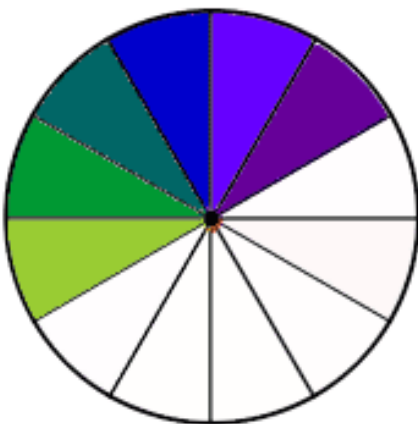
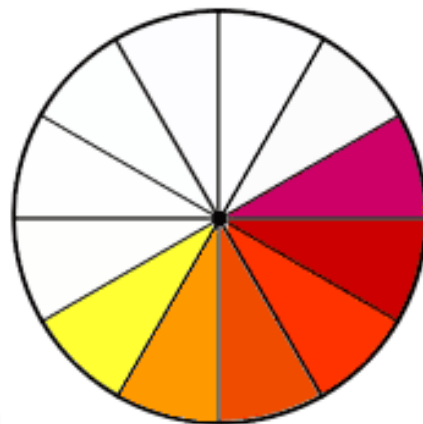


Figure 14: "Cool Colors"



10 .
Figure 15: "Warm Colors"

In “Sestina,” the split between the young grandson (**spring**) and the old grandmother (**autumn**) forms the point of divergence, upon which the conflict is based. The conflict is the old grandmother’s awareness of her approaching death, which will prevent her from taking care of her young grandson. The primary conflict, Life versus Death, falls under the greater category of Man versus Nature. The personification of death extends beyond the old grandmother to include the September *rain* that falls down on everything, from the ordinary house, to the *rain* of equinoctial tears the old grandmother is unable to stop, to the *small hard tears that dance like mad* on the supernatural talking stove.

The small hard tears that dance (and are thus transformed to steam) on the stove launch the shift from the sustaining powers of life to the inevitability of death. The tears symbolize the bittersweet knowledge gained by experience, which, as they escape the grandmother’s eyes, become planted in the child’s flower bed that he will later sow when he, too, becomes old. Even though the grandmother attempts to put more wood on the stove—to counter the chill of the approaching winter of “death,” she realizes that she cannot stop the natural rhythm of life / death. Meanwhile, the grandson is fascinated by the wonders of life. The wonders reveal themselves in both ordinary and startling ways; much like new growth whimsically reveals itself in spring.

By color-coding the “voices” of both seasons as personified by the old grandmother and her young grandson, the conflict of Life versus Death is visually evident, with each aspect attempting to assert itself. Yet, as the poem progresses, the conflicting voices begin to merge. For instance, *the little moons fall down like tears / from between the pages of the almanac / into*

the flower bed the child has carefully placed in the front of the house might reflect the cold, stony moon-like tears (a symbol of death) falling from the almanac (a symbol of knowledge of the forces of life/death) and planted as seeds (a symbol of life) into the flower bed. The child has carefully placed the flower bed in front of the house, thus “planting” tears that represented death into the processes that bring forth life. Thus, the conflict of Life (**spring**) versus Death (**autumn**) become resolved with the understanding that Death is an inherent aspect of Life just as Life is an inherent aspect of Death.

Red: aspects of fall/death

Green: aspects of spring/life

Purple: aspects of both life/death

September rain falls on the house.
In the failing light, the old grandmother
sits in the kitchen with the child
beside the Little Marvel Stove,*
(5) reading the jokes from the almanac,
laughing and talking to hide her tears.

She thinks that her equinoctial tears
and the rain that beats on the roof of the house
were both foretold by the almanac,
(10) but only known to a grandmother.
The iron kettle sings on the stove.
She cuts some bread and says to the child,

It's time for tea now; but the child
is watching the teakettle's small hard tears
(15) dance like mad on the hot black stove,
the way the rain must dance on the house.
Tidying up, the old grandmother
hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac
(20) hovers half open above the child,
hovers above the old grandmother

and her teacup full of dark brown tears.
She shivers and says she thinks the house
feels chilly, and puts more wood in the stove.

- (25) *It was to be*, says the Marvel Stove.
I know what I know, says the almanac.
With crayons the child draws a rigid house
and a winding pathway. Then the child
puts in a man with buttons like tears
(30) and shows it proudly to the grandmother.

- But secretly, while the grandmother
busies herself about the stove,
the little moons fall down like tears
from between the pages of the almanac
(35) into the flower bed the child
has carefully placed in the front of the house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.
The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove
and the child draws another inscrutable house.

Most conflicts arise from one or more of the following thematic dualities: Appearance versus Reality, Good versus Evil, Joy versus Sorrow, Knowledge versus Ignorance, Harmony versus Chaos, Innocence versus Experience, Life versus Death, Free Will versus Fate, Madness versus Sanity, Love versus Hate, Youth versus Old Age, and The Known versus The Unknown. As noted in the analysis of “Sestina,” engaging conflicts require the reader to alternately shift her attention from one aspect of the conflict to the other, gaining insights from each perspective until she is able to interpret the resolution. The wisdom gained from the resolution of the conflict reflects the theme that emerges from the story. Major thematic categories of conflict are grouped under six main headings, each with man in opposition to a character, force, and/or emotion. Often, in a strong literary works, these categories overlap:

- (A) Man versus Himself
- (B) Man versus Man
- (C) Man versus Society
- (D) Man versus Nature
- (E) Man versus Machine
- (F) Man versus Fate

The next model explores each of these categories by asking the student to discover a duality within each image and create an imagined conflict. Thus, within a given structure, she can begin to explore style and theme through the core literature element of conflict.

Model 3: Alternating Aspects and Visualizing Conflict

1. Each of the following images exemplifies one of the six thematic categories listed above. Study each image and create an imagined conflict based on the theme category. Write a paragraph explaining each aspect of the imagined conflict. The details should include the objects within each visual as well as reflect the mood created through the artistic elements and composition.
2. Write five paragraphs of the beginning of an imagined story for each of the six images. Use details of the images to support your basic conflict. Make sure to achieve a sense of balance for each story by carefully pitting both aspects against one another, with the conflict clearly evident as a struggle between the two characters, forces, ideas, and/or emotions.

A. Man versus Himself



Figure 16: "My Two Faces"

B. Man versus Man



Figure 17: "Marine Debut" by Burke Uzzle

C. Man versus Society



Figure 18: "Homeless Man Begging for Food"

D. Man versus Nature



Figure 19: "After the Apocalypse" by Rodrigo Arangua

C. Man versus Machine



Figure 20: "Clarence Wool, 11 year-old spinner in North Pownal Cotton Mill, 1910" by Lewis Hines

F. Man versus Fate



Figure 21: "Silent Homage to Fallen Coast Guard Man" by NARA, 1942

Analysis: Each image invites the reader to perceive a duality through the art elements of shading, line, shape, and/or texture, as well as the composition of these elements, such as proportion and balance. By visualizing dualities within a unified image, the student creates her own imagined stories by observing how the details within each aspect compare and contrast to reveal conflict, the core ingredient of fiction. For example, in Figure 20, the components of large machinery create one aspect, while two small boys create the other aspect. Both boys have their hands placed on the machinery in unison as if they are manifestations of the machines they operate. Both boys also wear hats, a type of apparel one normally associates with older males. Thus, the hats might symbolize the boys' premature manhood. The hats might also reflect how the boys protect themselves from their mechanical surroundings as well as how they integrate themselves with the machinery.

One of the boys is barefoot. The visual image of his small bare feet as he stands on the large machine creates a visual contrast of the vulnerable qualities of flesh against the indomitable qualities of metal, thus reinforcing the Man versus Machine duality. An imagined story might begin with the moment the small boy's bare feet touch the cold metal of the spinning machine. Visual elements of light versus dark reinforce the Man versus Machine duality. For example, the main source of light comes from the window beyond the room where the boys are working, symbolizing a realm of freedom beyond their reach. Encouraging the student to find as many dualities within the image as possible and then alternate between the dualities adds depth and dimension to the story possibilities. The next section explores how theme and epiphany are generated by the dynamics of conflict.

Discovering Thematic Connections through Alternating Aspects of Conflict

*“We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our
exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the
first time.”* –T. S. Eliot “Four Quartets”

A story’s theme refers to its revelation of a universal truth. A theme emerges from a major conflict and may be stated as the wisdom gained from the resolution of the conflict. A theme is rarely stated directly; usually the writer leads the reader to discover the basic truth for herself, such as an awareness of the difference between what ought to be and what is. Consider the quote by renowned children’s author, Paula Fox: “A lie hides the truth; a story tries to find it.” A theme differs from a fable, which is a short story that teaches an important lesson, usually through a moral. A moral relates to issues of right and wrong and points toward a path of how humans “should” behave according to societal codes of conduct.

While a moral points toward a specific direction, a theme is open-ended and leads toward multiple points of discovery. These points of discovery are called epiphanies and may reveal any aspect of human nature. If the story succeeds, the reader, along with the characters, gains significant insights about the human condition. Insights pertaining to human nature can also be themes, such as “the forcefulness of love” in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The tragedy takes place in less than 48 hours, propelled by a passionate and obsessive love. The two lovers become so absorbed with their love for one another that they defy their family, friends, and government, and then take their own lives at the end so that they may be together in death, if not in life.

Themes include abstract concepts explored in a literary work such as love, jealousy, honor, or fear; frequently recurring ideas, such as *carpe diem*; and/or the repetition of a

meaningful element in a work, such as references to blindness in *Oedipus Rex*. Important works of literature contain more than one theme that the reader discovers through a series of epiphany moments. These moments build into a cohesive whole. The following image exemplifies how the concept of Death thematically underlies a conflict between two judges:



Figure 22: "Judge" by Gilliam, 1894

A dynamic figure-ground interplay underscores two judges that have differing viewpoints of Woodrow Wilson's Tariff Bill. A human skull embedded into the background symbolizes Death, thus thematically underscoring the connotation that the conflict between the judges is connected to a deeper conflict of the merits of the bill itself.

The next image demonstrates how the theme exemplified by the title, "Forever Young," connects all aspects of the image into a cohesive whole:



Figure 23: "Forever Always" by Octavio Ocampo

In this example, the eye may be drawn first into the overall theme that involves a relationship between the man and the woman. The eye may next discover the vase that emerges from the background into the foreground as a symbol of this relationship. Other details might then emerge, such as the plate of limes and the glass of tequila. Artist Octavio Ocampo adds depth to the two faces by including a younger woman within the face of the old woman and a younger man within the face of the old man.

Titling his work, "Forever Always," Ocampo asserts that the couple still sees each other as they did in their youth when the man wooed his wife with serenades. A beautiful youthful image of the woman flows from his ear and "the cup of love" dominates the space between the couple (Block 63). Ocampo states that by contrasting old age versus youth in multi-layered ways,

he sought to add depth and dimension to the overriding theme of enduring love against the impermanence of the flesh. By combining dualities, such as the light versus dark, youth versus old age, permanence versus transience, an instructor invites the student to imagine a conflict based on an elderly couple's desire to immortalize their past. The next model explores how textual aspects create conflict through similar embedded patterns, from which multiple themes can then be interpreted.

Model 4: Exploring Theme through Contrasting Symbols in Yeats' "Lines Written in Dejection"

In "Lines Written in Dejection," William Butler Yeats provides the first indication of theme in his title. The word *dejection* reflects the internal conflict the narrator faces as he realizes his youth is fading and is not willing to enter the *embittered sun* of his old age. Yeats uses the **moon** as a symbol of the imaginative qualities associated with the narrator's youth and the **sun** as a symbol of the realistic qualities associated with the narrator's imminent adulthood. The conflict is reflected in the *dejection* the narrator feels as he is forced to succumb to the laws of nature. Note how Yeats begins with the **moon** as the figure and the **sun** as the ground and then observe how he reveals the theme of dejection through the interplay of both aspects. Note as well as the interplay heighten the narrator's internal conflict as one aspect of his life is pitted against the approaching other:

When have I last looked on

The round green eyes and the long wavering bodies

Of the dark leopards of the moon?

All the wild witches, those most noble ladies,

For all their broom-sticks and their tears,

Their angry tears, are gone.

The holy centaurs of the hills are vanished;

I have nothing but the embittered sun;

Banished heroic mother moon and vanished,

And now that I have come to fifty years

I must endure the timid sun.

1. List the qualities of the moon and explain how they symbolize youth.
2. List the qualities of the sun and explain how they symbolize advancing age.
3. Explain how the sudden shift of the last two lines reinforces the internal conflict between the man's youth and his advancing age.
4. Explain how each of the yellow lines leads toward the resolution of the narrator's internal conflict.
5. Write two distinct themes evident from the resolution of the conflict and of the poem, and explain how each reveals a particular perspective. Relate each theme to the overriding theme of *dejection*.

Analysis: Color-coding the opposing qualities of youth and advancing age heightens the differing qualities, thereby revealing the narrator's struggle to hold on to his youth as he succumbs to old age. By encouraging the student to write two distinct themes, she must evaluate the conflict from at least two perspectives. This skill requires her to pay particular attention to key words such as *embittered* and *timid* to interpret the finer shades of meaning, as the conflict is an internal resistance towards inevitable change, revealed through the narrator's attitude. At

first, the narrator becomes aware that he has lost his youth, and thus, has *nothing*. Then, as he continues to ponder his inevitable situation, he struggles to face it. The theme of *dejection* can be variously interpreted as the narrator's surrender to his "fate," or as a courageous desire to make the best of his situation.

The next model explores how a visual story's theme shifts depending on contextual position. This model builds upon the student's ability to understand and create imagined conflicts as a foundation from which to develop multiple themes. The student must pay close attention to visual cues to accurately express her observations in written form.

Model 5: Alternating Aspects and Visualizing Theme



Figure 24: "Shades" by Katie Weaver

1. Note the two distinct aspects, the tree and the tombstones. List the ways the tree and the tombstones are similar in shading, line, shape, and/or texture.
3. List the ways the tree and the tombstones are different in shading, line, shape, and/or texture.

4. List the ways the fence and the natural background of foliage are similar in shading, line, shape, and/or texture.
5. List the ways the fence and the natural background are different in the above elements.
6. Explain the various dualities that might be determined through the art elements, as well as the composition of these elements
7. What theme is suggested when the tree is perceived as the figure?
8. What theme is suggested when the tombstones are perceived as the figure?
9. Note the title, “Shades.” Explain the various meanings of the word and how the title thematically reflects the image.
10. Write an original caption that reflects a theme that assumes the tree is the figure.
11. Write an original caption that reflects a theme that assumes the tree is the ground.
12. Reflect on the significance of how shifting your focus between various aspects perceived as figure and ground influences your interpretation. Explain what distinctly different perspectives you were able to determine through shifts in focus.

Analysis: By studying the visual qualities that characterize both aspects of the image, Man and Nature, the student creates a theme that reflects an imagined conflict. She might note, for example, the whimsically curved lines of the massive oak against the clean-cut lines of the tombstones, from which to interpret a theme that reflects upon Nature’s ability to seek its own course, versus Man’s more constricted role in shaping his destiny. Other comparatives might be observed, such as the visibility of the massive tree contrasted with the invisibility of the “men” who are signified only by tombstones, or the neatly mown grass and the sharply delineated lines

of the tombstones, contrasted against the sprawling, unchecked growth of the tree that dominates the frame.

When asked to assume that the tree is the figure, the student might variously interpret a theme that reflects the looming or protective presence of the tree that outlives the men buried underneath it. When asked to assume that the tombstones are the figure, the student might interpret a theme that reflects how the enduring aspects of the stone-crafted tombstones symbolize an eternal world beyond the scope of the living tree. Thus, the theme of a work expands beyond a single, definable quality.

The next model invites the student to create fictional stories based on the dualities perceived in a series of images. The student first creates an imagined conflict between the dual aspects of the images and then interweaves the accompanying textual and visual details to support her conflict. She is asked to vary her responses by shifting her perspective from the aspect she first perceives as figure to foreground the aspect she first perceives as ground. Each written response must show evidence of an emerging theme.

Model 6: Creating Stories through Alternating Aspects using Visual and Textual Clues

1. Explain how Figure 24 exemplifies a duality of a major conflict category. Use visual details and textual details to support your explanations.
2. Write five opening paragraphs of a short story based on the particular conflict category you have chosen. Although the paragraphs are fictional, they must be based upon the brief commentary accompanying the image. Create each story from the perspective of the aspect you perceive as the figure. Use visual details from the images to support your conflicts.

3. Repeat the exercise from the opposite perspective, foregrounding the aspect you first perceive as the ground. Explain how alternating perspectives affects the themes of your stories.



Figure 25: “Firebird” by Farrell Grehan

“Gelsey Kirkland, 17, with choreographer George Balanchine, preparing for Stravinsky’s *Firebird*, New York City, 1970” (*The Great Life Photographers* 218)

Analysis: The student expands upon her knowledge to create believable conflicts and imagined stories based on the dualities she is able to discover from textual and visual clues. Dualities might include the theme of solitude versus camaraderie. A beginning storyline might explore what solitude entails. For instance, she might observe the solitude of the actress in “Firebird” as she is about to perform and the pressure she feels just before she goes onstage. She might variously feel a sense of camaraderie with the men who surround her, assisting her. Or she may feel even more alone as they suffocate and overwhelm her by controlling her every move. The student might write from the viewpoint of the men as well. She might note how hard they are

working together to make their show a success, or how they only appear to be working together as each one covets the girl. What is important is that the student becomes aware of how perspectives can shift within a duality and how each shift invites new story possibilities within a single frame of reference. The next section explores how epiphany moments result from a shift in mental sets. Discovering epiphany moments require a deep understanding of theme, as well as other literary terms such as foreshadowing.

Discovering Epiphany Moments through Alternating Figure-Ground Perspectives

An epiphany refers to a sudden moment of awareness when a new perspective emerges. Usually true epiphanies occur only a few times in a person's lifetime. However, small epiphanies can occur many times in an ordinary day. Many writers and artists shape stories and images around epiphany moments. These moments are analogous to the shift that occurs in a figure-ground relationship when the aspect the reader/viewer first perceives as the ground suddenly emerges as the figure, thus offering a fresh perspective. Epiphany moments dramatically reveal themes the author skillfully foreshadows, but that lurk just under the surface, waiting to be uncovered. The following image exemplifies this concept. Building from the concept in "Rabbit or Duck?" whereupon two images exist within a greater whole, the initially perceived image appears to alter as the viewer perceives it differently. Thus, the student may first perceive a frog when viewing the image from a particular context, yet, upon deeper reflection, may note that her perception changes when she shifts her perspective of the same image:



Figure 26: "Frog?"

The defining moment when the student realizes the first creature they perceive (generally a frog) is also another image (generally a horse) is analogous to an epiphany moment in which a fresh perspective is realized *within* the boundaries of the predictable. Thus, the image remains the same, but is perceived differently:

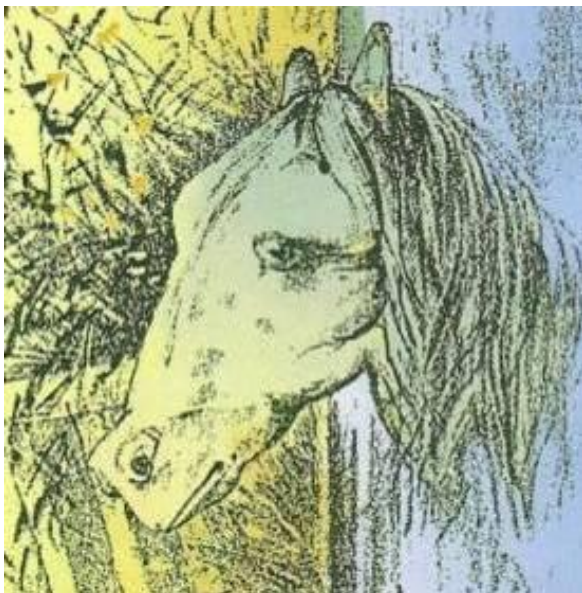


Figure 27: "Horse?"

Skillful writing foreshadows epiphany moments in a likewise fashion by embedding all the clues of what is to come in the early parts of a literary work. The reader must discover these clues to predict what will emerge as the story progresses, thus providing a different perspective of the same situation.

Most authors provide clues to foreshadow what will happen in a story. Yet they stop short of giving away too many clues so that the reader may participate in the discovery process. Note how author James Hurst contrasts phrases (figure-ground shifts) to foreshadow the relationship between two brothers in the opening paragraph of “The Scarlet Ibis.” In the first sentence he describes the setting as the *clove* of seasons, foreshadowing a split between the actual seasons as well as the figurative seasons of life. Note how he interweaves metaphors of summer (life-giving) with metaphors of autumn (death-inducing) to provide clues that the story involves the interconnection between life and death:

It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been born, that the ibis lit in the bleeding tree. The flower garden was stained with rotting brown magnolia petals and ironweeds grew rank amid the purple phlox. The five o’clocks by the chimney still marked time, but the oriole nest in the elm was untenanted and rocked back and forth like an empty cradle. The last graveyard flowers were blooming, and their smell drifted across the cotton field and through every room of our house, speaking softly the names of our dead. It’s strange that all this is still so clear to me, now that that summer has since fled and time has had its way. A grindstone stands where the bleeding tree stood, just outside the kitchen door, and now if an oriole sings in the elm, its song seems to die up in the leaves, a silvery dust.

The next model uses the first paragraph of “The Scarlet Ibis” as a starting point to assist the student in predicting the epiphany moment that occurs later in the story.

Model 7: Discovering Foreshadowing Clues in James Hurst’s “The Scarlet Ibis”

1. Provide several specific examples of the contrast between Life and Death evident in the opening paragraph of “The Scarlet Ibis.”
2. Using the clues in the opening paragraph, predict as much as you can about the epiphany moment the main character will come to realize by the story’s end. Keep in mind that a story’s title often indicates theme. Scarlet ibises are exotic birds normally found in tropical areas and the story takes place in South Carolina. A rare storm brings the unusual bird to the setting of this story. The narrator of the story is the older brother of a disabled sibling whom he tries to “normalize.” The scarlet ibis becomes a metaphor for the younger boy, especially at the major epiphany moment that takes place during a storm toward the end of the story.
3. Reread the opening paragraph. The metaphors of life are highlighted in green and the metaphors of death are highlighted in red. Which of these metaphors could also be metaphors of the opposite color? Explain what this ambiguity suggests.

Analysis: This model draws the student into the finer complexities of figure-ground analysis by noting the varied meanings within each aspect of a duality. By color-coding both aspects, the student notes how the interwoven pattern thematically reflects the interconnectedness of Life and Death. While Life and Death are distinct aspects in some sentences, such as, *The last graveyard flowers were blooming*, the qualities begin to blur in others, suggesting a deeper pattern of interconnectedness whereupon one quality is imbued with the characteristics of the other. For

example, the author states that the smell of the “blooming” graveyard flowers permeates every room of the house, while the personified flowers softly speak the names of the dead. Thus, the flowers “bloom” with death. By blending the aspects of life with the aspects of death, the student becomes aware that death will likewise “bloom” in the story.

The Gestalt-inspired figure-ground models presented in this chapter demonstrate how contextual position influences perspective. The student becomes an active participant in the meaning-making process by discovering through text-image models how key literary terms lend themselves to visual structures within literary works. These structures, based on the concept of privileging, form alternating aspects from which insights can be gleaned. The literary terms include conflict, point of view, theme, epiphany, and foreshadowing. The next chapter examines how juxtapositioning a range of differing aspects allows the student to see beyond surface levels to the deeper, less obvious aspects of a literary work. By privileging both the obvious and the more obscure aspects, the student notes the rich range of meaning inherent within literary works.

CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THROUGH JUXTAPOSITION

Generating New Perspectives through Juxtapositioning

This chapter explores new perspectives generated through figure-ground comparatives based on juxtaposition. The strategies are grounded on N. Katherine Hayles' assertion that we must see beyond surface levels in order to understand the underlying complexities within a literary work. This process requires us to interact with aspects that are at first less obvious than what we first perceive, yet when explored through comparatives, reveal themselves to be integral components of a greater whole. Thus, our understanding of what we first "see" reflects only one aspect of a deeper realization that is generated through an interaction with those aspects that first escape our attention. Juxtapositioning also allows us to concurrently reflect upon the rich range of meaning within a single term or idea. Key terms explored through juxtaposition strategies in this chapter include conflict, theme, point of view, setting, character. The student is encouraged to observe how these terms interrelate to create multiple levels of meaning.

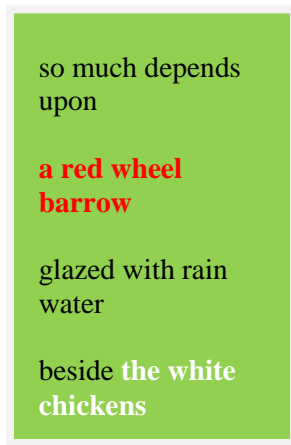
Juxtaposition refers to the act of placing two or more aspects side by side to imply a comparison or contrast between normally unassociated ideas, words or images. Traditionally considered a visual term, when applied to literature, juxtaposition compels the reader to consider associative meanings by alternating the focus between contrasting values. As each aspect competes for attention, the intensity between its opposing aspect increases. The competition serves to exaggerate the differences between both aspects while strengthening the qualities of

each. Note, for instance, how Charles Dickens' challenges a reader to consider complementary aspects at once in the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities*:

It was **the best of times**, it was **the worst of times**, it was **the age of wisdom**, it was **the age of foolishness**, it was **the epoch of belief**, it was **the epoch of incredulity**, it was **the season of Light**, it was **the season of Darkness**, it was **the spring of hope**, it was **the winter of despair**, **we had everything before us**, **we had nothing before us**, **we were all going direct to heaven**, **we were all going direct the other way**.

By presenting dual aspects of a particular event, Dickens arrests the reader's curiosity by compelling her to reflect on divergent aspects. A *time* can be considered paradoxically *the best of times* and *the worst of times*. By contemplating both aspects concurrently, the reader is able to broaden her perspective of what a single word might mean.

In modern poetry, juxtaposing contrasting images likewise arrests the reader's curiosity. Consider how William Carlos Williams uses color imagery in his poem, *The Red Wheelbarrow*. Although he wrote the poem in black and white text, he invites the reader to visualize the colors as a method of heightening the contrasts between the disparate images:



so much depends
upon
**a red wheel
barrow**
glazed with rain
water
beside **the white
chickens**

Figure 28: "The Red Wheel Barrow"

In visual images, juxtaposing color against a contrasting background may also awaken the viewer's curiosity by foregrounding particular characteristics. These characteristics may symbolically suggest meanings that might not otherwise be noted. For example, the "warm" color red might suggest the bold, aesthetically pleasing presence of a red wheel barrow juxtaposed beside white chickens as a reassuring symbol of farm life. In a different context, however, the color red might also suggest blood, passion, or violence. Skillful writers and artists employing contrasting colors within a single work as a means of heightening an intended effect.

For example, the workers in the following image stand in rigid rows, with each wearing exactly the same uniform. Their backs are turned away from one another and their faces are hidden beneath their hats. Collectively, they appear as mechanized as the dull gray machines they are connected to. Yet, by adding red only to their uniforms, the photographer creates a visual image of them standing out from their dull gray world, thus using a contrasting color to pique the viewer's curiosity. The red of their uniforms may variously suggest hidden passions within them, or their lifeblood being drained away by their mechanized environment:



Figure 29: "Factory Workers" by Stephen Wilkes

Sometimes writers and artists juxtapose ideas or images to achieve humorous or startling effects as two distinct images share the same space:



Figure 30: “Red Chameleon” by Takko Jima



Figure 31: “Bullet Proof” by Elliot Erwitt



Figure 32: “Taking Strides” by Elliot Erwitte

Juxtapositioning disparate images also creates the potential for poignant stories:



Figure 33: “Dreams of Youth” by Nana Sousa Dias

In Figure 33 the juxtapositioning of the dark-clothed man with the blurry, gray silhouettes might be interpreted as an older, solitary man contemplating the lost, unattainable dreams of his youth as he continues his journey in a different direction. Skillfully employed, juxtapositioning serves to heighten the rich range of contradiction within an entity. The next section explores how juxtapositioning creates strong thematic statements.

Visualizing Theme through Juxtaposed Images

Marcel O’Gorman maintains that by encapsulating an essential ambivalence within an entity, words and images “engage in an endless contest for meaning,” thus creating a framework for generating differing perspectives (51). For example, “William Blake’s works of composite art might not arouse our senses of smell, taste, and touch;” rather, they represent a *dialectic of dialectics*, which O’Gorman defines as “a meeting of various opposing forces within a complex space” (57). Interpreting works such as Blake’s composite art allows the reader to move beyond Ramist dichotomies toward enigmatic image-texts, where words and images meet “but never reconcile, for they are bound in a dialectical relationship in which ‘neither can be reduced to the other’s terms,’” O’Gorman notes (62). “What matters most,” he asserts, “is not whether Blake is beyond such contraries as ‘good and evil,’ but to recognize that Blake’s work, informed by his notion of the ‘contraries,’ involves a unification of form and content, material production and ideology” (62).

Eighteenth-century painter Jean-Simeon Chardin’s still life *La Raie* exemplifies the contradiction within an entity, beginning with the oxymoronic play on the words, *still life*. Still

life paintings of this era are characterized by finely-detailed representations of common, everyday objects, such as vases of flowers, and bowls of fruit arranged in pleasing displays. Many of these paintings enhanced the décor of a room, required little interpretation, and were noted for their aesthetic qualities. Yet, Chardin's *La Raie* challenges the underpinnings of the still life genre by juxtapositioning a tranquil domestic scene (the right side of the painting) against a "domestic" cat's bloody attack of a ray fish (the left side of the painting).

The white foreground eerily resembles the white background of the mauled fish, with both showing an expanse of smooth white surfaces and soft folds. Yet the fish is ripped open and displays its bloody, glistening internal organs, and the white tablecloth sports a knife folded within the tablecloth, as if it has been inserted. A copper pan rests nearby, with reddish hues similar to the blood of the fish. The open-mouthed cat that occupies the other remaining white area is the only living aspect of the still life, connoting an oxymoronic twist of the words "still life."

The side-by-side placement of opposing aspects serves to heighten the differences between each as well as to introduce conflict as a point of divergence. Through juxtapositioning, Chardin transforms the genre of still life as an emotionally flat, aesthetic-based category into a dynamic thematic statement. The overall effect of *La Raie* reflects a jarring mix of domestic tranquility and domestic violence, which serves to arrest the viewer's emotions and underscore the darker aspects of a domestic environment:



Figure 34: “La Raie” by Jean-Baptiste Chardin

The next model builds upon these concepts by presenting the student with pairs of images that juxtapose contrasting aspects on multiple levels. By noting the visual details that contrast in each pair, she is invited to write imagined settings. Each setting represents a distinct aspect that when placed side by side with the other aspect, create a complementary whole.

Model 1: Visualizing Settings through Contrasting Details

1. Study the details of the following pairs of images and then write a descriptive paragraph for each setting.
2. Explain how the setting details of each pair compare and contrast. Use visual details to support your observations.

Pair A



Figure 35: "Woman in a Red Bodice and Her Child" by Mary Cassatt, 1901



Figure 36: "Views, Objects: Egypt" by T. H. McAllister

Pair B



Figure 37: "The Physician's Visit" by Ignacio León y Escosura, 1881



Figure 38: "Cots Await Evacuees of Hurricane Katrina," FEMA/Photo, 2005

Pair C



Figure 39: "Floor with Laundry No. 3" by Sylvia Plimack Mangold



Figure 40: "Kiss Me and You'll Kiss the Lasses" by Lilly Martin Spencer

Pair D



Figure 41: "Two Cars" by Joel Sternfeld

© Joel Sternfeld. Used with permission.



Figure 42: "Traffic at Night"

Digging Deeper: Writing Story Beginnings and Conclusions based on Figure-Ground Dynamics

Assume that each pair represents two aspects of a cohesive story. Minor details may be changed to adjust time periods.

1. Write the opening and closing paragraphs of a short story assuming the image at the top of each pair reflects the opening of the story and the image at the bottom of each pair reflects the conclusion. Make sure to include conflict. Include descriptive details from each image, as well as the mood you think each image captures.
2. Write the opening and closing paragraphs of a short story assuming the image at the top of each pair reflects the opening of the story and the image at the bottom of each pair reflects the conclusion.
3. Write the opening and closing paragraphs of a short story assuming the image at the top of each pair represents the environment of one character and the image at the bottom of each pair represents the environment of another character. Create a conflict by interweaving both characters.

Analysis: Visually comparing and contrasting details within each pair encourages the student to create settings for imagined stories that draw upon the differences. The differences then provide potential conflicts from which a range of stories can be generated. For example, contrasting the look of contentment of the well-nurtured baby nestled in his mother's arms in Figure 35 with the look of despair on the unattended group of children in Figure 36 heightens the qualities of each aspect. These differing qualities are supported by a host of other contrasts, such as the absence versus presence of a parental figure, the warmth of a home versus the harshness of a barren

landscape, the extravagance of beautiful clothes versus the thriftiness of functional clothes, the pampered quality of pearly white skin, versus the hardness of weather-beaten skin. The words the student uses to describe the differences have a wide range of connotations and denotations. The word “pampered” for instance might imply an overprotected quality which some may not perceive. Thus, the careful choosing of the descriptive words affects the meaning as well. By assuming a series of opposing perspectives, the student is encouraged to continue her exploration of the range of differing perspectives within a single work. The next section explores how juxtaposition defines character through comparatives.

Understanding Character through Juxtapositioning

Juxtapositioning also serves to heighten the conflict between characters, as well as define character through comparatives. For instance, in William Shakespeare’s classic tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo insists he will never love another girl except Rosaline, Juliet shows no interest in marrying Paris. While Rosaline will not be “bought” by Romeo’s sweet-talk, Juliet will likewise not be “bought” by Paris’s sweet-talk. Then, while Juliet and Romeo profess their love through marriage vows, their families profess their hatred through feuding. The murders of Mercutio and Tybalt that occur just after the marriage of Romeo and Juliet intensify the conflict between the two families just as it had begun to heal through the unification of the couple.

The conflict continues to escalate through juxtapositioning up to the final scene when Romeo rushes to Juliet’s side only to find her dead and then Juliet awakens from her feigned death (as a drastic measure to be with Romeo) only to find him so recently dead that as she kisses him his lips are still warm. Writers and artists use juxtapositioning to heighten the differences evident in other literary elements as well, such a character relationships.

Literary characters who are opposites are called foils. They may oppose one another through their backgrounds, their intentions, their behavior, or through their values, such as noted in Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*. Although the prince comes from royalty, he is spoiled and arrogant, whereas the pauper, who comes from a poor family, is kind and caring toward others. Creating a pair of opposites allows an author to exaggerate the qualities of each as a means to intensify the conflict in a story. When the prince and the pauper interact, for example, their differences are exaggerated by contrast. Thus, the prince appears even more arrogant when pitted against the kind pauper than if he were pitted against another arrogant boy. Through such methods, our impression of each character is strengthened through opposition.

Foil relationships also involve secondary characters who contrast with a major character as a method of revealing the personality of the major character. In *Hamlet*, for instance, Ophelia and Hamlet have lost their fathers. At the beginning of the play it appears that Hamlet is mourning too much, yet when Ophelia loses her father, her extreme reaction provides such a contrast to Hamlet's mourning that it appears he is barely affected by his father's death.

In its most basic state, a foil relationship implies completely opposite characteristics. For example, if one stares at the image on the left for 20 seconds and then looks at a flat white surface, its counterpart image will appear. The same holds true if one stares at the image on the left. Both images thus complement one another:

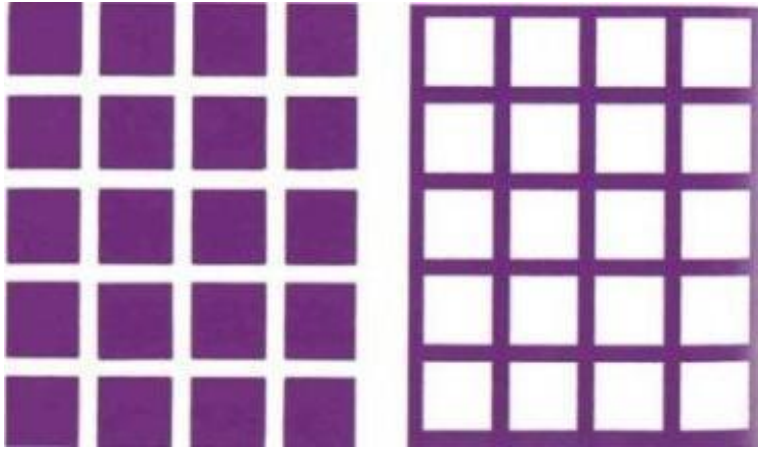


Figure 43: “Compare Contrast Squares”

The concept of opposition was a source of intrigue for M. C. Escher. In “The Angel Michael Binding Satan,” Escher achieves a dynamic figure-ground interplay of angels and bats, with each aspect competing for the viewer’s attention:



Figure 44: “The Angel Michael Binding Satan: Circle Limit IV” by M. C. Escher

All M.C. Escher works (c) 2009 The M.C. Escher Company - the Netherlands.
All rights reserved. Used by permission.

The resulting story might be interpreted as a fierce battle between The Angel Michael and Satan as Michael attempts to bind Satan. Escher explains that his artwork is essentially about balance. “Good cannot exist without evil, and if one accepts the notion of God then, on the other hand, one must postulate a devil likewise. This is balance. This duality is my life... [I]t really is very simple: white and black, day and night—the graphic artist lives on these,” he states (Escher qtd. in Ersnt 20).¹⁵ Literary foils are also structured through balance. The characters, who personify balance through opposition, drive the tension of the traditional story up to the climactic moment at which point one character overcomes the other. The next model sets the stage for storytelling by visually representing characters that can be imagined as foils. The student is encouraged to study the visual details carefully in her process of creating opposing qualities that create an essential balance within each pair.

Model 2: Creating Foils through Visual Details

1. Write a descriptive paragraph for each of the following images, explaining at least six significant ways how the characters are foils. Make sure to balance the opposing qualities so that the characters complement one another:



Figure 45: “The Rice Merchant”



Figure 46: “The Man in Waiting”



Figure 47: "The Flower Seller" by Julian Alden Weir, 1879



Figure 48: "The Two Colleagues (Lawyers)" by Honoré Daumier, 1870



Figure 49: "The Fitting" by Mary Cassatt, 1890

Analysis: By focusing on the artistic elements and composition, the student transfers visual detail into written contrasting aspects as a method of creating character foils. This process invites her to explore how the art elements and composition combine to achieve a visual statement, such as the dark figure of the woman in "The Fitting" who appears subservient to the lighter figure. One might note that in every image, one character stands, squats, or sits at a different level than the other, thus implying a relationship of inequality. In "Rice Merchant," for example, the well-fed merchant is comfortably perched among her overflowing wares while the beggar sits upon the ground holding out his empty bowl. More richly subtle is the posturing of the older man and the

young girl in “The Flower Seller.” With his lined face and stoic expression he might variously be viewed as a predator or a protector of the young, smooth-faced girl.

Titles play on opposing qualities as well. One cannot be sure if the “The Flower Seller” refers to the young girl who sells flowers, or the man who is “selling” the girl by exploiting her youth. “The Two Colleagues” demonstrates a likewise play on words, as one is not certain if the lawyer ascending the stairs seeks favors from the other lawyer and is being snubbed, or if the young lawyer, by his act of ascending the steps, is snubbing the older lawyer, who is symbolically “descending” the stairs. Thus, some of the images demonstrate paradoxical qualities, which invite a deeper level of “seeing.” The next section explores how textual details, such shifts in the rhythmic patterns of speech, also reveal foil relationships through contrasting aspects.

Determining Foils through Rhythmic Patterns in Hamlet

In *Hamlet* Shakespeare develops Hamlet and Ophelia as character foils through the rhythmic patterns of their speech. At the beginning of the play Hamlet and Ophelia share affection for one another. Their initial friendship counters the growing split that occurs between them as the play progresses. At first, many readers assert that Hamlet’s love for Ophelia appears to frighten her. Yet, as she tries to overcome her fear and express her mutual love for Hamlet, her father frowns upon the relationship and encourages her to suppress her emotions. Later, when she summons her courage and decides to confess her love for him, he then hides his feelings for her and denies he ever loved her. He goes so far as to suggest she go to a nunnery, which makes her feel so unworthy that many readers assert it contributes to her suicide. The sudden shift from

verse to prose when Hamlet tells her Ophelia he no longer loves her marks a climactic turning point that many readers interpret as evidence that Hamlet is no longer speaking honestly to Ophelia.

Shakespeare wrote most of his plays in iambic pentameter, a form of verse that most resembles natural speech. According to Giles Block, an educator at the Globe Theatre in London, “Verse is based on two things that keep us alive—breath and pulse. Iambic pentameter reflects sincerity. The rhythm itself is reassuring, same as the rhythm of our own heartbeat. It brings an unspoken message—one of reassurance and sincerity” (Teaching Shakespeare through Performance Workshop). While prose also has rhythm, it features an unexpected rhythm. Prose includes more unstressed syllables than stressed, which results in a heavier rhythm. Block adds that when a Shakespearean character who normally speaks in iambic pentameter suddenly shifts to prose, it is often because she is evading something. The onset of her heavier prose thus marks her shift away from sincerity. Although the uneducated characters in Shakespeare’s plays also speak in prose because “they are clowns and want to make us laugh,” Shakespeare often “went out of his way” to conform to iambic pentameter for his main characters, Block emphasizes. Shakespeare often inverted words and added *ed* stresses at the end of normally silent endings to throw key words into prominence just to keep the iambic pentameter rhythm in his lines, Block adds.

While verse written in anapest (unstressed syllable, unstressed syllable, followed by stressed syllable) often creates an engaging humorous effect, Block asserts that it results in an odd, forced, and therefore pretentious rhythm. Iambic pentameter, on the contrary, reflects the natural rhythm and underlying sincerity of everyday speech. One can thus determine the sincerity of Shakespeare’s characters by studying their speech patterns.¹⁶ “When you try to appear to be

what you are not or ignore or avoid who you really are, your speech no longer has an intimate connection with your body. Instead, you put your mask on and do something else,” Block maintains.

Discovering the point where Hamlet’s speech shifts from iambic pentameter to prose can be variously approached by reading Act III, Scene I silently or aloud, performing the script, or visually studying the script. Visually studying the script involves noting where the lines abruptly shift from long and flowery to short and choppy. The student might note as well how the sound of the words change, such as from soft, “s” dominated words evident in the beginning lines, *Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune / Or to take arms against a sea of troubles*, to the choppy guttural “g” dominated words evident toward the end of the passage to include “Go, God, and Get.” Employing comparative practices through visual, aural and textual approaches contributes to a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns that underscore well-drawn characters. Characters with opposite qualities can be understood from within representational groups as well. In the next model, the student is asked to observe details within two distinct aspects from which to generate contrasting contextual positions.

Model 3: Creating Character Narratives through Juxtapositioning

1. Describe the characters in Figure 50. Include details about facial expressions, clothing, posturing, and other pertinent details.



Figure 50: "The Ship 1"

2. Describe the characters in Figure 51, noting the same details you observed in Figure 50.



Figure 51: "The Ship 2"

3. Compare and contrast the details of both photographs. Explain how the details from each photograph are similar. Explain how they are different.

4. Study Figure 52. Explain how the juxtapositioning of both photographs into a coherent whole affects the representation of each as a distinct entity? Explain how it affects your response to question 3?
5. Choose a character from the Figure 50 and write a five paragraph opening to a short story about her/his life.
6. Choose a character from Figure 51 and write a five paragraph opening to a short story about her/his life.
7. Explain the similarities and differences between both of your imagined characters.
8. Place the texts of both your character stories underneath Figure 52. Explain how the juxtapositioning affects the divergent points of view: Explain how the title, “The Steerage,” heightens those differences.



Figure 52: “The Steerage” by Andrew Carnegie

Place Here: Character Narrative Based
on Top Photograph

Place Here: Character Narrative
Based on Bottom Photograph

Analysis: In “The Steerage” the student is invited to describe two distinct groups of people and then compare and contrast the qualities to note the dividing line that delineates them. Obvious aspects, such as the posturing, the clothing, and the presence (or absence) of the everyday processes of daily life, for example, the laundry strung on a line on the lower level, may

immediately come to mind. Subtle aspects also appear to the discerning eye, such as an overall atmosphere of expectancy evident on the upper level, versus an overall atmosphere of resignation evident on the lower level. The opposing aspects invite stories of depth as the student juxtaposes the characters from two distinct worlds to create an underlying conflict that emerges when both worlds are juxtaposed.

For example, the crisply dressed man on the upper level who stands tall and proud while clutching his bags contrasts with the woman swaddled in nondescript clothes on the lower level that wearily holds her child. While she stares vacuously into the distance, surrounded by others who seem for the most part no less eager to climb up the stairs into a new future that may hold little promise, the man on the upper level impatiently awaits his release into his new life. Thus, a potential story emerges from the interplay of two distinct parts.

Juxtaposing Divergent Points of View through Braided Narratives

A braided narrative is a type of story in which disparate aspects are juxtaposed in an alternating braided pattern from which they ultimately come together to create a shared viewpoint. The color-coded poem, “Sestina” is as an example of a braided poem, which follows the same pattern as the longer braided narrative. N. Katherine Hayles defines braided narratives as texts “where both voices can be heard, at first very different but then gradually coming closer until finally they are indistinguishable” (*Writing Machines* 106). Thus, by creating two distinct characters, the student is required to find common ground between them from which to merge their perspectives.

Model 4: Creating Double-Braid Narratives through Visual Cues

Using the following image as a basis, write a brief, original double-braid narrative that alternates between two perspectives and then comes together at the end. Invent the contrasting perspectives based on visual cues.



Figure 53: "On Vacation" by Jeff Sirmons

Analysis: This model expands upon the concept of a braided text that was introduced in Chapter Three in Elizabeth Bishop's "Sestina," to demonstrate the depth of characterization achievable by juxtaposing disparate points of view. By paying close attention to the visual clues of a couple whose posturing exhibits a contradictory quality of communicating and not communicating, the student is asked to create a perspective from which an authentic story can be generated. For example, although the couple does not face one another and are staring off into opposite directions, they nonetheless lean against each other for support. Casually dressed, with the trappings of tourists, such as a purse, a guidebook and a watch, they appear weary but stoic,

together, but separate. To the discerning eye, the visual clues create ripe potential for the creation of distinctly delineated fictional characters whose paths alternately connect and disconnect until they ultimately come together. The next section examines how character perspective is enriched by the ability to see beyond pre-supposed positions. Students are encouraged to create round characters by exploring the deeper aspects that escape surface-level stereotypes.

The Effect of Previous Knowledge on Perception in Foil Relationships

“We know what we are . . . but not what we may be.”

–William Shakespeare

Point of view refers to the perspective from which the story is told. Strong writing involves the ability to interpret a point of view from more than one perspective. The following image is an example of how point of view is influenced by perspective. There are two distinct female faces within the image, yet some viewers first perceive a young woman, while others first perceive an old woman:



Figure 54: “My Wife and My Mother-in-Law” by W.E. Hill

In an experiment at Harvard Business School, an instructor passed out cards to his students, half of which had the sketched image of the young lady and half of which had the sketched image of the old woman. After asking his students to study their particular card, he projected the above image to the class and asked the students to describe what image they saw. Nearly every student first saw the image reflected in the card she was given. An argument ensued as to whether the image was in fact a young lady or an old woman. The experiment sought to prove that “two people can see the same thing, disagree, and yet both are right. It’s not logical, it’s psychological,” according to Stephen Covey (Covey 27).

According to Richard Block, previous knowledge influences the way people perceive images and interpret stories. Furthermore, “[r]esearch has shown that when there is a figure that can have two different meanings . . . if one does not know that two interpretations are possible, the figure is usually perceived as having only one. However, once it is known that there are actually two figures in one, the figures often ‘reverse’ themselves in an involuntary and

automatic way,” Block claims (*Seeing Double* 6). For example, consider how previous knowledge might affect the way a student perceives the following photograph:



Figure 55: “The Peace Highway”

According to Block, if one has no previous knowledge of the peace sign symbol, she might only see roads merging into a highway. Yet if she is knowledgeable of the peace sign symbol, her eye might be drawn to either the highway or the peace sign depending on the extent of her familiarity with both aspects. N. Katherine Hayles asserts that when we use our pre-existing perspective as a position from which to extend our knowledge, we are establishing—whether knowingly or unknowingly—a privileged, and therefore, subjective perspective. “[W]e know the world because we are connected to it. Our connection to it is precisely our position,” she claims (“Theory of a Different Order” 33).

Yet, to extend our knowledge, Hayles claims that we must be willing to address how our position is only a starting point from which to interact with other positions. “There is a version of

reflexivity that, in the early period of science studies, was like an admission of guilt: ‘Well, I’m a white male, and so therefore I think this,’” Hayles states. She encourages us “to explore in a systematic way what these correlations are and precisely why they lead to certain knowledge formations” as a method “to begin to get a sense of what is not seen” (“Theory of a Different Order” 33). She notes that only then are we able to understand the deeper complexities that point of view entails.

Hayles emphasizes that the interaction between differing positions should focus on “what happens at the dividing line, where one side meets the other side.” She adds that “if it is true that reality is what we do not see when we see, it is also true that our interaction with reality is what we see when we see” (33).¹⁷ Hayles’ ideas are explored in the next model, which encourages students to role-play divergent perspectives at the point of interaction of an actual event. By interweaving realistic visual and textual details into imagined fictional story premises, the student is encouraged to create authentic, fully-round characters from sharply divergent contextual positions. This process requires an ability to understand and form contextual positions based on the dynamics of opposition as well as comprehend the deeper complexities of how pre-existing knowledge affects character motive.

Model 5: Exploring the Dividing Line in Protagonist-Antagonist Relationships

Study the details of the photograph and the accompanying textual information and then answer the questions that follow.



Figure 56: “Bonds of Fear” by Jim Kean

“During a 1970 courtroom breakout in San Rafael, Calif., convict James D. McClain aims a smuggled weapon at Judge Harold Haley. Moments later, after a shoot-out in front of the courthouse, the judge, McClain and two other kidnappers were dead” (*Best of Life* 146).

Create fictional accounts through each of the following perspectives: First Person Point of View, Third Person Limited Omniscient Point of View, and Third Person Omniscient Point of View.

1. Create a struggle between the two men from the point of view of the older man as the protagonist.
2. Create a struggle between the two men from the point of view of the older man as the antagonist.

3. Create a struggle between the two men from the point of view of the younger man as the protagonist.

4. Create a struggle between the two men from the point of view of the younger man as the antagonist.

Reflection:

1. Explain how shifting the roles between the protagonist and antagonist create new perspectives from each type of point of view.

2. Explain whether you predominantly saw the older man or the younger man as the protagonist? Do you think your response is a reflection of your social background? Explain.

Analysis: By providing the student with a an actual event, she is encouraged to focus on the small details, both textual and visual, as a basis from which to create a wide range of imagined, yet authentic perspectives. She might note, for example, the similar shape and angle of the pointed gun held by the convict and the rolled up American flag held by both the convict and the judge. The intense nature of the photograph allows her to focus on the dividing line from which to study characters who are sharply divergent, yet at the same time are so interconnected that the actions of one directly impact the actions of the other. The characters are contextually anchored to a particular time and place, one that reflects the racial tensions following the Civil Rights movement.

The historical context adds a layer of complexity to the observable details, offering perspectives that reflect prevailing societal views as well as lesser known views. The accompanying blurb encourages the more capable student to study the historical context before

attempting to create her narratives. Thus, by understanding character from a wide range of differing contextual positions, the student is able to understand the fine-tuned interrelationship between contextual position and perspective as a basis for comprehending complex character motives.

In the next chapter, the paradoxical qualities of literary terms and concepts are explored. Irony, for example, is explored at the dividing line, where one aspect contradicts the other, thereby adding a paradoxical quality to the first aspect. This section adds a layer of complexity to figure-ground models presented thus far.

CHAPTER FIVE: JUXTAPOSITIONING AND DRAMATIC REVERSALS

“Intelligence is to understand before affirming. It means that when confronted with an idea, one seeks to go beyond it... To find its limits, to find its opposite... the essence of the paradox is, in the face of what seems a perfectly self-evident idea, to look for the opposite” —Jean-Luc Goddard (Godard and Others: Essays on Film Form)



Figure 57: “Three Worlds” by M C. Escher

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This chapter explores how dramatic shifts in figure-ground comparatives affect meaning. By focusing on aspects embedded within a text or image, the models demonstrate how bringing unexpected, hidden, or obscure details to the foreground creates new perspectives. Marcel O’Gorman claims that the base of the meaning-making process is expanded foregrounding any aspect no matter how seemingly insignificant challenges existing commonplace orders. These

aspects, O’Gorman claims, “can take us across cultural and cognitive fields, forcing us to confront the *other*, and his / her methods of organization” as a method of seeing the world in a new perspective (81).

Asserting that we write *about* images instead of *through* them, O’Gorman encourages the reader to note the small, easily missed details that he claims form essential aspects of the collective image. Through such ways, the reversal process adds fresh insights and depth to the literary analysis. The chapter begins with a figure-ground exploration of irony.

Creating Irony through Juxtaposition

Irony takes three major forms: situational, dramatic, and verbal. In literature, situational irony emerges from the events of a story or play as something unexpected that happens in contrast to what is predicted. The effectiveness of the irony involves the skill of the author to foreshadow clues of its emergence. This skill requires placing the expected aspects of the story as the figure and the unexpected aspects as the ground. The dynamics between the two aspects play a critical role in that the reader must become tricked to expect something, yet still believe in the authenticity of the sudden reversal.

For example, Macbeth murders his king, expectant that in becoming king he will achieve great happiness. In reality, he never knows another moment of peace and finally is beheaded for his murderous acts. His outrageous series of killings are considered by most students as believable because Shakespeare creates Macbeth as a weak but human character who becomes enticed by the witches’ prophecy: “All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter” (I.iii.50). As

his mind toys with the possibility that power and riches are within his grasp, it is his very humanness that unleashes the monster within. The Good versus Evil dichotomous aspects of his character escalate as Macbeth's consciousness is piqued by the ghostly appearances of his victims. In the climactic "Is this the dagger I see before me" scene (II.i.33), it becomes ironic that Macbeth—the cold-blooded murderer—is terrified of death. Yet by contrasting opposing aspects of his character, a fully-rounded, complex character emerges as a "whole" that far exceeds its extreme, conflicting parts.

In dramatic irony, the audience knows something that the characters in the drama do not. For example, the identity of a murderer such as Macbeth or a modern-day serial killer may be known to the audience long before the mystery gets solved. The ability of the author to plant an emotion such as fear and anxiety in the reader's mind relies strongly on her ability to consistently balance the figure (what the audience knows) with the ground (what the audience does not realize) so that when the unexpected ground suddenly emerges, the reader becomes both engaged and stunned. In verbal irony, the contrast lies between the literal meaning of what a character says and what she means. A character may refer to school as "wonderful," while actually hating it. Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony.

"The Appointment in Samarra" as retold by W. Somerset Maugham in 1933, exemplifies a classic tale of irony. Note how the author juxtaposes each of the speaker's perspectives to build to the final, ironic message:

There was a merchant in Bagdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, "Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I

saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture. Now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me.” The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and he saw me standing in the crowd and he came to me and said, “Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning?” “That was not a threatening gesture,” I said. “It was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Bagdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.”

The author adds the element of surprise to establish the ironic twist by skillfully shifting the point of view. The reader is led to believe that the narrative is written in the third person omniscient point of view by the opening sentences. Then, halfway through the narrative, as the servant flees in fear, the author juxtaposes the first person point of view told by *Death* with the following sentence: Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and he saw me.” From this point forward, the narrative is told by Death’s perspective. Thus, by juxtaposing the first aspect of the narrative (the illusion of a third point omniscient point of view) with the second aspect of the narrative (Death’s point of view), that narrator achieves the ironic effect.

Irony is likewise achieved in poetry by juxtaposing opposing aspects. Note how Li-Young Lee juxtaposes qualities of Life and Death to achieve irony in “Eating Together”:

In the steamer is the trout
seasoned with slivers of ginger,
two sprigs of green onion, and sesame oil.

We shall eat it with rice for lunch,
brothers, sister, my mother who will
taste the sweetest meat of the head,
holding it between her fingers
deftly, the way my father did
weeks ago. Then he lay down
to sleep like a snow-covered road
winding through pines older than him,
without any travelers, and lonely for no one.

The title evokes the hidden aspect of the poem, the dead father who is no longer “eating together” with his family. Instead, his absence is brought to the foreground in a single sentence that connects the living family’s ritual of eating the family meal with the father who once ate with his family. The sensory details of the meal—“trout seasoned with slivers of ginger, two springs of green onion and sesame oil”—contrast with the image of the father lying in a similar flat position as the trout in the hot steamer, yet akin to a cold road where the snow of death covers him. Here nothing but cold white snow and trees that stand as tall as he once stood in the family dominate.

By juxtaposing similar qualities of the living family and the dead father, Lee heightens the irony of the living family “eating together” with the vestiges of the dead father. For example, the father, who sleeps *like a snow-covered road*, remains visually connected to his family as his body lies in the same prone state as a table. Lee also contrasts the *steamer*, a warm vessel, with the earth, a cold vessel, the trout, a source of warm, richly-scented food for the family, with the

father's body, a cold source of food for the worms, as well as the presence of the family in a warm, scented room, with the absence of any *travelers* except for the personified pines on the cold road of death, thereby exaggerating the paradoxical qualities of "eating together."

The contrast between the depiction of the father in the second sentence and the last sentence, dynamically shifts the reader's attention from a lively family sharing a fragrant, steamy meal (the figure), to the silent, cold realm where the father now dwells (the ground), creating the figure-ground reversal that brings into presence the absence of the father. Thus, the words *eating together* create a visual picture of concurrent dualities, such as Absence versus Presence, Life versus Death, and Camaraderie versus Solitude, reflected in a concise, ironic statement.

The next two models incorporate the figure-ground pattern evident in "Eating Together." These models demonstrate how juxtaposing differing aspects within a photograph also achieve ironic effects. The first model examines the comedic dimensions of irony while the second model examines the more serious dimensions of irony.

Model 1: Visualizing Comedy through Irony

Study the photograph and note how the two distinct worlds of the patrolman and the sculpture compare and contrast. Then, answer the questions that follow.

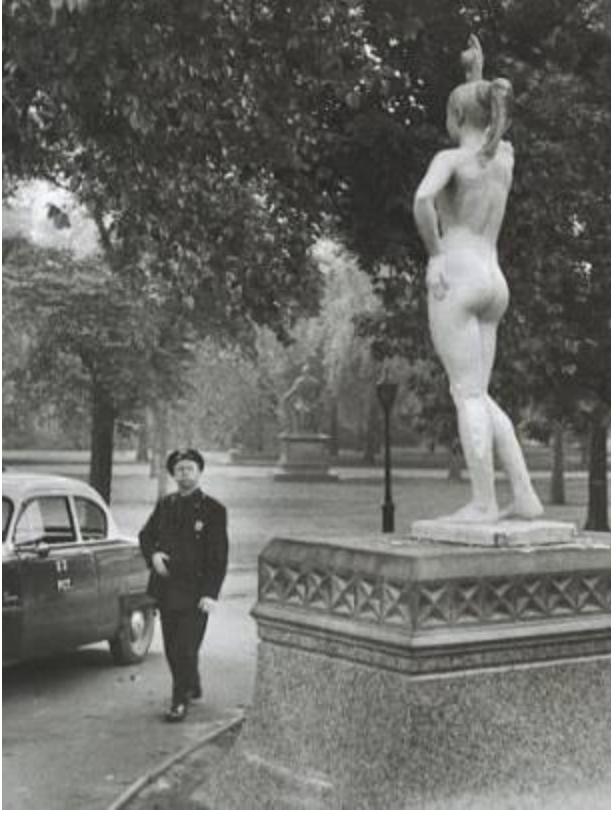


Figure 58: "Patrolman Meets Belly Dancer" by Grey Villet

1. Write a detailed character description of the patrolman.
2. Explain how the art elements, such as line, shape, and light, support the type of world the patrolman lives in.
3. Write a detailed character description of the statue.
4. Explain how the art elements, such as line, shape, and light, support the type of world the statue lives in.
5. Create a caption that reflects an ironic interpretation of the photograph.
6. List at least five examples of irony evident in the juxtapositioning of both aspects.

Analysis: By dividing the photograph into two aspects, the student begins the process that underlies the ironic possibilities. For example, her character description of the patrolman might note that he is clad in a dark uniform, with his badge of authority clearly visible. He imitates the posturing of the sculpture that looms above him, while he frowns at her. His hands point toward the ground. Behind him, his car is parked on a road. She might then note how the art elements reinforce the kind of world he lives in. For example, there are many straight lines evident, such as the rigid lines of his arms, the lines of his car, the lines of the well-manicured lawn behind him, the lines of the tree trunks, the lines of the lampposts, and the lines of the road. She might then draw the conclusion that the visual elements collectively represent the mechanized society he lives in.

The student's description of the belly dancer might include the following observations. She is a stone sculpture who rests atop an ornately carved pedestal. Her pale body is naked and larger than life. Her hand points skyward, toward the heavens. Behind her are trees and other symbols of nature. The curves of her body match the curves of the natural world she represents. From these and other contrasts, ironic observations can be generated, such as, "The patrolman arrests people who violate the law, but cannot arrest the statue of the naked girl who poses atop the pedestal, larger than life." The next model examines how ironic observations invite more serious interpretations.

Model 2: Visualizing Social Commentary through Irony

Study the details of the following photographing, noting two distinct aspects, and then answer the questions that follow.



Figure 59: "Bread Line During Flood, 1937" by Margaret Bourke-White

1. Write a detailed description of all the details of the real world captured in the photograph.
2. Write a detailed description of all the details of the imaged world depicted by the billboard captured in the photograph.
3. Compare and contrast both worlds and then list at least ten ways these worlds differ.
4. Explain how the elements of art, such as light, shape, and texture, support your overall interpretation of each world.
5. Explain the irony of the caption, "There's No Way Like the American Way" that looms over the people in the breadline.
6. Write three different captions for the photograph that reflect various ironic observations evident in the juxtaposed aspects.

Analysis: Two distinct worlds are delineated in “Breadline”: the real and the imagined. In the fantasy world depicted by the billboard, the student might note the prosperous white family driving down the highway in their roomy car. Each face is distinctly drawn, smiling, and facing the open road ahead. A sun-filled, gently rolling, open landscape fills the background. The student might note how this larger-than-life flat image that boasts “World’s Highest Standard of Living,” looms over the line of small, yet real people in the foreground. Here each face blends in with the rest, looks weary, and faces a line so long it has come to a standstill. Each person holds an empty food basket, waiting for it to be filled. The dark, heavy clothing signifies the cold, inclement weather.

When the student reads the caption on the billboard, “There’s no Way Like the American Way,” she may interpret it one way when juxtaposed against the prosperous imagined family, yet when juxtaposed against the real people standing in line below, the caption—as it hovers at the dividing line between both aspects—conveys a dual, paradoxical meaning which contradicts its original message, yet is nonetheless true. Thus, through visually-oriented figure-ground dynamics, ironic observations are gleaned from the shift in mental sets. The next section explores how oxymorons, which also reflect dual meanings, can also be understood by visually juxtapositioning contradictory aspects.

Creating Oxymorons through Juxtaposition

An oxymoron is a short paradox of contradictory or incongruous words. Derived from the Greek, the term *oxus* means sharp, and the term *moros* means dull. The word *sophomore* is considered an oxymoron within itself as *sophos* is another Greek word for sharp; thus a

sophomore is both sharp and dull at the same time. In a visual representation of an oxymoron, the figure and ground compete for the viewer's attention, with both aspects essential to the composite meaning. For example, observe Marcel Duchamp's artwork of a blue-painted cabinet with dark windows:



Figure 60: “Fresh Widow” by Marcel Duchamp

Note how the contradictory aspects of the dark windows and the fresh blue paint underscore the title, “Fresh Widow.” Observe as well that the words *fresh widow* juxtapose the concept of *fresh* paint with the concept of a dark *window*. If one removes the *n* in *window*, the word *widow* appears. One might also consider the symbol of a window as an opening that lets in light, or a view beyond its physical structure. By painting a window a dark, opaque color, light is prevented from passing through and the only view is akin to the dark barrier of death. Thus, the title, the underlying concept, and the visual image combine to create a paradox. The resulting oxymoron provides a visual snapshot of how someone who is “freshly” widowed might feel as she stares

into the window of her future and sees but the darkness that mirrors her sense of loss. The next model challenges the student to create oxymoronic titles from images.

Model 3: Creating Oxymoronic Titles

Study the following images and find various elements of contradiction within each one.

Then write three oxymoronic titles for each.



Figure 61: "Little Man" by Lewis Hine



Figure 62: "Community" by Thomas Wrede



Figure 63: "Lightning Storm in Boston" NOAA.com



Figure 64: “Independence Day” by Ralph Crane

Analysis: Creating titles based on oxymorons requires the student to determine two aspects that contradict within each image. While this is relatively easy in every example, the greater challenge is to create at least three titles for each. Hence, “Community” might variously be titled, “Cold Sunshine,” “Warm Mountain,” or “The Wilderness Settlement.” To create more than one title requires the student to note more than contradictory elements through visual cues.

The next section investigates the details of background aspects that are so deeply embedded within the structure that they appear to be missing. However, when they are uncovered, they result in sudden, dramatic reversals. These reversals lend fresh insights to the interpretive process through the shifting of the mental sets.

Foregrounding Hidden Aspects through Figure-Ground Shifts

Writers and artists employ the full range of literary elements to make the student aware that sometimes the most obvious aspect of a literary work is so skillfully embedded within the

text that it is initially hidden and considered part of the “ground.” The slow emergence of this aspect drives the tension of the story until its full emergence overwhelms the other aspect. The climactic moment usually occurs when the main characters either continue to deny the existence of the hidden aspect or finally confront it in some significant way. For example, in “Hills Like White Elephants,” Hemingway employs an extended metaphor to demonstrate how conflict escalates when characters avoid a topic so crucial to their relationship that it is like a white elephant sitting between them.

In psychology, the term “white elephant” refers to unspoken subjects of significance that are not brought up for various reasons, often because they are too painful to discuss. In this story, Hemingway employs the concept of the white elephant to demonstrate how hidden aspects often have an uncanny, but dramatic way of coming to the foreground in ways that significantly alter the dynamics of a relationship, especially when intentionally suppressed. Using almost entirely dialogue, Ernest Hemmingway creates tension in “Hills Like White Elephants” by alternating the focus between the surface level of conversation of the couple (the figure) and the deeper level of thoughts implied or not fully revealed (the white elephant). Consider how the deeper level of thoughts is foreshadowed in the opening paragraphs through allusions to white elephants:

“Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway

The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white. On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies. The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building. It was very hot and the express from Barcelona would come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes and went to Madrid.

“What should we drink?” the girl asked. She had taken off her hat and put it on the table.

“It’s pretty hot,” the man said.

“Let’s drink beer.”

“Dos cervezas,” the man said into the curtain.

“Big ones?” a woman asked from the doorway.

“Yes. Two big ones.”

The woman brought two glasses of beer and two felt pads. She put the felt pads and the beer glass on the table and looked at the man and the girl. The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

“They look like white elephants,” she said.

“I’ve never seen one,” the man drank his beer.

“No, you wouldn’t have.”

“I might have,” the man said. “Just because you say I wouldn’t have doesn’t prove anything.”

Hemingway sets the scene by directly following the title with a description of an implied white elephant: *The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white*. He then seamlessly incorporates the first sentence of descriptive detail into the second sentence, which links the couple to the elephant: *On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun*. Other metaphors come into the foreground as well, such the concept of *sides* and *no shade and the sun*, suggesting that there is no real shelter from the hidden issue that comes between the couple, a concept he reiterates with *no trees*. He then notes that the station—where the couple sit drinking beer—is straddled between *two lines of rails in the sun*. Thus, he reinforces the concept of *sides*, in this case, *two sides*, which he then demarcates with the metaphor of steel railroad rails which visually and metaphorically slice through the setting.

The couple—shielding themselves from the figurative and literal *sun*—drink beer while waiting for the *train*, a metaphor of their lives moving forward. Yet, for the moment they are stuck physically as well as psychologically. The metaphor of the white elephant is re-introduced when the girl notes that the hills are *white in the sun* in a country that is *brown and dry*. When she observes that the hills look like elephants, the man replies that he has never seen one, which

draws the counter reply, *No, you wouldn't have*. The escalating tension in the exchange reveals the deeper split occurring between the couple.

In “Hemingway’s Debt to Cezanne: New Perspectives,” Theodore L. Gaillard notes that Hemmingway reportedly learned to create the substructure of his tension-driven stories by studying the work of Impressionist artist Paul Cezanne. Cezanne was famous for leaving areas of the canvas blank to allow the viewer to mentally fill in what was missing. By filling in what is missing, the viewer thus participated in the meaning-making process by mentally “completing” the image as if it were a puzzle with a missing piece. By creating a framework for the reader to mentally fill in what is missing in “Hills Like White Elephants,” Hemingway likewise invites the reader to participate in the meaning-making process by “completing” the story with the missing piece—the white elephant. He also visually links the “hills” that resemble “white elephants” with the waistline of an expectant woman. Thus, the real subject of the white elephant—the girl’s unborn child—visually dominates the single setting in which the story takes place.

A similar concept of figure-ground shifting is visually explored in the next model. Here the photographer substitutes the missing face of a worker with concrete blocks, the product of the worker’s labor. By asking the viewer to fill in what is missing, the viewer foregrounds the face of the worker and actively participates in the meaning-making process.

Model 4: Making the Invisible Visible in Photographs

Barthes’ assertion that “[a] photograph is always invisible; it is not it that we see” (106) invites the viewer to find the invisible meanings that lurk beneath the surface appearance of an image. Study the following photograph and answer the questions that follow.



Figure 65: “Architectural Elements I” by Alexandre Arrechea

1. Explain how you envision the missing face. Does it shift to the foreground or remain in the background?
2. Explain how the visual absence of the face affects your interpretation of the photograph.
3. Write three different captions for “Architectural Elements I.” Explain how each reflects a specific interpretation of the image.

Analysis: In Chapter Three, Reuven Tsur’s analysis of Shelley’s “A Song” explores the readiness of human perceivers to switch back and forth between figure and ground as a method to achieve the poem’s effect. The mournful song the widow bird sings is received by such stillness in the air

that the nearly inaudible *mill-wheel's sound* serves to reinforce her sense of deprivation. Thus, the quality of absence emerges as presence. A similar figure-ground shift is evident in “The Architectural Elements I,” leaving the student to ponder whether the image foregrounds the presence of the worker whose face is hidden behind the heavy stack of concrete blocks, or the blocks. By foregrounding the absence of the worker’s face through the dominant aspect of the concrete blocks, the student becomes aware that the presence of an unseen worker whose toil—symbolized by his strong arms and legs—is more apparent than his actual being. Thus, a profound message is conveyed about how absence is actually presence.

Visualizing Hidden Aspects of Carpe Diem

The literary term Carpe Diem can also be explored through dynamic figure-ground reversals. The term Carpe Diem (seize or “pluck” the day) means to make the best of the present moment because tomorrow is not promised. In the 1989 movie, *Dead Poets Society*, the theme celebrates carpe diem. As the main character, Mr. Keating, invites his students to study old, yellowed photographs of former classmates housed in a display cabinet, he makes the following comment:

They’re not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they’re destined for great things, just like many of you; their eyes are full of hope, just like you. Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because, you see gentlemen, these boys are now

iota of what they were capable? Because, you see gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it? –Carpe –hear it?—Carpe, carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary. (*Dead Poets Society*, Touchstone Pictures)

In this example, Keating uses the idea of carpe diem to challenge the boys to live fully before surrendering to the control that inescapable death has upon them. His call to action creates a dynamic shifting process to occur between the aspects of death and life, as the boys begin to realize the fleeting qualities of life. The following model employs similar figure-ground dynamics between opposing aspects of life and death that invite the student to actively participate in the meaning-making process.

Model 5: Visualizing Carpe Diem and “Kennedy’s Final Days”

Former President John F. Kennedy (left center) was fatally shot in Dallas November 22, 1963, just hours after the following photograph was taken. Later that day, Lyndon Baines Johnson (center) was sworn into office, while riding back to Washington D.C. on the same jet as seen in the photograph. Jacqueline Kennedy (center) stood beside Johnson while he was sworn in as the new president. Historians describe the Kennedy administration as “The Days of Camelot.” Carefully study the details of the photograph to answer the questions that follow:



Figure 66: “Kennedy’s Final Days” by Arthur Rickerby

1. Explain how each of the following evoke Carpe Diem:

- a. Jet
- b. Roses
- c. Jacqueline Kennedy’s appearance and outfit
- d. John Kennedy’s smile
- e. Blue Sky

f. Flag

2. Describe how the following aspects contrast:

a. the older man and John Kennedy

b. the older woman and Jackie Kennedy

c. the size of John Kennedy and the size of Johnson

d. John Kennedy's youthful smile and Johnson's expression

e. John Kennedy's connection to the older man and Johnson's isolation

f. the blue sky and the dark square doorway of the jet

3. What figure-ground shifts occur when you study these contrasts against the title, "Kennedy's Final Days"? Which of these contrasts are the most affected by the title? Explain. How do these shifts add a dimension of meaning?

4. Write an alternate title that expresses the theme of Carpe Diem.

5. Explore at least three other aspects that compare and contrast. This question requires you to examine the photograph at a greater level of depth.

6. Study the juxtapositioning of Herrick's "To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time" over the photograph and explain how it affects the message of Carpe Diem. Share your findings.



Figure 67: "Gather ye Rose Buds While ye May"

Analysis: This model invites the student to go beyond the surface level of a photograph on many levels to examine the fleeting nature of even the most significant moments of life. By explaining how a jet, roses, Jacqueline Kenney's appearance and outfit, John Kennedy's smile, and blue sky are metaphors of life at its best, the student creates material snapshots of a specific moment in time. The roses might suggest the richness of life in full bloom, while Kennedy's youthful

smile might provide a glimpse of the Camelot atmosphere that surrounded the brief Kennedy administration. Then, by contrasting the Carpe Diem life-affirming metaphors with details that foreshadowed Kennedy's death, the student examines how the concept of duality heightens the fleeting aspects of life when juxtaposed against the powers of death. For example, while a jet might represent an ambitious journey to exciting places and a blue sky might represent hope and good fortune, juxtaposing the dark opening of a jet with a blue sky recreates the jet as a harbinger of a journey into darkness.

Likewise, the student's previous knowledge of Johnson's swearing in as President just hours after Kennedy's death sets the basis for a figure-ground reversal as she is drawn to Johnson's small figure in the center of the photograph. Her switching back and forth between Kennedy as the larger, dominant figure and Johnson as the smaller, almost obscure figure is complicated by her knowledge of Kennedy's imminent death. The poignancy of Carpe Diem is then heightened by superimposing Herrick's "Ode to the Virgins" over the photograph, creating a figure-ground interplay between Kennedy and Johnson. While Kennedy forms the dominant figure, the transitory nature of life evoked by the poem shifts the student's attention to the inevitability of Johnson's emergence from the background to become sworn in as the next president after the assassination, which will occur a few hours later. Thus, through sharp comparatives, the student is able to note the deeper, invisible messages that emerge into the foreground. The next section invites the student to go beyond the actual image or text they observe, to examine the deeper levels of meaning that extend beyond surface representation. By comparing and contrasting varying interpretations of the same image, the student re-examines her own contextual positions regarding what constitutes "truth" and ways of seeing.

Photo-epigrams and Bertolt Brecht

“The camera is just as capable of lying as is the typewriter”—Bertolt Brecht

Epigrams are concise, satirical poems with a witty ending that express a single idea. Originating in ancient Greece, epigrams were inscribed on stone monuments to honor the dead. During World War II, exiled German playwright Bertolt Brecht began composing “photo-epigrams” to accompany newspaper and magazine photographs. His work brought to light hidden aspects of mass-produced photographs to challenge the notion that the meaning of a news photograph is self-evident. In *War Primer* he argues that news photography in the hands of the bourgeoisie has become a “weapon” against truth and that the vast amount of picture material “disgorged” by the press obscures truth.

Brecht wrote the following photo-epigram to accompany a newspaper photograph of then Führer Hitler amiably shaking hands with an older woman:



Figure 68: "Adolf Hitler Greeting Woman, 1943"

Suffer the old women to come unto me

That they may glimpse, before their graves close o'er them

The man their sons obeyed so faithfully

As long as he had graves still waiting for them (Brecht qtd. In Evans par. 3)

According to David Evans, the poem represents Hitler's hidden thoughts. By rephrasing the words in Mark 10:14, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," Hitler equates himself with Jesus as a Savior. However, "[u]nlike Jesus, Hitler can only greet mothers because their sons are elsewhere, fighting and dying to supposedly liberate Germany," Evans states. Thus, "[t]hrough the *epigram*, a routine publicity shot becomes a *gest*. Hitler is now the ersatz savior whose swastika armband is a perversion of the Christian cross, the older woman's black clothes become mourning shrouds and the touch of the leader's hand is paltry consolation for the loss of a son," Evans states (par. 6).

Brecht's epigram brings attention to those aspects of Hitler's regime he found repugnant by foregrounding Hitler's imagined thoughts. Thus, by bringing to the reader's attention those aspects of Hitler's character that are not apparent on the surface, Brecht brings to the reader's attention the powerful underlying motives that shape character. The next model explores another Brecht poem by inviting the student to compare and contrast two viewpoints of the same photograph: a news blurb and Brecht's poem.

Model 6: Visualizing Hidden Perspectives in Brecht's War Poems



Figure 69: "Japanese Soldier, 1943" by Ralph Morse

1. Interpret Brecht's epigram for the photograph:

Alas, poor Yorrick of the burnt-out tank!

Upon an axle-shaft your head is set.

Your death by fire was for the Domei Bank

To whom your parents are still in debt (Brecht qtd. in Evans par. 7).

2. Interpret the caption that appeared with the photograph in the February 1943 issue of *Life* magazine: "A Japanese soldier's skull is propped up on a burned-out Jap tank by U.S. troops. Fire destroyed the rest of the corpse."

3. Compare and contrast the interpretations. Explain how each example provides a different viewpoint. Then, explain which of these viewpoints you think is the most prevalent from the following audiences:

A. Americans during World War II

B. Americans at the present day.

C. Japanese during World War II

D. Japanese at the present day.

4. In your opinion, which interpretation best reflects the truth as evidenced through the details of the photograph, as well as your own knowledge of this event. Explain how you arrived at your decision.

5. Find a photograph and an accompanying news caption that vividly depicts a current event.

Write an original epigram to create your own vision of the event.

Analysis: The use of the degrading word “Jap” reveals the superior attitude of the Americans toward the Japanese during World War II, at home (where many American Japanese lived) and abroad. Although the journalistic caption reflected a popular attitude during the wartime period, Evans observes that for many Americans the superior attitude extended beyond the war itself to assume a superiority over the Japanese as a people. Thus, the journalistic caption is brought into question as the dominant or figural representation of the event. “By addressing the head directly as a fellow human being, Brecht restores its dignity, echoing Hamlet’s sympathetic speech on mortality addressed to the skull of Yorrick,” Evans states (par. 9). Brecht’s poem thus poignantly reminds the student that the head belonged to a human being. “Our feeling is, finally,

not the passivity and completeness of pity, but anger, which is as alive and unfinished as the banks' power, and which demands action," Evans emphasizes (par.12).¹⁸ Evans argues that politically-oriented epigrams serve an essential role in bringing hidden aspects of an event into the public's awareness, thereby reversing and bringing into question the authoritarian role that many news agencies assume.

Collectively, these strategies visually exploit the readiness of viewers to switch back and forth between figure and ground as a comparative method to assess the full range of meanings within a text or image, to include even the most obscure aspects. Through dramatic shifts of figure and ground, fresh perspectives are generated. The next chapter builds upon these concepts to explore how the details within images provide clues from which overall perspectives can be determined.

CHAPTER SIX: VISUALIZING THE WHOLE FROM CONTEXTUAL DETAILS

Contextual Positions and Visualizing the Overall Structure

As noted in Chapter One, a Gestaltist whole is so unified that its aspects cannot be determined from a simple summation of its parts. Instead, the parts are dynamically interconnected from within, presenting differing qualities within a greater entity. Interpreting the whole from its varying qualities is a matter of perceiving and interpreting the relationships between the parts and the whole. This chapter explores the analogous relationships between the details of texts and images and the greater, thematic whole through the Gestalt-inspired concept of “emergence.” An example of emergence is the seemingly random appearance of variously sized dots on a piece of paper which, when viewed from a greater perspective, reveal the face of Abraham Lincoln. The “emergence” that takes place on a cognitive level involves the mind’s ability to discover how the qualities within the parts combine through patterns of organization to create a greater whole.

While figure-ground dynamics demonstrate how the same image can be variously viewed in two different ways and how the interpretive process changes the experience itself, the goal is to find a complementary. The goal of emergence is to find a holistic identity. According to Nathan Kogan, Kathleen Connor, Augusta Gross, and Donald Fava, the mental processes involve an ability to examine the intrinsic properties of non-literal similarity. “The production of unusual, yet fitting, interpretations of abstract patterns involves a kind of visual cross-categorical thinking that has aspects in common with the comprehension of visual metaphor,” the authors

state (61). Defining a metaphor in its most fundamental sense as “similarity in the midst of difference,” the authors note that the concept of metaphor “entails a special kind of similarity, one that overrides conventional category boundaries and brings together objects or events that normally belong to different domains” (1). Thus, the type of thinking processes involved require a distinctive form of cross-category reasoning that involves typically unrelated objects and events that are brought together by virtue of a shared feature.

In the models presented in this chapter, the “different domains” are analogous to the rich and varied contextual positions that serve as starting points for the comparative processes. Each position begins with a specific detail or perspective that comprises a part of a greater whole. These positions allow us to seek ways to combine positions to create new perspectives. The first model examines how firmly entrenched contextual positions make it difficult to see overall perspectives.

Model 1: The Blind Men Who Cannot See the Elephant

Directions: Read “The Blind Men and the Elephant” by Geoffrey Saxe and accompanying visuals and then answer the questions that follow:

“The Blind Men and The Elephant”
It was six men of Indostan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the elephant (though all of them were blind),
That each by observation Might satisfy the mind.

The first approached the elephant,
And, happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl;
“God bless me! but the elephant Is very like a wall!”



Figure 70: “Brick Wall”

The second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried: “Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me ‘tis mighty clear
This wonder of an elephant
Is very like a spear!”



Figure 71: “Oriental Weapon”

The third approached the animal,
And, happening to take The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
‘I see’, quoth he, “the elephant Is very like a snake!”



Figure 72: “Coral Snake”

The fourth reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee:

“What most this wondrous beast is like Is mighty plain,” quoth he;
“Tis clear enough the elephant Is very like a tree!”



Figure 73: “Pine Bark”

The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: “E’en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an elephant Is very like a fan!”



Figure 74: “Red Fan”

The sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
‘I see’, quoth he, ‘the elephant
Is very like a rope!’



Figure 75: "Rope"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right
And all were in the wrong
—John Godfrey Saxe

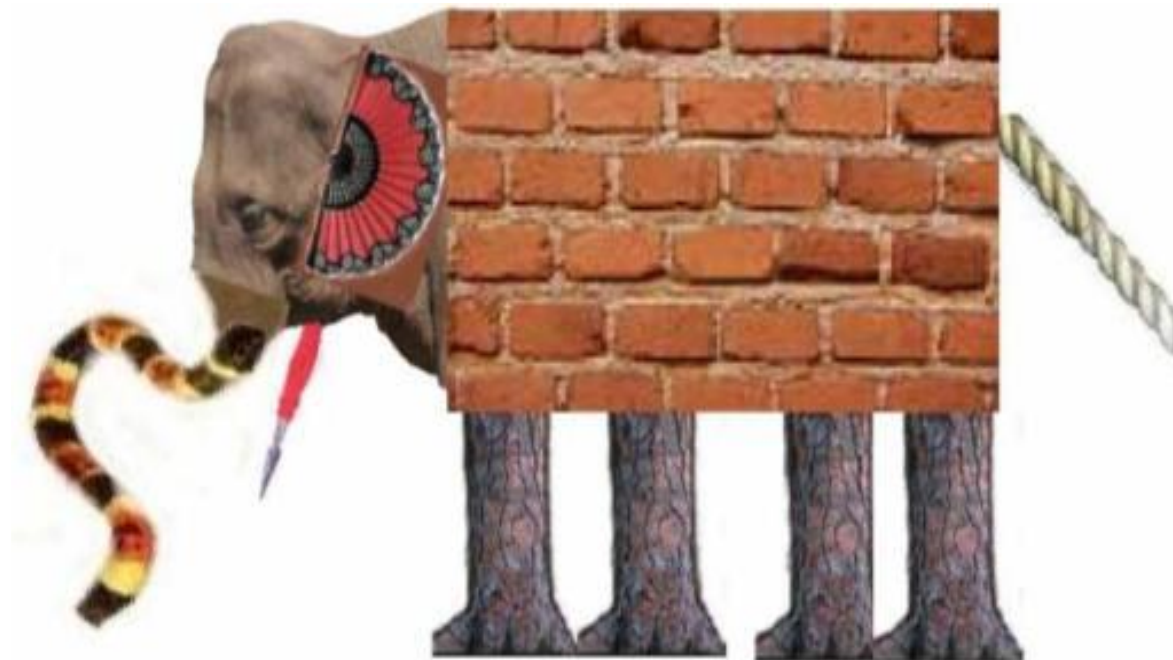


Figure 76: "Elephant Collage" by Beth Weaver

Saxes concludes with the moral:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,

Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

Questions

1. Briefly describe each contextual position through sensory details as a distinct perspective.
2. Explain how each of the blind men is right.
3. Explain how each of the blind men is wrong.
4. Explain the necessary step that needs to occur for the blind men to “see” the whole elephant.
4. Create a caption for the Elephant Collage that expresses the theme of the poem.
5. Use the model as analogy a specific real life example.

Analysis: In “The Blind Men and the Elephant,” American poet John Godfrey Saxe demonstrates how limited viewpoints often lead to misinterpretations of an overall perspective. He draws his inspiration from the well-known fable by the same name, told in various versions throughout the Far East. Drawing separate conclusions that the elephant is like a wall, snake, spear, tree, fan, or rope, depending upon which part they touch, the blind men are unable to consider another’s perspective or see the whole picture. Thus, they collectively build an elephant that results in a ludicrous summation of its parts. The absurdity of the blind men’s inability to see the whole picture demonstrates the shortsightedness of those unable to incorporate various viewpoints into a collective whole. Examples include current political issues in which both sides polarize and are

unable to work together. The ability to see the collective whole analogous to a reader's ability to combine disparate elements into a rich, cohesive story that embraces multiple perspectives. The result is not an empirical summation but a whole new structure. The new structure can be summed up in a single sentence, the theme. The next section explores how themes can be interpreted from clues or details within a text or image.

Exploring Theme through Clues

The title of text or image is often the first indication of the theme. Some titles are straightforward and involve little interpretation, while others are more ambivalent, requiring the viewer to participate in the meaning-making process. For example, observe how artist Mark Grieves integrates the embedded title into each painting and how the details of his compositions emphasize each particular theme:



Figure 77: "Rhythm" by Mark Grieves



Figure 78: “Eternity” by Mark Grieves

Sculptor Daisy Boman, on the other hand, creates sculptures that require active participation from her audience in order to understand the complexities of character motive that she presents. Although the overriding themes of her artwork is noted in her observation that “[t]hese figures reflect the challenges and burdens we all face. And the obstacles that we must overcome in life” (20-21), each sculpture fine-tunes this concept into a specific example. Hence, the themes require the audience to study the small details in order to interpret the exact meanings of each. This requires a figure-ground process in which the student must uncover clues that are richly embedded within each work. In the next model, the original titles of Boman’s sculptures have been removed to invite the student to create her own titles by examining the embedded clues.

Model 2: Interpreting Theme through Visual Cues

1. Study each of the following figures. Note how the details reveal clues to possible titles. Then, write a title that reflects the theme of each. Explain your selection process.

2. Compare your titles with the titles of other students. Decide which titles are thematically strongest and explain why.



Figure 79: Daisy Boman 1



Figure 80: Daisy Boman 2



Figure 81: Daisy Boman 3

3. Compare your best titles with the titles by the artist. Explain the rationale for both. Which titles do you think are best? Explain.

Boman's Titles: Figure 79: "Walk with Us"; Figure 80: "Imagine"; Figure 81: "The Great Escape" (30-31).

Analysis: Every artist has her own style of incorporating theme into her work. While some artists clearly express their themes and then embed composition details to support their theme as noted in Grieves' paintings, others require more participation from the viewer to interpret the images. Some artists also offer a wider range of possibilities that can accurately assess the visual information. For example, Figure 83, which depicts an exodus from a prominent box, might be called "Out of the Box" to reflect those who do not wish to conform to conventional ideas. Thus, by requiring the viewer to look closely at visual details, she is encouraged to create rich,

insightful titles that avoid predictable, didactic responses. The next section explores how similar approaches apply to texts.

Creating Fully-Rounded Authentic Characters from Distinct Aspects

"When you photograph a face... you photograph the soul behind it . . . Photography is truth." —French film director Jean-Luc Godard

Creating fully rounded characters requires as much skill as creating rich, insightful titles. In direct presentation, an author describes a character, the narrator, or the other characters. In indirect presentation, an author reveals a character through action and speech. In art and photography, explicit and implicit details reveal character traits. A character may be classified as round (three-dimensional, fully developed), or as flat (having only a few traits or only enough traits to fulfill her function in the work), as developing (dynamic), or as static. A character also may be described by a particular aspect, such as the shoes she wears:



Figure 82: “Pair of Shoes” by Vincent Van Gogh



Figure 83: “Diamond Dust Shoes” by Andy Warhol

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In “Pair of Shoes” Post-Impressionist artist Van Gogh’s coarse brushwork and layered, textured affect convey a way of life for working class peasants of rural nineteenth century Europe. The shoes represent the earthy people who were grounded to the land on which they toiled. Martin Heidegger asserts the shoes are symbolic of the peasant’s earthy lifestyle. “In them,” he notes, “vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of ripening corn and its enigmatic self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field . . . This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman” (Heidegger qtd. in *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* 6) Observe how the details of the shoes compare to the characters in “The Potato Eaters,” which depicts the kind of people Van Gogh imagined would wear the peasant shoes:



Figure 84: “The Potato Eaters” by Vincent Van Gogh

By creating a detailed aspect of a character, Van Gogh was able to envision a fully-realized character. Post-Modernist Andy Warhol’s “Diamond Dust Shoes” depicts a completely different type of character. Figure 85 is one of several paintings of shoes he created to represent the flatness and depthlessness of late twentieth century society. Warhol declared, “If you want to know all about Andy Warhol just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, there I am. There’s nothing behind it” (qtd. in Rojeck iii). Thus, the type of character who would wear “Diamond Dust Shoes” would look quite different from the type of character who would wear Van Gogh’s “Peasant Shoes.” The next model challenges the student to create fully-rounded, convincing characters based on character aspects, such as a pair of shoes. This skill requires the ability to envision a greater whole from a distinct part.

Model 3: Visualizing Character from Character Aspects

1. Write a descriptive paragraph for each of the following images of shoes. Consider the title as well as the art elements and composition details.
2. Write a descriptive paragraph of a character who might wear each example of shoes. Include telling details such as how the character talks, what profession she/he engages in, and any other pertinent information based the particulars of each image. Make sure each character you depict reflects a distinct personality. Write from either a third person or first person point of view.
3. Create four pairings of the eight shoe examples. In each pairing determine which shoes represent the most opposite characters. You may only use each image one time.
4. Pick your best example of opposites and create characters who would wear these shoes. Then, using details from the images, write the first five paragraphs of a short story involving your characters. Include an imagined conflict.



Figure 85: “Not Made For Walking” by Cindy Revell

©Cindy Revell, 8 x 10, Oil on Canvas. Used with Permission



Figure 86: "Harriet's Last Dance" by Suzanne Saul

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Figure 87: "Jukebox Lights" by Suzanne Saul

©Suzanne Saul. Used with Permission



Figure 88: "Water Bottle Sandals"



Figure 89: "Beach Feet"



Figure 90: "Nike Women's Running Shoe



Figure 91: "Dutch Wooden Shoes" by Sicko Atze van Dijk



Figure 92: "Corporate Ladder" by Suzanne Saul

©Suzanne Saul. Used with Permission

Analysis: By noting specific details within a wide variety of shoes the student is asked to develop imagined characters who would wear each type. The details of the shoe styles as well as the compositions of each image contribute to the overall meaning-making process. For example, in Figure 94 “Corporate Ladder,” the green pair of casual shoes in the foreground is juxtaposed against a “ladder” of shoes, suggesting a character that variously changes her image of herself depending on the circumstance. One wonders if the green pair of shoes reflects the real character or the current persona the character is assuming to promote her corporate image. In Figure 90 “Water Bottle Sandals,” an entirely different story emerges. The single pair of resourcefully

hand-made shoes reflects the wearer's ability to adapt to his austere environment by creating something of value from throwaway materials.

Questions three and four are more difficult. While some of the pairs form obvious opposites, such as the "Water Bottle Shoes" juxtaposed against the "Beach Feet," other pairs do not neatly fit into opposite categories. Also, as the student begins to create her short story, she might discover better story potentials for different pairing. For example, she might juxtapose "Water Bottle Shoes" with "Corporate Ladder" to depict a high level executive who has little regard for the indigenous people of a country where her corporation has just built a new factory. Thus, the student is challenged to find a variety of compelling stories that can be expressed in many complex ways, which are then realized through the creation of fully-round, authentic characters. In the next model, the student creates her own vision of a character's shoes based on textual details. A successful image will include composition details that suggest an overall theme as well as specific details. The details should clearly reflect the character she envisions after carefully studying the lines of the poem. The next model challenges students to create images from textual clues.

Model 4: Visualizing Character through Textual Details

1. Read the following poem by an unknown writer. Then create an image of the father's face based on the details from the poem. You may use any art medium.

The Iranian

They were my father's shoes

My mother looked at them and saw a donation to Goodwill

My father looked at them and saw his life.

They were there with him on the last step on his home country

They were there with him when he first saw me

They kissed the dirt of the land of opportunity

My mother looked at them and sees dust collectors

My father sees his first day at work

He sees his graduation

He sees the hard work it took to get these shoes

My mother looks at them and sees things that take up extra space

I don't look at the shoes

My father's face says it all

(Source: Anonymous)

2. Superimpose the text of the poem over the image of the father. You may alter your spacing or positioning of the poem to enhance both aspects (text-image). You may also adapt your text by experimenting with various font styles, sizes, and colors to achieve your effect.

Analysis: By challenging the student to envision an image from textual clues allows her to apply her knowledge of specific details to a greater vision. The open-ended discovery process is enhanced by her ability to choose among a wealth of visual methods to create her image. Thus,

by exploring artistic elements, such as shape, line, color, and texture, she provided the chance to experiment with how the elements combine and affect her final product. By superimposing the text over her image of the father, she is able to note how words blend with image into a cohesive whole. Her ability to experiment with fonts also allows her to understand how the appearance and visual manifestation of text affects the meaning-making process.

The next model presents well-written descriptions of round characters and then asks the student to create her own descriptions based on the specific details evident in images. The model is intended to deepen the student's skills in noting the interconnected relationship between texts and images.

Model 5: Describing Fully Rounded Characters through Images

Directions: Read the following examples of character descriptions. Decide whether each depicts a round or flat character. Round characters are three-dimensional and fully developed while flat characters have only a few traits or enough traits to fulfill their function in a literary work. Then, using the best examples as templates, write a round character description for each of the images. Use the specific details from the images and accompanying text to incorporate into your imagined characters.

A. [He had] a great damp loaf of a body. At six he weighed eighty pounds. At sixteen he was buried under a casement of flesh. Head shaped like a crenshaw, no neck, reddish hair rucked back. Features as bunched as kissed fingertips. Eyes the color of plastic. The monstrous chin, a freakish shelf jutting from the lower face.”(*The Shipping News* by Annie Proulx)

B. Well, judgin’ from his tracks, he’s about six and a half feet tall. He eats raw squirrels and all the cats he can catch. There’s a long, jagged scar that runs all the way across his face. His teeth are yella and rotten. His eyes are popped. (Jem describing the mysterious Boo Radley in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee).

C. Salvador inside that wrinkled shirt, inside the throat that must clear itself and apologize each time it speaks, inside that forty-pound body of boy with its geography of scars, its history of hurt, limbs stuffed with feathers and rags, in what part of the eyes, in what part of the heart, in that cage of the chest where something throbs with both fists and knows only what Salvador knows, inside that body too small to contain the hundred balloons of happiness, the single guitar of grief, is a boy like any other disappearing out the door, beside the schoolyard gate, where he has told his brothers they must wait. Collects the hands of Cecilio and Arturito, scuttles off dodging the many schoolyard colors, the elbows and wrists crisscrossing, the several shoes running. Grows small and smaller to the eye, dissolves into the bright horizon, flutters in the air before disappearing like a memory of kites. (“Salvador Late or Early” by Sandra Cisneros)

D. Miss Lottie seemed to be at least a hundred years old. Her big frame still held traces of the tall, powerful woman she must have been in youth, although it was now bent and drawn. Her smooth skin was a dark reddish-brown, and her face had Indian-like features and the stern stoicism that one associates with Indian faces. Miss Lottie . . . never left her yard and nobody ever visited her. We never knew how she managed those necessities that depend on human interaction—how she ate, for example, or even whether she ate. When we were tiny children, we thought Miss Lottie was a witch, and we made up tales that we half believed ourselves, about her exploits. . . Miss Lottie’s marigolds . . . did not fit in with the crumbling decay of the rest of her yard. Beyond the dusty brown yard in front of the sorry gray house, rose suddenly and shockingly a dazzling strip of bright blossoms, clumped together in enormous mounds, warm and passionate and sun-golden. The old black witch-woman worked on them all summer; every summer, down on her creaky knees, weeding and cultivating and arranging, while the house crumbled . . . (“Marigolds” by Eugenia Collier)

E. Mademoiselle Reisz was . . . dragging a chair in and out of her room, and at intervals objecting to the crying of a baby, which a nurse in the adjoining cottage was endeavoring to put to sleep. She was a disagreeable little woman, no longer young, who had quarreled with almost every one, owing to a temper which was self-assertive and a disposition to trample upon the rights of others . . . She entered the hall . . . during a lull in the dance. She made an awkward, imperious little bow as she went in. She was a homely woman, with a small weazened face and body and eyes that glowed. She had absolutely no taste in dress, and wore a batch of rusty black lace with a bunch of artificial violets pinned to the side of her hair. (*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin)

F. I look into her swollen red eyes. She still has a hangover from last night’s stupor. Her once beautiful, shiny hair is now frazzled clumps. As usual, she wears no makeup. She is overweight, and she knows it. (*A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer)

G. The boy was grey, too. He wore an olive green trenchcoat (an army cast-off like his boots) over funereal black, greasy hair obscuring his eyes. They must have been grey. He

was narrow-shouldered and small, and walked like he was in a trance. I suppose he was. It was trance weather. (*If You Lived Here, You'd be Home by Now* by Joe Bowers)



Figure 93: "The Seal-hunter, Noatak" by Edward S. Curtis



Figure 94: "Mrs. F. M. Kendall" by Horace Bristol, 1939



Figure 95: “Marine in Korea 1950” by David Douglas Duncan



Figure 96: “Four-Year-Old Carrying Water” by Brent Stirton, Ghana, 2008

Analysis: By first determining which of the descriptions best describe round characters, the student becomes aware of how details create depth on many concurrent levels. For instance, in example G, the description of black as *funereal black* connotes black as a symbol of death. This concept is reinforced with the description of *greasy hair obscuring his eyes*, with the word *eyes* doubling as a symbol of the character's figurative inability to see. Thus, the word *trance* that repetitiously follows reinforces the concept of someone who has lost his ability to see, and is no longer fully alive. By then presenting the student with images, the student examines the contextual details from which to envision fully-rounded characters. The student might note, for example, the contrast between the thin, lithe limbs of the four-year old girl and her raised bare feet in striking contrast to the heavy water bucket that rests atop her head, as well as the ironic background in which electric lines are strung, suggesting a modern world in sharp contrast to her primitive one. The next model uses a similar method to explore the larger contextual setting that characters inhabit.

Creating Round Characters in Fully Realized Settings

"One returns to the place one came from."

—Jean de La Fontaine

Setting refers to the particular world in which a story takes place. Details that describe the location, the weather, the time of day, as well as the time in history contribute to the setting. Descriptive details usually establish the setting, but sometimes narration or dialogue also reveals the location and time. Setting contributes to the tone and mood of the story and adds dimension

to the conflicts the characters face. Annie Proulx comments about the importance of the landscape in the settings of her stories: “For me everything begins with the great landscape—not scenery, but soil and water, climate and weather, indigenous plant and animal life, geography and geology . . . [A] landscape in a particular time orders the personalities and characters of my stories, shapes the stories themselves which must tumble out of the place portrayed” (“Annie Proulx Biography,” par 2). The next model challenges students to create fully realized settings from visual images by studying the small, telling details within exemplary literary passages. As the exercise progresses, students are asked to then create story beginnings based on the settings with at least one character.

Model 6: Creating Character and Setting through Visual Details

Directions: Study the following setting descriptions and note how the author employs details to create an overall atmosphere. Then, study the images that follow and answer the questions.

A. Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer’s day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men’s stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o’clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum. (*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee)

B. It was a cold and cheerless evening. The fog seemed to hover over the street, clutching the buildings, the streetlamps—the entire city—in a damp, icy grip. If one were to stand still, passers-by would emerge briefly from the gloom, only to disappear from view after taking just a few steps. These ghostly apparitions tormented James as he impatiently waited for his valet to return with his carriage. (*A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens)

C. The high grey-flannel fog of winter closed off the Salinas Valley from the sky and from all the rest of the world. On every side it sat like a lid on the mountains and made of the great valley a closed pot. On the broad, level land floor the gang plows bit deep and left the black earth shining like metal where the shares had cut. On the foothill ranches

across the Salinas River, the yellow stubble fields seemed to be bathed in pale cold sunshine, but there was no sunshine in the valley now in December. The thick willow scrub along the river flamed with sharp and positive yellow leaves. ("The Chrysanthemums" by John Steinbeck)

D. The Villa San Girolamo, built to protect inhabitants from the flesh of the devil, had the look of a besieged fortress, the limbs of most of the statues blown off during the first days of shelling. There seemed little demarcation between house and landscape, between damaged building and the burned and shelled remnants of the earth. To Hana the wild gardens were further rooms... In spite of the burned earth, in spite of the lack of water. Someday there would be a bower of limes, rooms of green light. (*The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje)

E. Ennis Del Mar wakes before five, wind rocking the trailer, hissing in around the aluminum door and window frames. The shirts hanging on a nail shudder slightly in the draft. He gets up . . . shuffles to the gas burner, pours leftover coffee in the chipped enamel pan; the flame swathes it in blue." ("Brokeback Mountain" by Annie Proulx)

F. The towers of Zenith aspired above the morning mist; austere towers of steel and cement and limestone, sturdy as cliffs and delicate as silver rods. (*Babbitt* by Upton Sinclair)

G. It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents, except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the house-tops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness. (*Paul Clifford* by Edward George Bulwer-Lytton)

H. A breeze ruffled the neat hedges of Privet Drive, which lay silent and tidy under the inky sky, the very last place you would expect astonishing things to happen. Harry Potter rolled over inside his blankets without waking up. One small hand closed on the letter beside him and he slept on, not knowing he was special, not knowing he was famous, not knowing he would be woken in a few hours' time by Mrs. Dursley's scream as she opened the front door to put out the milk bottles, nor that he would spend the next few weeks being prodded and pinched by his cousin Dudley...He couldn't know that at this very moment, people meeting in secret all over the country were holding up their glasses and saying in hushed voices: "To Harry Potter - the boy who lived!" (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling)

I. Every light in the hall was ablaze; every lamp turned as high as it could be without smoking the chimney or threatening explosion. The lamps were fixed at

intervals against the wall, encircling the whole room. Some one had gathered orange and lemon branches, and with these fashioned graceful festoons between. The dark green of the branches stood out and glistened against the white muslin curtains which draped the windows, and which puffed, floated, and flapped at the capricious will of a stiff breeze that swept up from the Gulf. (*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin)

Questions:

1. Based on the small details within each of the above examples, create a fully realized setting for each of the following images.
2. Write an opening paragraph to a possible short story or novel based on the details you observe within each of the following images. Include a fully-rounded character (or characters) based on the details you observe from any of the characters within each image.
3. Explain which of your openings works best to invite the reader into a fully realized world.
4. Explain which images have the best story potential and why.



Figure 97: "Katrina Survivors in Houston Shelter," by Andrea Booher, 2005



Figure 98: "Carnival Time"



Figure 99: "McLean, Virginia, December 1978" by Joel Sternfeld

© Joel Sternfeld. Used with permission.



Figure 100: "Cityscapes"



Figure 101: "Vernal Baker" by Andy Hernandez. Arizona, 1986

Analysis: Encouraging the student to study strong examples of texts and images and then try her hand at creating her own fully-realized characters and settings directs her toward seeking crucial details to create a story atmosphere. By studying example E, for instance, the student might note that Proulx goes beyond merely describing both the character and the landscape by blending personified details of the landscape (the hissing wind) with personified details of the character's belongings (shirts that shudder slightly in the draft). Her carefully chosen words create a framework from which a multi-layered story can unfold. Thus, specific details do not lead to narrow, predictable conclusions, but point toward complex characters, settings of depth, and a wealth of story possibilities.

The next chapter builds upon the concepts of comparative relationships by examining the various ways writers and artists frame their works to create specific boundaries. It first investigates framing as a subjective process and demonstrates how every selected frame yields a unique perspective.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FRAMING MEANING

Framing Meaning through Contextual Positions

Roland Barthes defines meaning as an order “with chaos on either side; one that is essentially a division” (*The Elements of Semiology* 116). This chapter explores Barthes’ claim by introducing learning strategies that demonstrate how the act of framing contributes to the overall perspective of texts and images. Framing refers to the boundary lines an author or artist *chooses* to establish a contextual position. It anchors the concept of contextual position by creating specific lines of demarcation that order the author’s selection process. In a story, an author’s may create more than one frame of reference to yield new ways of seeing and connecting ideas.

For example, in “Looking at a Blackbird,” Wallace Stevens builds thirteen different ways of seeing a blackbird. While each perspective presents a distinct *frame* of meaning, when the thirteen frames are combined, a new, overall structure of meaning emerges. Stevens uses imagery and free verse to reveal the differing points of view. Free verse allows for shifts in rhythm and meter to create a poetic effect. Patterned after the spoken word, it allows for abrupt shifts in rhythm to express shifts in mood, while maintaining a unified effect. Stevens creates rhythmic patterns to underscore the vivid imagery of each stanza. As the reader progresses through each stanza, she builds thirteen different *pictures* of reality as symbolized by the blackbird, with each frame reflecting a distinct relationship between the blackbird and his environment. By closely examining visual and textual clues, the student is encouraged to reflect upon how distinct frames of meaning build into a thematic whole. The first model examines Steven’s method of framing meaning.

Model 1: "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Poem"

Directions: In the first stanza, the single, moving eye of the dark blackbird begins to emerge as the "figure" against the background of twenty white motionless mountains. As you read the selection, consider the various perspectives the blackbird comes to represent in its ever-shifting relationship to the contrasting landscape. Then answer the questions that follow.

"Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" by Wallace Stevens

I
Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II
I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three.

III
The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV
A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V
I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI
Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird

Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII
O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII
I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX
When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X
At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI
He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII
The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII
It was evening all afternoon.

It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

1. In prose format, briefly explain the point of view from each stanza.
2. Which stanzas show the most similar points of view? Explain.
3. Which two stanzas show the most opposite points of view? Explain.
3. Which stanza shows the most distinctive point of view? Explain.
4. Explore how rhythm plays a role in the shifting points of view.
5. Explain what other literary techniques create each particular perspective.
6. What is the overall theme of this poem? Explain how each point of view contributes to the overall theme.

Analysis: “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” presents thirteen distinct ways of viewing which build to create a thematic whole. By analyzing each aspect the student discovers common threads from which to interpret the entire poem. For example, by contrasting the first stanza, *Among twenty snowy mountains / The only moving thing / Was the eye of the blackbird* with the last stanza, *It was evening all afternoon / It was snowing / And it was going to snow / The blackbird sat / In the cedar-limbs*, many dualities are revealed. By visualizing these dualities and then noting how they combine, the student can then interpret a thematic statement.

For instance, in the first stanza the eye of the blackbird as the *only moving thing* dominates the solid mountains that form the background. In the last stanza the action shifts to

the snow—*It was snowing / And it was going to snow*—which emerges against the blackbird that now “sits.” The static nature of the collective *twenty snowy mountains* contrasts as well with the dynamic nature of the lone eye of the moving blackbird. Thus, in the last stanza, as the movement shifts to the emerging snow as it permeates the entire region, the subsequent retreat of the single eye into a motionless, and therefore, unseeing, state can be considered a cause and effect relationship that invites thematic interpretation.

Stanza VIII presents a picture of blackbird deeply involved—and thus in harmony—with the natural rhythms of life. Therefore, as the blackbird is *flying*, the water of the river is not frozen like snow or icicles, but is *moving* and hence in its own way as alive and “all seeing” as the blackbird. Note as well that the contrasting rhythm of long, flowing lines with short, concise lines underscores the inherent sense of order established through the careful balancing act between the blackbird and nature. Through these comparatives and others, the student can construe an overall theme. For instance, although the blackbird has a limited prescience over the effects of nature, he will eventually surrender to the winter of his own life, brought about by the rhythmic, natural, and cyclical processes of the natural world. The next model examines how story fragments can be visually combined to create a composite whole.

Model 2: Framing, Point of View, and Story Development

1. Study the compiled painting, “The Execution of Maximilian,” as well as the information below it. Then, write a descriptive essay recreating the entire scene from the third person omniscient point of view.



Figure 102: “The Execution of Maximilian” by Edouard Manet

According to the British National Gallery, Napoleon III installed the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian in Mexico as a puppet emperor around 1863. Maximilian depended on the support of the occupying French army and when Napoleon withdrew his troops, Mexican forces, loyal to their legitimate republican government, captured Maximilian. Mexican forces executed him alongside two of his generals, Mejía and Miramón, on June 19, 1867. The left-hand section of the canvas showing General Mejía was probably cut off by Manet himself. After the artist’s death the canvas was cut up into smaller fragments, some of which were sold separately. Edgar Degas eventually purchased all the surviving fragments and reassembled them on a single canvas (“The Execution of Maximilian,” par. 2-3).

2. Write a paragraph describing each of the fragments from the first person point of view. Weave your original stories with the details from the paintings and the historical information provided as skillfully as you can.



Figure 103: "Maximilian"



Figure 104: “The Executioner”

Analysis: This model requires the student to carefully analyze details of three distinct photographs and then incorporate them into a greater story. Each photograph is framed to reflect a distinct perspective. Each frame is cropped differently, thus suggesting different priorities of information. For example, the rifle in “The Executioner” predominates, while a narrow strip of “Maximilian” is framed, thus heightened the viewer’s sense of awareness of his trapped state. The eye is drawn to his bare hands in the center of the framed image in striking contrast to the executioner’s hands that hold the rifle. The student might also note the framing accentuates the similar look of equanimity on both of the men’s faces as a common thread that thematically connects them to their corresponding fate and duty.

By adding a range of contradictory aspects within a composed and orchestrated whole, the painter evokes fully-rounded characters which yield rich potential for story details. For

example, the white that surrounds Maximilian contrasts with the dark clouds that surround the gray-clad soldiers. As white often symbolizes innocence and dark often symbolizes corruption, the student may ponder who the real villain is, Maximilian or the soldiers. Manet's style contains a collage of fragments that mirrors the sense of division evident between within each frame of reference, such the one soldier who stares down at his rifle reflectively and the rest of the soldiers who collectively point their rifles at Maximilian.

Writers likewise often start from a specific aspect embedded within a larger perspective that is not immediately revealed to the reader, yet when the reader grasps the greater whole, a shift of mental sets occurs that results in a new, overall perspective. Thus, a writer frames the beginning of her story by selecting the only the details she wants her audience to know. In doing so she establishes her initial contextual position from which to allow the later shifts to occur. Note how Edgar Allan Poe establishes the mood as a frame of reference at the beginning of "The Fall of the House of Usher":

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country ; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was - but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. (1)

By creating a melancholy mood from the onset, Poe frames his story by embedding the mood into the larger context. Some writers create initial frames of reference that differ sharply with the wider perspective. This method creates a shifting process that requires the reader to rethink her

earlier contextual position. Note how the framing process is accomplished textually and visually by observing how the framing of the ocean invites the viewer into an open expanse of clear blue sky. Images of open spaces that stretch into the horizon often evoke the idea of freedom:

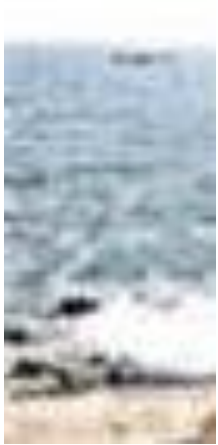


Figure 105: “Ocean”

However, when the framing is pulled back, a different “story” emerges:



Figure 106: “Door”

Without any textual information accompanying the visual, the viewer sees an open door leading from a dark, tunnel-like room made of stone, into the open sea beyond. The sunny atmosphere beckons her to enter its open realm of light and space, while the open door symbolizes the portal of passage from one realm to another.

Yet when the following textual information accompanies the photograph, a new story emerges:

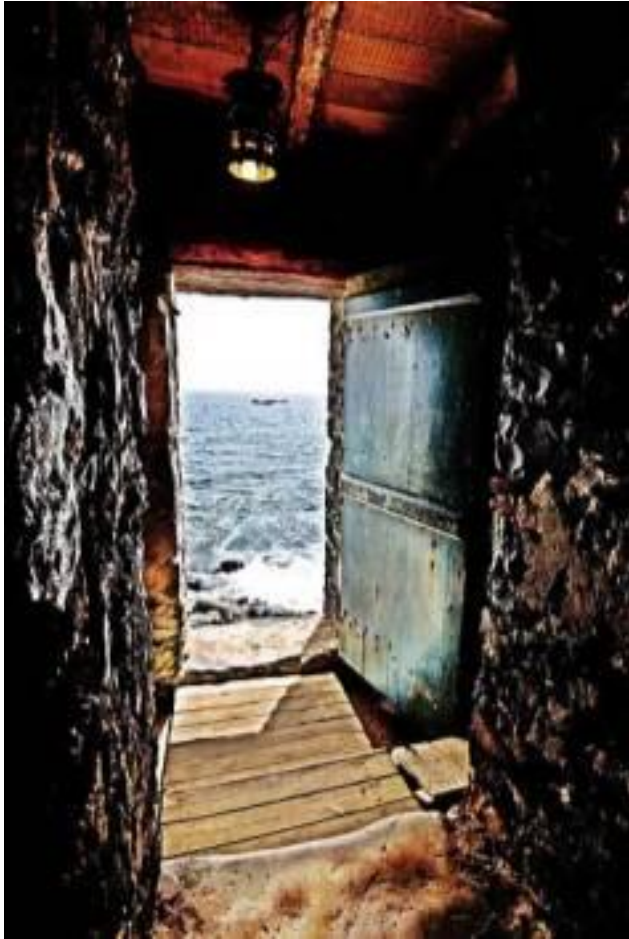


Figure 107: “House of Slaves” by Shahidul Alam

“The Door of no Return” was the exit point from the “House of Slaves.” Slaves were either shipped across the Atlantic Ocean, or fed to the sharks. The “House of Slaves,” now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was built in 1780 in Goree Island in Senegal.

By combining the text with the image, the viewer-reader discovers the ironic message that the sunny world that beckons beyond the door is actually an invitation to death. Thus, the narrow framing of the ocean suggests a contextual position much different from the overall meaning. The next model explores this concept through character and setting details.

Model 3: Framing Character

1. Write a character description based on the details of the following photograph:



Figure 108: "The Couple"

2. Create an imagined dialogue between the couple, incorporating any of the details visible within the frame.
3. Adapt your description of the following image to reflect the new frame of reference:



Figure 109: "The Couple in the Catacombs" by Elliot Erwitz

4. Interpret the expression on the two girl's face and then describe an imagined setting.



Figure 110: "The Child"

3. Adapt your description of the following image to reflect the new frame of reference:



Figure 111: "The Children at the Puppet Show" by Alfred Eisenstaedt

5. Interpret the collective facial expressions and describe an imagined setting. Then, compare your setting with the actual setting. These children are watching the climax of a puppet show in Paris in 1963. They are actually shouting, “The dragon is slain!” Re-examine the photograph to note the clues that connote the real event. The next section explores how frames lure the student beyond the physical borders into imagined realms.

Images as Sites for Investigation

“Don’t sow; grow offshoots!” –Deleuze and Guattari

Marcel O’Gorman views images as sites for investigation. He argues that the ambivalence of Stephen Gibb’s “Eye Socket” provides it with “generative potential” from which new stories may be created.



Figure 112: “Eye Socket” by Stephen Gibb

“The eye is battered and worn, simultaneously crying and sweating, hemmed in hopelessly by a threatening swarm of circuits, chips, and switches,” he states. “[There is] a menacing three-pronged plug that looms serpent-like, waiting to be ‘jacked in’” (17). O’Gorman asserts the power of the image lies within its ability to lure the viewer into its realm of uncertainty. “The viewer is invited to guess what lies at the other end of the tri-pronged cord,” he notes, and then poses the question, “What invisible appliance threatens at any moment to be jacked in, wired for action?” (19).

O’Gorman encourages instructors to provide students with images “that draw on the suggestive power of pictures as a means of generating new modes of writing suitable to an image-oriented culture” (12). The “Eye Socket,” which invites the student to follow multiple pathways beyond its physical frame of reference, thus becomes “a tool for invention” as well as a “generator of concepts and linkages unavailable to conventional scholarly practices,” O’Gorman notes (12). By engaging in the discovery process of learning, O’Gorman claims that students break out of “the hermeneutic circle” of traditional practices that focuses on the fixed result (12). The next model explores how the act of framing establishes a contextual position from which multiple paths can be followed.

Model 4: Framing and Setting the Scene

Directions: Consider the following image of wood:



Figure 113: "Rough Wooden Surface"

While the wood might be described as “rustic, fresh-cut, and splintery,” consider it as a tool for invention, one that can be incorporated into completely different stories while still retaining its essential characteristics.

1. Write a descriptive sentence of the close up photograph of a rough wooden surface in the above image.
2. Examine the wooden surfaces evident in each of the following photographs. Then, incorporate the descriptive paragraph of the rough wooden surface into the first five paragraphs of a beginning short story for each. Make sure your descriptive adjectives are exactly the same in each story, yet yield to a different end result.



Figure 114: "Unemployed Man Eating in Soup Kitchen"

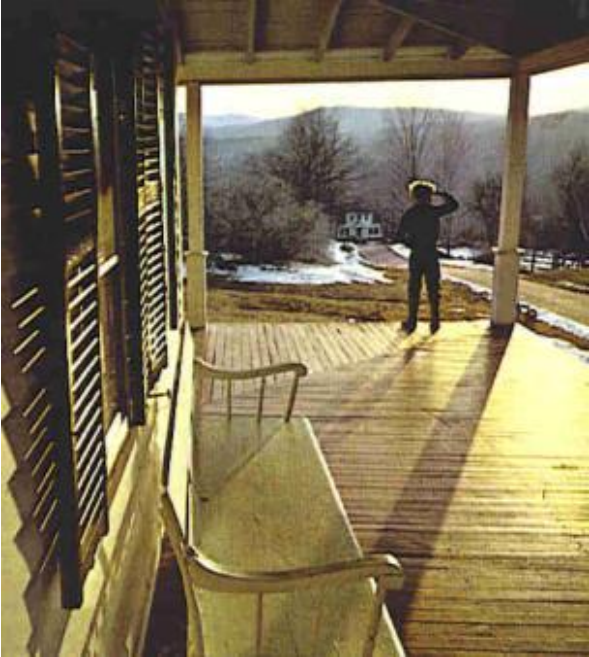


Figure 115: "Dawn" by Bill Binzen. New Hampshire, 1965



Figure 116: "/Children Playing at White Lake"

Analysis: By challenging the student to incorporate a single object into a series of varying images, she must consider the various ways a specific can apply to a greater whole. A descriptive sentence of the rough wooden surface might read as follows: “The rustic wood surface looked fresh-cut and raw and was splintery to the touch.” When incorporated into the first image, a resulting beginning might read as follows: “The man stared into his soup bowl as he ate, neither feeling the warm steam rise onto his face nor the chill penetrating his feet from the long hours he’d stood in line just to get a meal. One elbow rested on the edge of the long wooden table as he clutched a hunk of bread. The rustic wood surface was fresh-cut and raw and felt splintery. It was one of dozens of tables that had been put together hastily to create more space in the soup kitchen. But the man didn’t feel that, either. All he felt was the warm food going down his throat.”

A differing story might emerge from the second image as such: “The young man stood on the edge of his porch, staring into the distance. His breath hung in the frigid air like hoary clouds

and the icy wooden boards creaked beneath his feet. The rustic wood surface was fresh-cut and raw and felt splintery beneath his thin slippers, but it glowed like spun gold under the rising sun.” The differing examples collectively demonstrate the range of possibilities that can be generated from a specific frame of reference. In such ways, the student is challenged to stretch her abilities to create wide-ranging authentic stories. The next section addresses how even the most random of images can be used as a specific frame of reference from which to generate varying stories and perspectives.

Creating New Frames of Reference

“No image is boring, you are not obligated to wait for the next in order to understand and be delighted”—Sergei Eisenstein

Photographer John Szarkowski notes that for centuries painting entailed a painstaking, expensive process that recorded “what was known to be important” whereas when photography first emerged, it was “easy, cheap, and ubiquitous” (4). A flood of randomly composed images resulted, which led to new ways of framing meaning. “Since the photographer’s picture was not conceived but selected, his subject was never truly discrete, never wholly self-contained,” Szarkowski notes. “The edges of his film demarcated what he thought most important, but the subject he had shot was something else; it had extended in four directions. If the photographer’s frame surrounded two figures, isolating them from the crowd in which they stood, it created a relationship between those two figures that had not existed before,” he adds (4). Thus, he emphasizes that new ways of interpreting meaning arose. The next section expands the story telling and interpretive process by asking students to look beyond conventional aspects of a frame of reference within a text or image, to consider the lesser known details in the selection

process. By selecting details that may escape obvious attention, students are able to broaden their base from which stories can be both generated and understood.

Sergei Eisenstein describes film as “a contiguity of episodes, each one absolutely meaningful, aesthetically perfect, and the result is a cinema by vocation anthological, itself holding out to the fetishist, with dotted lines, the piece for him to cut out and take away to enjoy” (qtd. in *Image, Music, Text* 71-72). The next model explores this concept by challenging the student to generate stories that originate from random pieces.

Model 5: Framing and Creating New Orders

Directions: Observe how Eliot Elisofon’s photograph of Marcel Duchamp descending a staircase exemplifies the range of expression that can be captured moment by moment through a short sequence of time, and then compressed into a whole, as is characteristic of film. Then, focus on single episode within the composition that follows.



Figure 117: “Marcel Duchamp” by Eliot Elisofon, 1952



Figure 118: "Face"



Figure 119: "Feet"

1. Examine the “cut out” pieces of “Marcel Duchamp” in Figure 120 and Figure 121 and write a descriptive paragraph for each as if it were a distinct entity. Create an original title for each.
2. Write a paragraph describing Figure 119 without using any of the descriptive details you incorporated in your descriptions of the pieces.
3. Compare and contrast your descriptive pieces with the greater whole. Explain what details you omitted in your description of Figure 119.

Analysis: Describing distinctly framed parts of a greater whole challenges the student to observe how each part is capable of standing alone. In the cut out pieces, for example, the student might observe a solitary moment of reflection noted in Duchamp's face or remark on how the stairs remain solid and unchanging in contrast to the parade of moving feet. By focusing on a small piece of a larger picture, the student notes how close up frames can be perceived much differently than wide-angle frames.

Roland Barthes urges the viewer to concentrate on what the details mean and how they function as signs to make explicit what is implicit. This process involves looking beyond the surface level to the "third" level in order to find the "obtuse" meaning. The obtuse meaning is based on the idea of the "punctum" which he defines as "a personal memory based on a private repertoire" that "stings the viewer" on an unconscious level through a detail or accident in the photograph. It "occurs when there is a match between a signifier in the scene (in the photograph), and a scene in the memory," he states (*Image, Music, Text* 45).

Barthes asserts that by allowing a memory to reorder the priorities of what one sees within an image, the viewer participates in creating a new way of ordering, one with chaos on either side; one that is essentially a division" (*The Elements of Semiology* 116). Thus, by "cutting out shapes" one is able to establish new forms of order and generate new perspectives from which to create stories that evoke a personal response as well as an interconnective quality between the author and the image. The next model examines how the seemingly arbitrary process of cutting out shapes creates new forms of order. Unlike the above model, the shapes are completely random.

Model 6: Generating Perspectives through “Cutting out Shapes”

1. Visually “cut out” any three pieces from the following photograph and write a descriptive paragraph describing each piece.
2. Create the first five paragraphs of a short story for each piece. Be sure to include a conflict that your story will develop, as well as hint toward a theme that will later emerge.
3. Explain how you chose which pieces to cut out and how each piece affected each story.



Figure 120: “Floating Market at Damnoen Saduak Canal, Thailand” by Craig J. Brown

Analysis: Encouraging the student to concentrate on what the details mean and how they function as signs to make explicit what is implicit challenges her to generate new perspectives from which to create stories. Although the model does not explicitly require the student to cut out pieces based on the idea of the punctum, whether this process is used might be clearly

evident by the choices the student makes. For example, she may cut out the following image of freshly cut grassy green vegetables, based on a smell she remembers from childhood:



Figure 121: "The Smell of Fresh-cut Grass"

In this example, the student might revolve an entire story around the smell of fresh-cut grass. Her new form of order might replace the conventional notion of a story as having a beginning, middle, and end, and center around the smell the image evokes from her memory. Or, she might choose to cut out the legs of the little boy beside his small folded umbrella and juxtapose him next to the opened, protective umbrella belonging to his mother. By focusing on the duality of his vulnerability against her protectiveness, the potential for a different story might emerge:



Figure 122: "Small Boy, Big Umbrella"

Or, by focusing on the women holding each other's hands while isolated on separate boats,

another story might emerge which may either enhance the story of the little boy, or yield itself to an entirely different perspective:



Figure 123: "Women on Separate Boats Unite"

Thus, through the process of cutting out pieces and focusing on the details within those pieces, the student creates stories based on new forms of order. This method expands the base from which meaning is created as well as interpreted. Most importantly, it demands that details within every image contain a world within itself waiting to be explored. Furthermore, it re-orders priorities by removing the notion that an image requires another image to complete it. Instead, it embraces Roland Barthe's claim that every detail of an image is important in the meaning-making process as well as Sergei Eisenstein's assertion that no image is boring.

The next chapter explores the potential of texts and images as sites for investigation. The models encourage the student to go past predictable, didactic routes into multiple points of inquiry. Based on the Gestalt-inspired law of similarity, the models investigate comparatives within texts and images. It then examines how these various threads of similarity combine to create overall themes that reflect each thread as a distinct entity while at the same time a part of a greater whole.

CHAPTER EIGHT: VISUALIZING PATTERNS OF SIMILARITY

“Similarity is based not on piecemeal identity but on correspondence of essential features.” —Rudolph Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*

Seeking Similarities through Text and Image

This chapter introduces text-image learning strategies that focus on the Gestaltist law of similarity as a method of categorizing and emphasizing key points. The law of similarity states that we group objects that share similar qualities. Grouping can occur in both visual and auditory stimuli and can involve any quality of similarity. For example, in Figure 126 we tend to perceive horizontal rows of objects instead of vertical columns or other arrangements, even when each circle is equidistant:

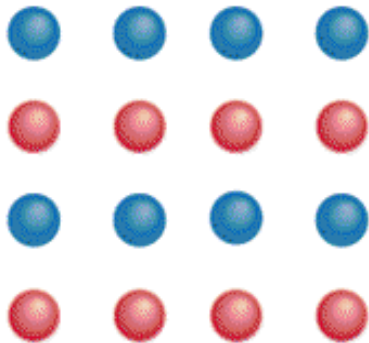


Figure 124: "The Law of Similarity"

This law underscores the human tendency to search for specific categories as a way of ordering and understanding the greater environment. By grouping similar elements within a work, the

student discovers how the particular qualities of an element combine to add a distinctive voice to the overall work. By then interweaving these elements into a greater whole, she observes the interrelationship between the substructures that form the foundation of both texts and images. The chapter begins by exploring how similar sound patterns in poetry interact to create meaning and then examines how similar visual patterns in images interrelate in a similar fashion to create meaning.

Seeking Similarities through Sound Patterns

Alliteration is the repetition of similar sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables. Modern alliteration is predominantly consonantal, although certain literary traditions, such as Old English verse, use vowel sounds. Alliteration is similar to **assonance** which is a similarity in vowel-sounds within non-rhyming words such as **crum**ble and **bun**ker. **Consonance** is the repetition of consonants or consonant patterns within words and at the end of words as in **thin**k and **sank**. **Rhyme** is the similarity of terminal sounds of words or of lines of verse, such as **thin**k and **sink**. Sometimes these terms overlap, especially in the case of rhyme, and when beginning sounds are matched with ending sounds.

Used sparingly, the repetition of similar sounds intensifies ideas by emphasizing key words. For example: “**B**eaded **b**ubbles winking at the **b**rim” (John Keats) and “**F**ive **m**iles **m**eandering **i**n a **m**azy **m**otion” (Coleridge). Similar sounds also create an echo effect: “**A**nd the **s**ilken **s**ad **u**ncertain **r**ustling of each **p**urple **c**urtain” (Edgar Allan Poe).

The combination of various similar sounds within verse results in highly musical, rhymed poems. The Anglo-Saxon oral poets combined similar sounds with carefully placed pauses (caesuras) to add music and rhythm to their stories. Oral poets mesmerized audiences by

musically connecting words so that stories could be easily memorized and passed down from one generation to the next.

Alliterative phrases are noteworthy in the earliest known surviving Anglo Saxon epic poem, *Beowulf*. Beowulf is a Swedish prince who comes to help the Danish King Hrothgar rid his kingdom of the monstrous Grendel who feeds on his men in the middle of the night. Beowulf succeeds in mortally wounding the monster that flees to die in his underground lair. Later, Beowulf must prove his strength by confronting a dragon. The story—borne of a time when life in natural settings was harsh—exaggerates the qualities of Good and Evil personified in the opposing characters, yet remains a richer epic than a mere analogy of Good versus Evil. The use of similar sound patterns creates a common characteristic of strength for the oppositional characters while concurrently pitting them in a figure-ground dynamic. These substructures reveal the deep motives of the characters as well as escalate the tension that drives the epic.

The substructure of similarity is evident in the alliterative phrases as Grendel first encounters Beowulf and is startled by his vigor. In particular, the guttural G sounds are associated with the growl of an animal, the C sounds are associated with Grendel's callous killing nature, and the B sounds are associated with Grendel's boldness. The repetitious sounds intensify until the monster discovers the strength of his foe:

Grendel snatched at the first Geat
He came to, ripped him apart, cut
His body to bits with powerful jaws,
Drank the blood from his veins, and bolted
And Grendel's great teeth came together,

Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another
Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
—And was instantly seized himself, claws
Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm. (421-31)

At this point, Grendel's boldness begins to dissipate with the soft sounds of the second line:

That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime / Knew at once that nowhere on earth (432-33).

Beowulf's strength rises at this point and overwhelms Grendel as demonstrated by the assault of hard consonants. Grendel's earlier alliterative growling sounds reduce to one ending word: *grip*:

Had he met a man whose hands were harder;
His mind was flooded with fear—but nothing
Could take his talons and himself from that tight
Hard grip. (434-37)

These shared patterns reveal similar qualities of strength between both characters. The ultimate triumph of Beowulf is reinforced by the knowledge that Grendel is indeed a formidable foe as evidenced by the continued use of alliteration up to his death. Yet the shift that depicts the lessening of Grendel's strength becomes the turning point in the poem. The bold B sounds that depict his death reinforce Beowulf's hold on him until the end as he slips into the hidden hell depicted by the hushed H sounds and the softer, weary W sounds as he sinks into the bloody water:

... his beaten
And lonely flight, to the edge of the lake

Where he'd dragged his corpselike way, doomed
And already weary of his vanishing life.
The water was bloody, steaming and boiling
In horrible pounding waves, heat
Sucked from his magic veins; but the swirling
Surf had covered his death, hidden
Deep in murky darkness his miserable
End, as hell opened to receive him. (524-30)

Fifty years later, as Beowulf—now near ninety—confronts the Dragon, note how alliteration, assonance, and consonance interweave to reinforce the near even strength of both characters:

(Beowulf)

And the Geats'

Lord and leader, angry, lowered

His sword and roared out a battle cry,

A call so loud and clear that it reached through

The hoary rock, hung in the dragon's

Ear.

(Dragon)

The beast rose, angry,

Knowing a man had come—and then nothing

But war could have followed. Its breath came first,

A steaming cloud pouring from the stone,

Then the earth itself shook.

(Beowulf)

Beowulf

Swung his shield into place, held it

In front of him, facing the entrance.

(Dragon)

The dragon

Coiled and uncoiled, its heart urging it

Into battle. (699-711)

Alliteration results in a highly effective reinforcement of themes as demonstrated in the above passage, yet when overused it results in distracting sing-song effects. The key consideration when writing and interpreting poetic passages is to note the ways various kinds of sound patterns overlap, thereby creating a rich musical interplay of distinct entities that underscores the overall theme. By visually highlighting similarities within each sound pattern and noting the ways they combine to create a cohesive effect, the student is provided an added dimension of the many ways text conveys meaning beyond words. The first model explores how similarities within visual elements likewise combine to create a rich, cohesive effect.

This model first challenges the student to observe how similarities within the art elements of color, line, shape, and texture, each lend a distinct perspective to an overall image. The model then invites her to interpret an overall theme that incorporates all the elements.

Model 1: Visualizing Art Elements through the Law of Similarity

Directions: Study the art elements in Appendix B. Then note how the similarities within each element contribute to the meaning of the following photograph.



Figure 125: “The Rooftop Ballerina” by Joe McNally

1. Write a descriptive paragraph that focuses on how each of the following art elements; color, line, shape, and texture adds a unique perspective to the meaning-making process. Make sure to note as many similarities as possible within each element.
2. Compare and contrast your paragraphs. Then, write a new paragraph that incorporates the combined perspectives into a cohesive entity.
3. Create a new title for the photograph based on your descriptive paragraph.

Analysis: Grouping various aspects within an image encourages the student to understand how perspective is influenced by a range of similarity groupings. For example, she might write a paragraph describing color as follows: “The white-clad ballerina is linked to the airy white of the clouds, while her pointed white shoes touch the gray of the rooftop that stretches as a plain before her. The darkness of the buildings crisply cut out against the lightness of the sky suggests the ballerina is free of the constraints of the built environment and is a part of the heavens reigning above.” The student might then note the similarities within the shapes to add another dimension as follows: “The shape of the buildings in the distance are pointed spires, which match the shape of the ballerina’s pointed feet and uplifted face to suggest a reference for the spiritual in contrast to the rectangular shape of the flat, sloping roof beneath her.”

Her observations of texture might include contrasts between the smooth and flat rooftop in contrast to the fluffy clouds and fluffy tutu of the ballerina. These remarks might lead her to then surmise, “It is as if the clouds, the cloud-like tutu and the dreams they symbolize have substance.” By combining varying aspects through the similar qualities within each element, she is then challenged to develop deeper, richer interpretations of an image.

The next series of models encourage the student to carefully observe the details of paired images as she makes “a substantial leap” to connect the two first visually and then textually. The models begin with simple comparatives of art elements between images and advance to more embedded comparatives. The images used for Models 2, 3, and 4 include the following pairs:

Pair 1

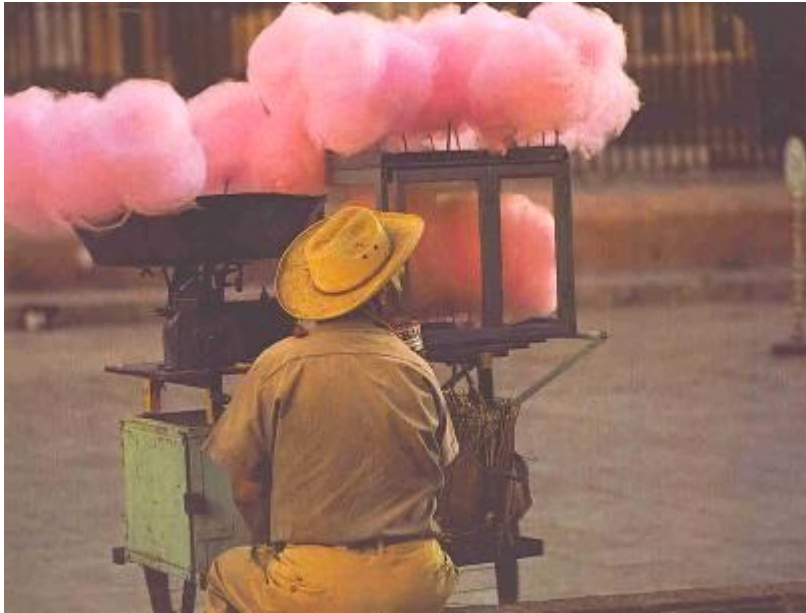


Figure 126: "Cotton-Candy Vendor" by Douglas Faulkner



Figure 127: "Fiery Sunset"

Pair 2



Figure 128: "Navajo Indian," by William M. Pennington and Wesley Rowland, 1914



Figure 129: "Windows and Walls"

Pair 3



Figure 130: "Indian Colors"



Figure 131: "Summer Daze" by Katie Weaver

Pair 4



Figure 132: "Pablo Picasso" by Irving Penn



Figure 133: "Turtle Smile"

Pair 5



Figure 134: “New England” by Paul Strand



Figure 135: “Young Man” by Paul Strand

Pair 6



Figure 136: "White Angel Breadline" by Dorothea Lange, Winter 1933



Figure 137: "Solitary Existence"

Model 2: Visualizing Similarities through Similes

Similes are figures of speech that compare two unlike things through an analogy, using the words *like*, *as*, *than*, or *resembles*. For example, *His feet were as big as boats*. Robert McKim asks us to consider the following when viewing an object: “What does it recall? For example, the author Colette described a fire on a hearth as a ‘glittering bouquet.’ Make sure that your simile makes a substantial imaginative leap, as from fire to flowers. A lake should not recall another lake, or even a rain puddle, but perhaps a jigsaw puzzle piece, a heat mirage, a fun-house mirror” (54).

Directions:

1. Study Pairs 1-6 and write a simile to figuratively connect each pair through the following art elements: color, lightness, texture, and shape.

Example for Pair 1:

Color: His cotton candy is as pink as a glowing sunset.

Lightness: His cotton candy is as light as the blush of a lingering day.

Texture: The sweet, fluffy candy is like a lingering ray of liquid sunshine.

Shape: The old vendor’s rounded shoulders slump like the stoic form of a worn mountain.

2. Explain how each comparative creates a specific perspective.

3. Choose your best set of examples and write a descriptive paragraph that incorporates the art elements of color, line, shape, and texture into an imagined scenario.

Analysis: Noting comparatives within each art element challenges the student to visualize similarities in clear, concrete pictures. By then writing a descriptive paragraph based on

concurrent levels of similarities, the student interweaves threads of similarities into a greater whole, thus noting the rich possibilities of meaning within a single image. These possibilities are explored in greater depth in the next model which invites the student to create imagined story beginnings based on their best similes.

Model 3: Writing Story Beginnings from Similes

Directions: Choose your best simile from each of the six pairs. Then, write the first paragraph of a believable story that begins with your best simile. The story should focus on the first image of each pair by comparing it to the second. Incorporate the art elements of color, line, shape, and texture into your imagined scenario.

Example Pair 1:

His cotton candy is as pink as a glowing sunset. He sells it on the dim streets of the old town where the poor come during the day, digging smooth coins from the depths their pockets just so they can savor the sweet candy. They walk the streets holding fluffy clouds of pink, as if holding their dreams in their hands. At night, the vendor lingers long after the crowds leave, the few remaining balls of cotton candy still clinging to the narrow, straight sides of his box-like cart. I think in some kind of mysterious way he floats on them.

Analysis: This model builds upon the previous models by interweaving similar details of color, line, texture, and shape into the beginnings of authentic stories. Students are challenged to note how each of the art elements compare and contrast as well as hint at underlying thematic connections. The next model challenges the student to draw more direct comparatives of the same images through metaphors.

Model 4: Visualizing Similarities through Metaphor

A metaphor compares two unlike things without the use of like, as, than, or resembles. Whereas in a simile the two things compared remain separate, in a metaphor they are united into one. For example, *The lady is as fierce as a tiger* compares only particular qualities of the lady to the tiger, whereas by stating *The lady is a tiger* unites the lady and the tiger. Metaphors are the most flexible and suggestive elements of figurative language and the means by which all experiences are imaginatively connected.

A direct metaphor directly compares the two things by the use of an equating verb such as *is*. An implied metaphor implies or suggests the comparison between the two things without stating it directly. “The city *is* a sleeping woman,” is a direct metaphor. “The city sleeps peacefully” is an implied metaphor (in other words, we are suggesting the comparison).

Directions:

1. Study Pairs 1-6 and write either an explicit or implied metaphor to figuratively connect each pair through the following art elements: color, lightness, texture, and shape.

Example for Pair 1:

Color: His cotton candy is a glowing sunset.

Lightness: His cotton candy is the blush of a lingering day.

Texture: The sweet, fluffy candy is liquid sunshine.

Shape: The old vendor’s shoulders are worn mountainsides.

2. Explain how each comparative creates a specific perspective.

3. Choose your best set of examples and write a descriptive paragraph that focuses on the first image of each pair by comparing it to the second. Incorporate the art elements of color, line, shape, and texture into your imagined scenario.
4. Compare and contrast your best sets of examples with your simile examples. Explain how each shapes meaning.

Analysis: By slightly altering the assignment by replacing similes with metaphors, the student grasps the similarities and differences of each type of figurative expression. She notes that similes generally create more distance between both aspects while metaphors consider both aspects so interconnected that they are interchangeable. Hence, the old vendor *is* a worn mountain. The next sections explore similarities through denotative and connotative meanings.

Discovering Differences within Similar Literary Categories

While literal meanings may change slower than connotative meanings, all meaning-making processes involve a contextual relationship influenced by many factors. Strong writing and literary interpretation require an ability to discern subtle as well as major differences in both denotative and connotative meanings. Denotation is the literal meaning of a word whereas connotation is an implied or associated idea. Connotative meanings are often emotionally charged meanings hidden from the literal meaning. Consider the word *pig*. The literal meaning for pig is “a farm animal with a broad snout.” The connotative meanings include “greedy person,” “coarse person,” “offensive term for a member of the police force,” and “authority

figure who is regarded by youths as having outdated, racist, or sexist views.” The word *mother* also has sharp distinctions between its literal meaning as “a female animal that has borne one or more children” and its connotative meaning as a maternal figure of tenderness and affection.

Writers and artists use connotations to add depth by complicating the literal meaning. Thus, process of finding similarities within any category is both generative as well as restrictive. The next model explores the connotative and denotative meanings of the terms *face* and *chair*.

Model 5: Discovering Connotations within Denotations

1. Envision the word *chair*. Then, write a one paragraph description of the chair you envisioned and make a sketch of the chair.
2. Read the following definition of *chair* from Merriam-Webster’s: “a piece of furniture for one person to sit on, having a back and, usually, four legs or feet. Some have rests for arms.”
3. Compare your description and sketch with the following chairs:



Figure 138: "Armchair" by George J. Hunzinger, 1869



Figure 139: "Easy Edges" by Frank Gehry



Figure 140: "Armchair No. 810" by Richard Meier



Figure 141: "DCM" Side Chair" by Charles Eames and Ray Eames

Digging Deeper:

4. Write a one paragraph description of each chair.
5. Explain how the chairs are similar.
6. Explain how the chairs are each separate and distinct.
7. Create two pairs from the above figures. In your pairings, choose the chairs you think are most opposite in overall characteristics. You can only use each chair once.
8. Reflect on Reuven Tsur's assertion that the importance of shifting perspectives "is not so much the 'message' conveyed, but the insight [that results] from the shift of mental sets" (1) as you explain your selection process. Compare your choices with other students, and then re-evaluate your own choices.

Analysis: By describing how a common object such as a chair is variously defined through connotative and denotative definitions, the student develops fine-tuned skills to observe the range of textual and visual differences within similarities. The ability to write descriptively through visual details is also enhanced. The next model builds upon these concepts by challenging the student to find deeper connections between human faces.

Model 6: Determining Differences within Similarities: What is a Face?

Merriam-Webster defines *face* as: "the front part of the head that in humans extends from the forehead to the chin and includes the mouth, nose, cheeks, and eyes." According to the US Census Bureau, as of March 2009 there were 6.76 billion people living throughout the world. Scientists maintain that no two exactly alike human beings have ever existed, not even identical twins. Therefore, all 6.76 billion people currently living, in addition to the billions who have

existed, have unique faces. That translates to billions upon billions of differences within one denotative term—*face*. This model explores the differences between the physical appearances of a variety of faces, as well as the differences between the ways humans interpret the person who exists behind the physical reality of “face.”

1. Write a connotative description of each face to imaginatively interpret the kind of person who exists behind the physical appearance. Include the details evident in each image, as well as the art elements and composition details. Try to be as truthful to the image as possible.

2. Compare your descriptions. In what ways are the faces similar? In what ways are they each distinctly different? Do some appear more similar than others? In what ways?

3. Write a caption for each that captures what you perceive as the personality behind each face.

While you may not copy any of the titles already listed, you may use details of these titles to help you write your caption.

4. Describe as many ways as possible how each of the four pairs of faces share similar qualities.

6. Create four new pairs based on similarities. Choose the faces (and poses) you think are most alike in overall characteristics. You can only use each face once. Then, describe how the images in each of your new pairs relate.

7. Compare your choices with other students’ choices. Re-evaluate your choices as you reflect on Reuven Tsur’s assertion that the importance of shifting perspectives “is not so much the ‘message’ conveyed, but the insight resulting from the shift of mental sets” (1) .

Pair A



Figure 142: "Study of a Boy 1" by Loretta Lux



Figure 143: "Dad, Hampton Ponds III" by Mitch Epstein

Pair B



Figure 144: "Snoop Dogg" by Andres Serrano



Figure 145: "Frances with a Flower" by Consuelo Kanaga

Pair C



Figure 146: "Girl in Fur Hood" by Abbott H. Thayer Abbott



Figure 147: "A Friend" by Sarah Cowell LeMoyne, 1880

Pair D



Figure 148: "Self-Portrait 1908" by Abraham Walkowitz



Figure 149: "Child Laborer" by Lewis Hines

Analysis: These models progress from simple comparatives to complex comparatives. At first, the student is asked to draw comparatives based on obvious threads of similarity between a pair of images. Yet, as the models progress, the students is required to look deeper into each image to discover a detail from which to draw new pairings. Thus, she discovers the analogous process relies on both explicit as well as implicit details that require her to re-evaluate her selection process. For example, she may pair “Child Laborer” with “Dad, Hampton Ponds III,” noting how the child’s face is as weary and stoic as the old man’s as he attempts to “stay afloat” by going through the daily motions of living. Or she may note the similar guarded but confident facial expressions of “Study of a Boy 1” and “Snoop Dogg.” Or she may pair “Dad, Hampton Ponds III” with “Frances with a Flower,” noting how both seek to experience their natural surroundings. The process thus challenges the student to look beneath surface layers to discover the multiple underlying connective threads. The next model explores how random groupings through anagrams create frameworks from which multiple underlying threads can be discovered as well.

Model 7: Discovering Details through Anagrams

1. Study the details of “Sniper Alley” and then jot down an observation you discover from every letter of the alphabet:



Figure 150: “Sniper Alley” by Tom Stoddart

For example:

A—Amputee

B—Boy

C—Canes

TIP: Try not to see only the explicit details such as “amputee” and “boy,” but the implicit details as well. For instance:

A—Ash-grey sky

B—Bold strides

C—Cautious steps

D—Deep Resolve

E—Echoing Silence

3. What mood is revealed through implicit details?

4. Now, consider the blurb that originally accompanied the photograph:

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA - JANUARY 1995: An amputee on crutches walks along the main road known as Sniper Alley. During the 47 months between the spring of 1992 and February 1996, the people of Sarajevo endured the longest siege Europe witnessed since the end of the Second World War. More than 10,600 people were killed, with a further 56,000 wounded or maimed. (AP News January 1995)

5. Explain how the style of writing conveys the mood of the photograph.

6. Using the details from the blurb, compose a descriptive poem that captures the mood of the photograph.

Analysis: By following a textually based hierarchical ordering system, the student must then find elements of similarity within an image that do not follow the same style of ordering. Instead, she is encouraged to closely study the artistic elements and composition of an image from which she must extrapolate a particular aspect such as mood. This model builds from the previous models by requiring the student to understand how both implicit and explicit details within an image can

be interpreted and categorized through varying ordering systems. By allowing implicit details to emerge through various groupings, fresh perspectives are generated.

The next chapter focuses on new ways to understand the text-image relationship afforded by the flexible tools of modern technologies. It first examines the boundary lines between texts and images to demonstrate how texts can be read as images and images can be read as texts, and then explores concrete poetry as viable genre for understanding and interpreting AP Literature and Composition concepts.

CHAPTER NINE: EXPLORING NEW DIMENSIONS OF SPACE

“Print culture does not disappear, but rather mutates as distributed cognitive environments [that] stimulate new kinds of narratives”

—N. Katherine Hayles
“Simulating Narratives”

New dimensions in space afforded by electronic media offer multiple ways to create and understand text-image relationships. This chapter begins with a section on deformance as a figure-ground means of foregrounding aspects of texts and images that are often first perceived as “ground,” and then analyzes how these hidden aspects add dimension to the meaning-making process. It then proceeds to link text and image through art-poetry connections. It then turns to an exploration of concrete poetry as a visual as well as textual means of communication. It concludes with a section on modern forms of visually-based poetry as a viable genre for understanding and interpreting AP Literature and Composition concepts in the digital age.

Photography professor Richard Zakia uses the figure-ground segregation principle to teach the concept of depth to his students. First he projects a blank slide on a screen and asks his students to imagine the entire room they are sitting in to be a blank screen with no surface, such as one would find when caught in a dense fog. He asserts that an actual physical place without surfaces or differences “represents a ganzfeld, a perfectly homogeneous field in which vision is lost.” He then projects an image of Rubin’s vase “to show how figure emerges from the ganzfeld, how important each is to the other, how in certain situations figure and ground can alternate, and how one cannot have figure without some contrasting ground” (68-69). Applied to the multi-

dimensional realm of space afforded by new technologies, this concept reinforces the idea that there are multiple levels to be explored in literary interpretive and composition practices. These new environments stretch beyond the two dimensions of the flat page and transform it “from a linear sequence of letters, words, and sentences into layered topographical spaces open for navigation and exploration,” according to N. Katherine Hayles (“The Transformation of Narrative” 24). Hayles points out that print culture does not disappear, but rather mutates through “distributed cognitive environments [that] stimulate new kinds of narratives” (“Simulating Narratives” 24). She notes Richard Kostelanetz’s observation that in literary fiction the rectangular paper frame “is so plainly the most indomitable constraint upon those imaginations that seem eager to burst through the page” (Kostelanetz qtd. in “The Transformation of Narrative” 24) to argue that the reconfiguration process involves “nothing less than a radical transformation of writing and reading, writer and reader” (24).

Hayles encourages instructors to foster learning strategies that fully use the dynamic, flexible, simultaneous, and multi-dimensional capabilities that new technologies provide for interpreting and composing literature in the digital age. She adds that authoring in these new realms involves an understanding that all the parts are dynamically interrelated similar to a figure-ground dynamic and that “if one part of the system can only function as a relatively low-level cognizer, the slack has to be taken up somewhere else by making another part smarter” (“Simulating Narratives” 6). The print-based learning strategies presented in this chapter are tailored to take advantage of new technologies that engage the senses through rich, interconnected layers. The first subsection begins with an adaptation of Jerome McGann’s deformance exercises as an approach to reveal hidden meanings.

Revealing Hidden Aspects through Textual Space Deformance Exercises

In *Radiant Textuality* Jerome McGann introduces deformance (text alteration) exercises that isolate words from their contextual position as a method of revealing the inner resources words possess. One might consider the revealed words as the “ground” that emerges into the “figure,” thus creating new perspectives from which literary analysis can be made. “Once a textual poesis is undertaken . . . language is set beyond the order of conceptual and expository categories,” McGann asserts (120). McGann bases his work on the premise that “the apparitions of text—its paratexts, bibliographical codes, and all visual features—are as important in the text’s signifying programs as the linguistic elements” and that “the social intercourse of texts—the context of their relations—must be conceived an essential part of the ‘text itself’ if one means to gain an adequate critical grasp of the textual situation” (12). He argues that his methods promote an array of visual-based analysis methods as a necessary counterpoint to traditional linear-sequential methods.

He encourages instructors to seek methods that “break beyond conceptual analysis into the kinds of knowledge involved in performative operations—a practice of everyday imaginative life,” arguing that concept-based interpretation, reading along thematic lines, is itself best understood as a particular type of performative and rhetorical operation” (106). He takes the stance that poems are not “transmitters of information” and that if we “read them in a linear mode, we know that they also (and simultaneously) move in complex recursive ways.” For example, when we read a poem backwards through deformance practices, “we expose its reciprocal inertias in performative and often startling ways” (108).

By isolating certain words from a poem, McGann explores how new insights of meaning

come to light when words are set alone on the page. The reordering of the text's physical space forces the reader to rethink relationships among the words, as words once considered background emerge into the foreground to assume an undiscovered identity. The reader's quest to discover the new identity involves a participatory process that emphasizes the discovery process more than the fixed result. McGann claims that the fresh insights students glean through his visually-based methods address the same elements students study through traditional approaches, such as structure, style, and themes, as well as smaller-scale elements as the use of figurative language and tone. In the following example, he replicates Wallace Steven's poem "The Snow Man" in its original format, to then demonstrate how deformance practices illuminate literary terms through text-image analysis:

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;
And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter
Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,
Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Note the traditional analysis of the poem, from which one can compare McGann's deformance analysis that follows: Title often indicates theme and the *absence* of an actual snow man depicted in the title, "Snow Man" indicates interplay between the "nothing that is not there" and "the nothing that is." Nature is personified throughout, beginning with the concept of the *snow man* and then reinforced with the subtle suggestions that junipers are "shagged" with ice, as if both physically and mentally weighed down with the burdens of all that *snow* symbolizes. *January* symbolizes the season of winter, which connotes the season of death.

Thus, the natural world might be interpreted as superseding the finality of death, as winter in Nature interconnects with all the seasons, followed by the renewing powers of spring. Spruce and juniper trees are conifers which are evergreen and drought-resistant. They depend on the wind to blow pollen produced by male cones to female cones, where fertilization takes place, and seeds develop. They symbolize the steadfast qualities of nature that do not yield even to the coldest of seasons in spite of being "shagged with ice" and "glitter." The blank or white space in poems, as well as the caesuras and breaks between stanzas, reinforce the idea that poems, like seasons, follow a natural cycle of birth and death. At first the beholder sees the *nothingness* of winter (death), but in the end, listens to the subtle sounds of life that exist.

McGann deforms the poem by isolating certain words in their original space relationships. He argues that printing only the nouns "enhances the significance of the page's white space, which now appears as a poetic equivalent for the physical 'nothing' of snow" (123).

Model 1: Deformance of “Lying Low”

1. Read “Lying Low” by Eamon Grennan and interpret the theme. Use excerpts from the poem to support your analysis.
2. Explain how the visual layout influences your interpretation of the poem:

The dead rabbit’s
raspberry belly gapes
like a mouth.

Bees and gilded flies
make the pulpy flesh
hum and squirm.

“Oh love,” they sing
in their nail-file voices,
“we are becoming one another.”

The head intact, tranquil,
as if it’s dreaming
the mesmerized love

of strangers who inhabit
the red tent of ribs,
the radiant open house of the heart.

3. Read the following visual layout of the poem with the key nouns and pronouns isolated in their original position. Examine how these nouns and pronouns combine with the layout to

influence your interpretation. Now how the proximity of words such as flies and flesh affects this process.

 rabbit's
 belly
 mouth

Bees flies
 flesh

 love they
 voices
we another

 head
 it
 love

strangers
 tent ribs
 house heart

3. Read the following visual layout of the poem with the key verbs isolated in their original position. Examine how these verbs combine with the layout to influence your interpretation. Note how the proximity of words such as *make* and *hum* affects this process.

gapes

make

hum squirm

sing

are becoming

dreaming

inhabit

4. Assume each of the layouts is a complete poem entitled, “Laying Low.” Explain how key words in each layout contribute to the theme implicit within the title. Also explain how the alliterative words *laying low* are reinforced through other examples of alliteration in each layout.

Analysis: Deforming “Lying Low” through isolating first the nouns and pronouns and then the verbs offers insights into the substructure of the poem. For example, the isolated verb *gapes* both visually and textually arrests the reader’s attention, thus setting into motion the verbs *make*, *hum*, *squirm*, *sing*, *are becoming*, *dreaming*, and *inhabit* into a visual cascade of consecutive events.

Reading the isolated verbs alone underscores the duality of horror and acceptance by creating the textual and visual transformation of a dead rabbit from an image of revulsion and fear to one of

pleasure and delight as it becomes a warm, inviting “house” to its new occupants. Isolating key words also creates textual and visual patterns through emphasis, thus bringing to the reader’s attention how the meaning-making process occurs on many concurrent levels. Thus, when analyzed from varying perspectives, new insights can be generated.

The next model examines prose in a similar fashion. It begins with an excerpt of a classic novel and deforms it to expose various aspects of its underlying structure. It then builds upon its basic structure to transform its original genre into new forms of expression, thus demonstrating that new forms of expression are inherent within existing structures.

Model 2: Deformance of Charles Dickens’ Hard Times

In Charles Dickens’ novel *Hard Times*, the narrator describes the mid-nineteenth century British town, Coketown:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours,

with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next (*Hard Times* 30-31).

Directions: After each question, explain how the isolation of the particular words affects both the mood and the overall meaning of the above paragraph:

1. Isolate the *nouns that are physical objects* as they occur in the excerpt:

town	dye
brick	piles
smoke	buildings
ashes	windows
face	piston
savage	steam-engine
machinery	elephant
chimneys	streets
serpents	people
canal	pavements

2. Add those *nouns that repeat*. List for every time they repeat:

town town town	piles
brick brick	buildings
smoke smoke	windows
ashes	piston
face	steam-engine
savage	head
machinery	elephant
chimneys	streets streets
serpents	people
canal	pavements
river dye	

3. Eliminate all but the *repeating nouns*:

town town town

brick brick
smoke smoke
streets streets

4. Isolate the *verbs* and note whether the majority are active or passive (Active verbs perform the action of the subject while passive verbs receive the action of the subject).

was	ran
would have been	was
had allowed	worked
stood	contained
was	inhabited
was	went
trailed	to do
got	was
had	

5. Isolate any *verbs that repeat* and list every instance of repetition:

was was was was was

6. Isolate the *major descriptive adjectives*. List every instance of repetition:

red red red
black black
like like like like
same same same same
every every

7. Isolate the descriptive *noun and/or descriptive noun phrases that are inanimate objects*:

red brick	purple river
town of unnatural red	ill-smelling dye
smoke	vast piles of buildings
machinery	rattling windows
tall chimneys black canal	trembling windows

8. Isolate the *descriptive noun and/or phrases that are animate*:

painted face of a savage
head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness
interminable serpents

people

9. Isolate examples of *assonance and alliteration*:

Melancholy madness
Same sound
River that ran
Serpents of smoke
All very like
Equally like
Where there was a rattling and a trembling

10. Read each of the above sets of answers as if it were a poem. Interpret what aspects of the original passage each reveals. Explain which poems work best and why.

11. Re-read the entire paragraph backward. What particular words stand out? How do these words affect the meaning of the paragraph?

Digging Deeper:

Experiment with juxtapositioning several of the lists you have created over the following painting of the Industrial Revolution. Explain how each alteration creates a new meaning.

Discuss which alterations are most effective and why. You may alter **FONTS** or **tint the photograph** to fine-tune shades of meaning. For example:

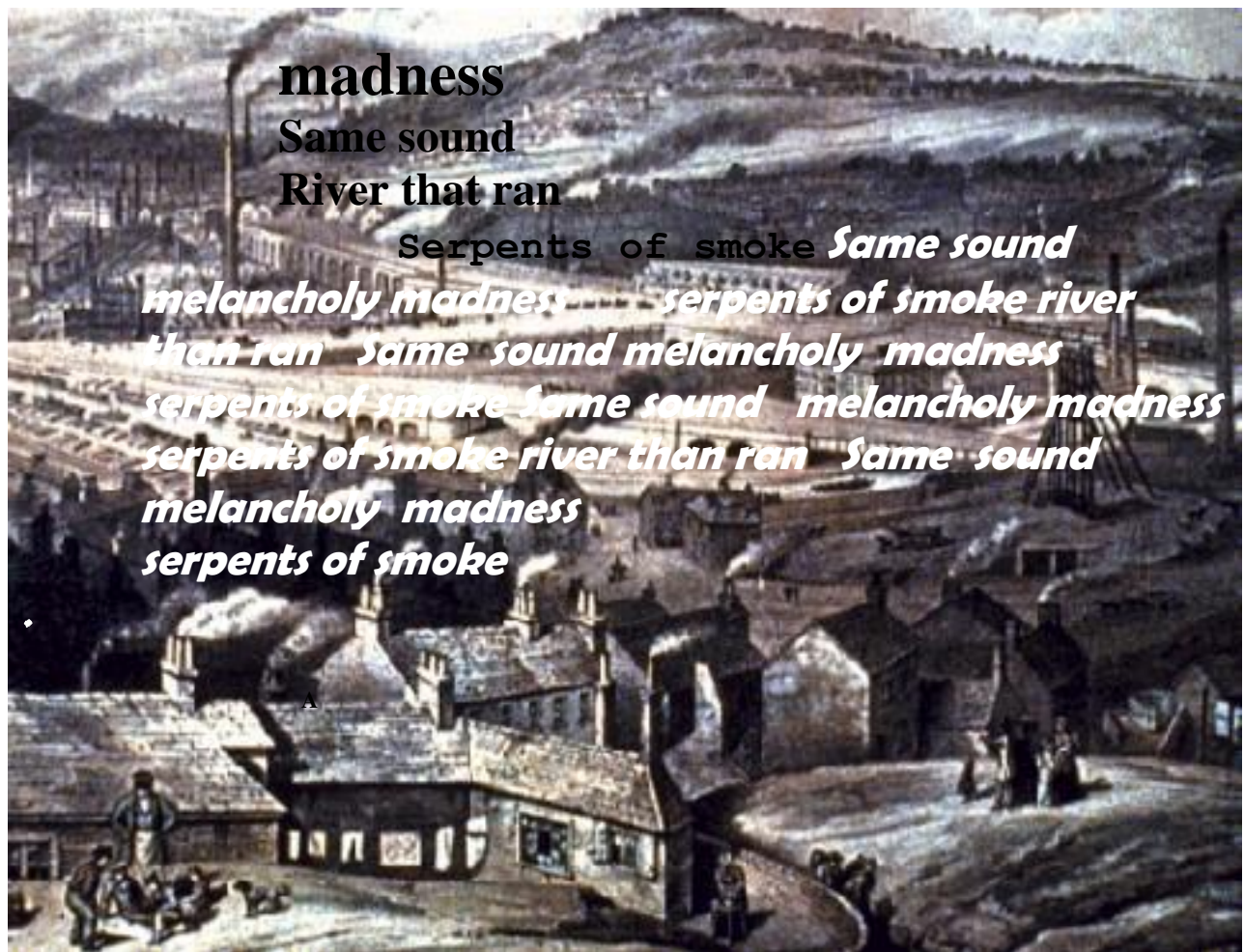


Figure 151: "Harder Times" by Beth Weaver

Analysis: Deforming the words from the original passage of *Hard Times* encourages the student to view words as both conveyers of meaning and as material structures. Although she is encouraged to follow a model, her ultimate ability to create an original concrete poem invites her to experiment with the many ways texts and images connote meaning.

Creating Visual Language

Visual Language and the Law of Proximity

The law of proximity states that the closer objects are to one another, the more likely humans are to mentally group them. In the example below, humans do not perceive the second and third units as a pair enough though they are chronologically-related. Instead, they perceive the nature of relationships based on visual proximity. For instance, the first and second units are perceived as a pair:

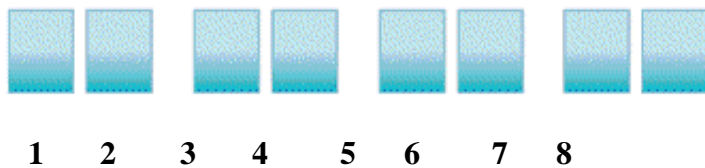


Figure 152: “Law of Proximity”

According to Richard Zakia, the power of German photographer August Sander’s 1914 photograph of three young farmers stems from its figure-ground dynamic of similarity against dissimilarity. “The two men at the right are seen as a pair because of their nearness or proximity, and because of the interval between them and the man on the left,” he notes (72). “In addition, one notices that all three men have similar postures and expressions, but the two on the right hold their canes vertically and their hats are straight, while the man on the left has his hat and cane tilted. He also dangles a cigarette from his mouth,” Zakia adds, thus observing that if the photographer had positioned all three men equidistant the photograph would have lost its dynamic interplay” (72).



Figure 153: “Young Farmers” by August Sanders, 1914

The next model explores how the law of proximity affects the meaning-making process. Students are challenged to analyze images and then write imagined scenarios based on proximity groups. Then are then asked to compare and contrast their imagined scenarios with other students to understand how proximity groupings can variously be interpreted.

Model 3: Visual Interpretation and the Law of Proximity

1. Explain how the law of proximity affects interpretation of the following images and groupings of images.



Figure 154: “The Connoisseur” by Norman Rockwell

©Norman Rockwell. Used with permission

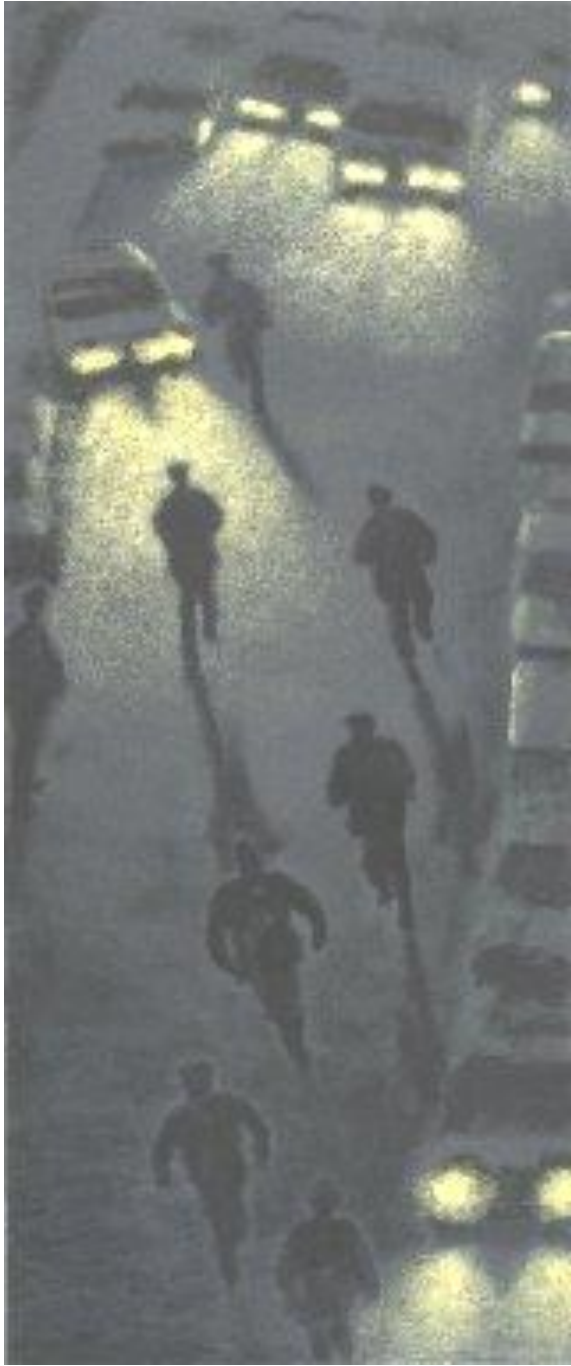


Figure 155: “Cops and Headlights” by Jane Dickson



Figure 156: Scene 1



Figure 157: Scene 2



Figure 158: Scene 3 of "A Dog's Day" by Elliot Erwitt

2. Write a brief story for each of the examples. Use proximity as an inherent part of the theme.
3. Compare and contrast your stories with stories from other students.

Analysis: Understanding the law of proximity helps the student become aware of how visual shifts in composition play a key role in the meaning-making process. By prioritizing visual groupings over chronological numberings, the student observes how the layout affects the interpretation. For example, in the first of the series of photographs by Erwit, a group of people contrasts with a single dog. A story emerges when another dog enters the picture and changes the visual dynamics by becoming part of the “group” while the single dog remains detached. The third photograph thus depicts a story of the lone dog making a commentary about the group. The next section demonstrates how writers embody words and ideas through concrete poems.

Visual Language and Concrete Poetry

“Writing a poem is like making an artifact. It is making something physical out of words.” —Galway Kinnell

Concrete poetry represents another kind of visual language. The word *concrete* means real, tangible, existing, actual, solid, and physical. Concrete poets create a physical presence through the arrangement and design of words. What distinguishes concrete poetry from other forms of poetry is that the meaning-making process is based on the poem’s visual appearance rather than its written text. It is perceived as a visual whole that requires text-image interaction, and cannot be fully realized by being read alone. Words move freely around the page, embodying as many sizes, shapes, textures, and colors as are at the disposal of their creator. There is no conventional grammar and syntax is based on spatial arrangements.

Introduced in the 1950's by poets from Switzerland and Sweden, and at the same time, from poets across the world in Brazil, the movement was inspired by a number of influences, including early twentieth century artists such as Paul Klee who experimented with form and function. Noting that "Art does not reproduce the visible, it makes visible," Klee used fragments of text or vestiges of text to imply an embodied relationship between texts and images, as evident in the following example ("Paul Klee," par. 5-7). While creating a clear distinction between words and images, Klee was also able to create an element of intentional ambiguity between both processes:



Figure 159: "Once Emerged from the Gray of Night" by Paul Klee, 1918

Although the painting appears to be abstract, Klee uses rows of letters to delineate color boundaries. Note how the title, "Once Emerged from the Gray of Night," uses neutral-toned letters to form the ground of the artwork, while vibrant colors well up in the spaces between the letters. Thus, the viewer's attention shifts from the ground of letters to the "emerging" vibrant

colors between them. “The Gray Night” might be interpreted as a metaphor for the print era and “Once Emerged” might be interpreted as a metaphor for color-drenched paintings rising up to create a new form of expression over the long-standing dominance of the print era. This interpretation suggests that rich colors are concrete embodiments of a powerful new visual language.

The idea of using letters as visual expressions of meaning dates back to the origins of language. In the Western world, the early Greeks created pictographs, while in the Eastern world, the Chinese created ideograms. Concrete poetry emerged as an experimental form of visual writing in the 1950s and 1960s, but there were many poems and paintings that inspired the movement, such as early Renaissance poet George Herbert’s “The Altar,” about a broken altar whose shape echoes the meaning of the verse, and “Easter Wings,” in which the reader must turn the book counterclockwise to read the text, whereupon she notes that the stanzas resemble two pairs of wings in mid-flight. A well-regarded example is Guillaume Apollinaire’s *calligramme*, “Il pleut” (“It Rains”), written in 1918. A *calligramme* is a word, phrase, or longer text in which the typeface or the layout has some special significance. In “Il pleut” the title is the written equivalent of the visual, which depicts slanted words cascading like rain down a windowpane:



Figure 160: “Il Pleut” by Guillaume Apollinaire, 1918

Roger Shattuck provides a linear translation:

It's Raining

It's raining women's voices as if they had died even in memory

And it's raining you as well marvelous encounters of my life O little drops

Those rearing clouds begin to neigh a whole universe of auricular cities

Listen if it rains while regret and disdain weep to an ancient music

Listen to the bonds fall off which hold you above and below (Shattuck qtd. in Hirsch, par.

5)

Anne Hyde Greet and S. I. Lockerbie assert that the words reinforce the rich ambiguity of feeling that goes beyond the melancholy mood Apollinaire visually creates of a rainy day in Paris.

“Trickling raindrops may be expressive of sadness, but in the way they spread down and over the windowpane there is also a sense of adventure and exploration of space,” Greet and Lockerbie add (Greet and Lockerbie qtd. in Hirsch, par. 7). Thus, the visual aspect of the poem represents an immediate “experience” of rain that transcends the verbal expression, thereby creating a dynamic interplay of text and image. In 1936 Bill Max asserted that the visual aspects of concrete poems constitute a spatial language through simultaneous representation.

Max’s ideas influenced a number of artists and poets, including a group called the Noigandres. They issued a manifesto defining concrete poetry as “qualified space” that transcends linear-temporistical development. According to Max, “qualified space adds an element of spontaneity to carefully chosen words” (Max qtd. in Huisman 49). The manifesto paid tribute to the influence of Mallarme, Pound, Joyce, Cummings, and Apollinaire, as well as futurism, Dadaism, and earlier Brazilian writers.

It also launched pattern and shape poems. John Hollander, for example, used a typewriter to create silhouettes of the subjects of his poems, which he then filled in with type. He notes, “The number of characters per line of typing would . . . give me a metrical form for the lines of verse, not syllabic but graphematic . . . These numbers, plus the number of indents from flush left, determined the form of each line of the poem” (42). “Kitty Black” exemplifies his best work:

O I
 am my
 own way
 of being in
 view and yet
 invisible at
 once Hearing
 everything
 you see I
 see all of
 whatever you
 can have heard
 even inside the
 deep silences of
 black silhouettes
 like these images
 of furry surfaces
 darkly playing cat
 and mouse with your
 doubts about whether
 other minds can ever
 be drawn from hiding
 and made to be heard
 in inferred language
 I can speak only in
 your voice Are you
 done with my shadow
 That thread of dark
 word
 can
 all
 run
 out
 now
 and
 end
 our
 tale

Figure 161: “Kitty Black” by John Hollander

Hollander’s poems occupy the forms of everything from Eskimo pies, to graven images, to beach umbrellas. The next model challenges the student to create her own concrete poems based on shapes.

Model 4: Shaping Words to Fill Images

Hollander notes that a shape poem’s form enhances but does not carry a poem’s meaning. He emphasizes that if a poem is not well written textually, then it will not become a good shape form when visually enhanced. He instructs students to begin writing poems by giving priority to preserving the integrity of the original poem and then to imagine shapes that either reflect the

primary subject of the poem or a small detail. Consider his ideas as you create poems to fill the following shapes:



Figure 162: "Eagle with Prey"



Figure 163: "Cow"



Figure 164: "Child Jumping"

1. Create a poem to go with each image. First write the poem to determine how well it stands alone. Then, incorporate your poem into the above shapes.
2. Re-write your poems as necessary to note how the shaping process affects your words.
3. Compare and contrast your poems to note which ones most effectively create and interconnection between text and image.

Analysis: Creating a visual template based on shapes challenges the student to first create a strong poem that stands alone textually and then to adapt it to complement a visual image. The student may note how Hollander visually and textually ends "Kitty Black" with *That thread of dark word can all run out and now end our tale*. By writing the line in the tail of his cat shape, he visually connects the word *thread* with the thread-shaped tail, and his *tale* with the image of a

cat's *tail*. By seeking similarities in her own text-image relationships, the student becomes aware of how each aspect influences and reinforces the other. The next section builds upon these basic concepts to explore poems that create visual statements through foregrounding.

Concrete Poetry and Visual Presence

Aaron Marcus analyzes concrete poetry in terms of its “figure-field” relationships, in which an object is described in relation to its background. The object establishes its “visual presence” in terms of “size and shape, position, and orientation judged against this field” (49). Although the visual statement represents a two-dimensional realm, Marcus asserts that it contains characteristics which promote the interpretation of depth. There may be other objects in the visual field as well, so that the relative arrangements “can be described in terms of point, lines and planes” (50).

For example, in Eugen Gomringer's “Silencio,” the blank white center of silence contrasts the frame of words that visually connote the antithesis of the silence that emerges from the absence of words. The eyes thus shift back and forth between the words as foreground and the silent space as foreground as both compete for attention. This dynamic process reinforces the contrast between words and meaning, and absence of words and meaning:

silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio
silencio silencio silencio

Figure 165: “Silencio” by Eugen Gomringer

The typographical arrangement demonstrates the fundamental instability of language. Gomringer experimented with other spatial forms as well, such as the implication of movement. In “Wind,” the reader reads the jumbled letters that comprise the word *wind* as if the reading process itself connotes the physical embodiment of “wind.” Creating the illusion of movement with words is explored in the next model.

Model 5: Creating Concrete Poems from Classic Verses

While the eye seeks to find order among the discombobulated words in “Wind” by Gomringer, note how the layout adds to the simulation of the whimsical, capricious nature of wind. A dynamic interplay of text and image results:

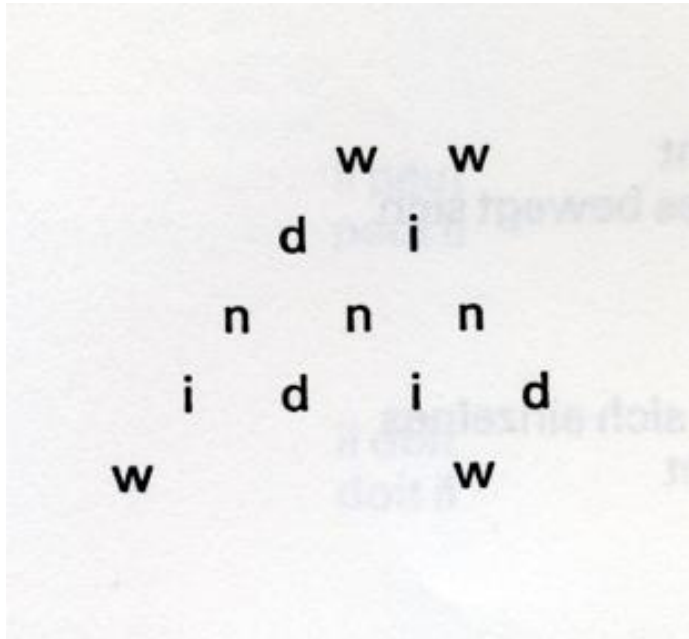


Figure 166: “Wind” by Eugen Gomringer

Directions: Create concrete poems from the following excerpts of *King Lear* and “The Siren Sisters” from *The Odyssey* using Gomringer’s concrete poem “Wind” as the template.

A. *King Lear* Act III; Scene 2

1. Replace the noun *wind* with one of the key weather words from the *King Lear* excerpt, such as cataracts or hurricanes:
2. Add at least three active verbs, such as *blow*, *crack*, *rage*, *spout*, in any way you determine simulates the action of the piece.
3. Using the tools from Microsoft Word or any computer program, visually recreate the drama of the scene.

Summary: King Lear begins his descent into madness. He wanders around in the storm, cursing the weather and challenging it to do its worst against him. He seems slightly irrational, his thoughts wandering from idea to idea, but always returning to fixate on his two cruel daughters.

ACT III

SCENE 2. Another part of the heath. Storm still.

Enter KING LEAR and Fool

KING LEAR

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!

You cataracts and hurricanes, spout

Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!

You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,

Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,

Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,

Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!

Crack nature's moulds, and germens spill at once,

That make ingrateful man!

B. "The Siren Sisters" from Homer's *The Odyssey*

1. Replace the noun *wind* with *Siren's Song*.

2. Add at least three phrases, such as, *Fly swift the dangerous coast; let every ear be stopp'd; firm to the mast with chains*, in a visual arrangement to create tension between the song and the sailors' need to escape its deadly powers..

3. Using the tools from Microsoft Word or any computer program, visually recreate the drama of the scene.

Summary: The *Odyssey* tells the wanderings of the hero Odysseus after the Trojan War. It is based on Homer's epic from Greek Mythology. The Siren Sisters are singing women-like beasts that inhabit an island from whence they lure sailors to their deaths with their beautiful songs.

Next, where the Sirens dwell, you plough the seas;

Their song is death, and makes destruction please.

Unblest the man, whom music wins to stay

Nigh the cursed shore and listen to the lay.

No more that wretch shall view the joys of life

His blooming offspring, or his beautiful wife!

In verdant meads they sport; and wide around

Lie human bones that whiten all the ground:

The ground polluted floats with human gore,

And human carnage taints the dreadful shore

Fly swift the dangerous coast: let every ear

Be stopp'd against the song! 'tis death to hear!

Firm to the mast with chains thyself be bound,

Nor trust thy virtue to the enchanting sound.

If, mad with transport, freedom thou demand,

Be every fetter strain'd, and added band to band. (Book XII)

Digging Deeper:

While Gomerger created poems that connote movement, Augusto de Campos created poetic experiments with sound. He added color to his series of concrete poems entitled, *Poetamenos*, to add a musical dimension. The name “Poetamenos” means “Minus One Poet.” Each color designates a different strand of the poem. When the strands are read concurrently, the multiple “voices” add a musical quality of varied, yet interwoven sounds:



Figure 167: “Poetamenos. Vivavaia 71” by Augusto de Campos

De Campos prefaced *Poetamenos* with a short text, explaining his intention to make the series a representation of Webern’s concept of “klangfarbenmelodie” (tone-color-melody):

... or aspiring in the hope of a

KLANGFARBENMELODIE

with words

like in Webern:

a continuous melody dislocating from one instrument to another, constantly changing its color:

instruments: phrase/word/syllable/letter(s), whose timbres are defined by a graphic-phonetic, or “ideogramic,” theme

[...]

reverberation: oral reading—real voices functioning as timbre (approximately) for the poem like the instruments in Webern’s Klangfarbenmelodie. (*Teoria* 15)

This process results in a multi-sensory interrelationship of sound, word, and image.

Directions: Using “Poetamenos. Vivavaia 71” as a template, create a multi-sensory interrelationship of sound, word, and image” of the King Lear or Siren Sisters excerpts by replacing each color with a line from the excerpt. You may use any flexible digital tools you choose. Then read the poem aloud with several other students. Each student should read a different color. Repeat the process, noting how sound contributes to word and image.

Analysis: Inclement weather plays a key role in both selections. Thus, by replacing the word *wind* with active verbs such as *blow*, *crack*, *rage*, *spout*, in the *King Lear* excerpt, the student notes the many ways physical space connotes an idea. Then, by exploring with the flexible tools of technology, students become active participants in the meaning-making process. Hence, as King Lear begins his descent into madness, the raging storm personifies his mental instability through both visual and textual arrangements. The *Digging Deeper* exercise challenges the student to create multi-dimensional poems from an original excerpt, thus adding sensory depth to

the original. This next model builds upon these concepts by challenging the student to create visually-based methods for adding the dimension of sound to text.

Model 6: Visually Creating Sound through Spatial Arrangements

Directions: Read “Two Shatts” by Edward Kamau Brathwaite and study how the visual arrangement adds a musical dimension to the onomatopoeic quality of the words, with the resulting poem working on three concurrent levels: visual, literal, and aural:

Lass night about 2:45 well well well before

the little black bell of the walk of my elec-

tronic clock cd wake me-

awakened by gunshatt

--the eyes trying to function open too stunned to work

out there through the window & into the dark with its

various glints & glows: mosquito, very distant cock-

crow, sound system drum, the tumbrel of a passing en-

gine, somewhere some/where in that dark. It must

have been an ear / ring's earlier sound that sprawled

me to the window. But it was

TWO SHATTS

--silence--

not evening the dogs barking or the trees blazing

& then a cry we couldn't see of

do

do

do

do

nuh kill me (*Trench Town Rock* 15)

1. Create your own visual arrangement to emphasize the key points of the following selections from classic novels.
2. Explain your interpretive process for each of the examples.
3. Compare and contrast your examples to determine which visual arrangement best emphasizes the text.

A. Holy men? Holy cabbages! Holy bean-pods! What do they do but live and suck in sustenance and grow fat? If that be holiness, I could show you hogs in this forest who are fit to head the calendar. Think you it was for such a life that this good arm was fixed upon my shoulder, or that head placed upon your neck? There is work in the world, man, and it is not by hiding behind stone walls that we shall do it. (*The White Company* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)

B. From hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. (*Moby Dick* by Herman Melville)

C. Anger's my meat; I sup upon myself, And so shall starve with feeding. (*Coriolanus* by William Shakespeare)

D. It is as though the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality. It is as though time, no longer running straight before us in a diminishing line, now runs parallel between us like a looping string, the distance being the doubling accretion of the thread and not the interval between. (*As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner)

E. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!' (*Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll)

F. The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is—a mob; they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any man at the head of it is beneath pitifulness. (*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain)

G. The legs of those who stood were like fence posts driven into a warm, squirming, and sighing earth. The queer earth was a mosaic of sleepers who nestled like spoons. (*Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut)

Analysis: By re-creating sound patterns through the rhythm and emphasis of particular words visually and textually, the student gains an awareness of how texts convey meaning on concurrent levels. For example, Vonnegut's personification of the *queer earth as a mosaic of sleepers* can be visually reinforced by spatial arrangements, proximity groupings, and various types of fonts to contrast the liquid qualities of the earth—warm, squirming, and sighing—with the solid qualities of the soldiers' legs—driven into the earth *like fence posts*. The next section builds upon these concepts to explore the visual language of typographical and spatial innovations.

Textual Analysis and Visual Poetics

Many artists and writers seek to attract a reader's attention through innovative fonts or other typographical arrangements. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes creates a visual poem through his textual analysis of Honoré de Balzac's realist novella, *Sarrasine*. Drawing an analogy between

“certain Buddhists whose ascetic practices enable them to see a whole landscape in a bean” and literary analysis aimed at “attempting: to see all the world’s stories . . . within a single structure” (3), Barthes asserts that “[t]o interpret a text is not to give it a . . . meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it” (4). Thus, he encourages methods of analysis that open up multiple codes and multiple interpretations, as well as methods that resist easy reading. These methods include visual analysis.

In Barthe’s textual analysis of *Sarrasine*, title *S/Z* symbolizes the split between the male protagonist, Sarrasine, and La Zambinella, the castrato he falls in love with. The typographical “/” visually reinforces the split that occurs in the original novella, along with Barthes’ textual and visual interpretation of the split. The split is multi-layered, yet thematically centered on the “axis of castration.” By “starring” excerpts of the novella, Barthes arbitrarily cuts up the signifiers into a series of brief, continuous fragments which he calls *lexias*. He chooses *lexias* that offer three or four meanings. Through the resulting poetic analysis, he illustrates the potential for any novel to be read on various spatial and literal levels to release the plurality of language. The next model explores the potential of texts to be “read” on various literal and spatial levels in order for the many “voices of the text” to be heard. It requires the student to consider the physicality of words as images.

Model 7: Determining the “Personality” of Fonts

1. Study the list of personality traits. Then transform the list by using a font and font size that best reflects each word’s connotation. Use a different font for each entry.

For example: Bold: **Bold**: Shy: *Shy*

Bold
Lively
Insensitive
Aggressive
Afraid
Caring
Boastful
Shy
Controlling
Courageous
Deceptive
Impatient
Confident
Artistic
Manipulative
Predictable
Obnoxious
Whiny
Mousy
Intimidating
Steadfast
Ostentatious
Scatter-brained
Straightforward
Nervous
Trustworthy
Serene
Violent

2. Pick a FONT from your above list to represent each character in the following scenes from *Gone With The Wind*. Choose the personality that goes with each font. Then replace the existing fonts in the following excerpts with your choices. The fonts must remain consistent within each excerpt, but the personality of the same character can vary from excerpt to excerpt, so choose carefully:

Excerpt A

Scarlett: You'd rather live with that silly little fool who can't open her mouth except to say "yes" or "no" and raise a passel of mealy-mouthed brats just like her!

Ashley: You mustn't say unkind things about Melanie.

Scarlett: Who are you to tell me I mustn't? You led me on... you made me believe you wanted to marry me!

Ashley: Now Scarlett, be fair. I never at any time—

Scarlett: You did, it's true, you did!

Excerpt B

Mammy: Oh no you ain't! If you don't care what folks says about this family, I does.

And I done told you and told you, you can always tell a lady by the way she eats in front of people like a bird. And I ain't aimin' to have you go over to Mista John Wilkes' house and eat like a field hand and gobble like a hog.

Scarlett O'Hara: Ashley Wilkes says he likes to see a girl with a healthy appetite.

Mammy: Well I ain't see Mista Ashley asked for to marry you.

Excerpt C

Scarlett O'Hara: As God is my witness, as God is my witness they're not going to lick me! I'm going to live through this and when it's all over, I'll never be hungry again! No, nor any of my folk. If I have to lie, steal, cheat or kill! As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again!

Excerpt D

Pa: It will come to you, this love of the land.

Excerpt E.

Rhett: A cat's a better mother than you.

Excerpt F.

Rhett: Did you ever think of marrying just for fun?

Scarlett: Marriage, fun? Fiddle-dee-dee! Fun for men you mean.

Excerpt G.

Scarlett: But you are a blockade-runner!

Rhett Butler: For profit, and profit only.

Scarlett: Are you tryin' to tell me you don't believe in the cause?

Rhett Butler: I believe in Rhett Butler, he's the only cause I know.

3. Explain your choices. Then, form groups and compare your choices. Collaborate and decide which choices work best.

The next section builds on the previous model to encourage students to create concrete poems through innovative typographical and spatial arrangements.

Typographical Innovations and Visual Language

Many concrete poets use typographical innovations to enhance the textual interpretation. For instance, Caribbean poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite adds both visual and aural dimensions to his explorations of African identity in the modern-day Caribbean. In “The Sea” he creates a figure-ground dynamic that pivots on the theme of *barrier*. He explores the contradictions of living on an open island where the sea represents freedom, while at the same time living in a place where man-imposed class and race restrictions create both mental and physical barriers. He uses a variety of fonts to visually connote the idea of barriers, such as the prominent *X* that starts the piece. The intentional separation of *X* from the word *except*, along with the altered form of the word *except* symbolizes “*eXclusion*,” a manifestation of the idea of *barrier*.

Brathwaite also uses a heavy iron font for the picket fence to symbolize a man-imposed barrier to the freedom of the ocean. He visually reinforces the idea of a barrier by adding the metaphorical connotation of a picket fence as a symbol for the white middle class. He also uses space and proximity to strengthen the concepts of exclusion versus inclusion:



Figure 168: “The Sea” by Edward Kamau Brathwaite

Early concrete poet e. e. cummings also used typographical innovations to convey meaning, beginning with his name, which he always signed in lowercase. As Craig Saper points out, the layout and design were so integral to the meaning of Cummings’ poems that he told fellow poet Augusto de Campos that publishers should photograph his typed version of “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r” rather than type it, to preserve the visual aspect (Cummings qtd. in *Sociopoetics* 9):

sometimes
the typewriter
thinks
for
me

and sometimes
i violently
i disagree
violent
ly

Figure 169: “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r” by e. e. cummings

To unscramble the title, “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r,” the reader must visually leap and hop about the way a grasshopper does, thus the letters, “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r” embody the actions of a “grasshopper.” Pure linearity methods that rely on sequential progression to interpret the title do not work. Instead, the reader must also become a viewer in order to understand the message, darting his eye from one place to another to decipher the words, in the same way that a grasshopper must leap about to explore his world. The actual text emphasizes this idea. The poem is thus both spatial and linear at once. The next model demonstrates how the typographical spatial innovations affects the interpretive process.

Model 8: Analyzing Spatial Versions of e. e. cummings’ “In Just”

Directions: Compare e. e. cummings’ spatial version of his poem with the two layouts that follow. Note the ways each layout affects the interpretive process. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Layout One (cumings' version):

In Just-

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer
old balloonman whistles
far and wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's
spring
and
the

goat-footed
balloonMan whistles
far
and
wee

Layout Two:

In just spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little lame balloonman

whistles far and wee
and Eddie and Bill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's spring
when the world is puddle-wonderful
the queer old balloonman whistles
far and wee
and betty and isbel come dancing
from hop-scotch and jump-rope and
it's spring and the goat-footed
balloonman whistles far and wee

Layout Three:

In just spring when the world is mud-luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee and Eddie and Bill come running from marbles and piracies and it's spring when the world is puddle-wonderful the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee and betty and isbel come dancing from hop-scotch and jump-rope and it's spring and the goat-footed balloonman whistles far and wee.

Questions:

1. Explain how each layout affects the interpretive process. Include a discussion on spacing, capital/lower case letters, repetition, rhythm, and any other visual details you note. Then, rank

the layouts to determine which best convey the poet's intent. Use details from the poem to explain your selection process.

2. Create your own original layout for the poem.

Analysis: By adding spacing, altered capital/lower case letters, and repetition, Cummings captures the capricious mood of spring. Some of the words jumble capriciously together, while others stand alone. Some of the words repeat and form a subtle, rhythmical association, while others randomly appear and then vanish. The next section demonstrates how visual layouts invite multiple codes and multiple interpretations.

Model 9: Creating Concrete Poems from Charles Dicken's Hard Times

1. Using any combination words from the word lists created from *Hard Times*, create an original concrete poem that retains the theme as evidenced in the following excerpt:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours,

with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next (*Hard Times* 30-31).

Inanimate objects:

red brick
town of unnatural red
smoke
machinery
tall chimneys
black canal

people
purple river
ill-smelling dye
vast piles of buildings
rattling windows
trembling windows

Animate objects:

painted face of a savage

head of an elephant
interminable serpents

Example: "Painted Smoke"



Figure 170: "Painted Smoke" by Beth Weaver

Analysis: Creating visual images by experimenting with fonts, colors, backgrounds, and other visual features encourages the student to create art from words as well as the meaning of words. Words thus become physical embodiments of ideas, reinforcing the textual language through visual language. The next model encourages the student to create her own template as a basis from which to capture the essence of an original poem and artwork. The process involves

selecting key words and then visually representing them to convey the theme as a material structure that communicates visually and textually.

Model 10: Creating Original Concrete Poetry through Visual Imagery

1. Read the following excerpts and extract the words that best represent the theme. Then arrange the words in any visual order you choose to create a concrete poem. Add background visuals as needed to complete your ideas.

My Antonia by Willa Cather

While the train flashed through never-ending miles of ripe wheat, by country towns and bright-flowered pastures and oak groves wilting in the sun, we sat in the observation car, where the woodwork was hot to the touch and red dust lay deep over everything. The dust and heat, the burning wind, reminded us of many things. We were talking about what it is like to spend one's childhood in little towns like these, buried in wheat and corn, under stimulating extremes of climate: burning summers when the world lies green and billowy beneath a brilliant sky, when one is fairly stifled in vegetation, in the color and smell of strong weeds and heavy harvests; blustery winters with little snow, when the whole country is stripped bare and gray as sheet-iron. We agreed that no one who had not grown up in a little prairie town could know anything about it.

The Awakening by Kate Chopin

She felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known. The foamy wavelets curled up to her white feet, and coiled like serpents about her ankles. She walked out. The water was chill, but she walked on. The water was deep, but she lifted her white body and reached out with a long, sweeping stroke. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace. She went on and on. She remembered the night she swam far out, and recalled the terror that seized her at the fear of being unable to regain the shore. She did not look back now, but went on and on, thinking of the blue-grass meadow that she had traversed when a little child, believing that it had no beginning and no end. Her arms and legs were growing tired . . . "The artist must possess the courageous soul that dares and defies." Exhaustion was pressing upon and overpowering her . . . She looked into the distance, and the old terror flamed up for an instant, and then sank again. Edna heard her father's voice and her sister Margaret's. She heard the barking of an old dog that was chained to the sycamore tree. The spurs of the cavalry officer clanged as he walked across the porch. There was the hum of bees, and the musky odor of pinks filled the air.

The Jungle by Upton Sinclair

On one side of the room were the hoppers, into which men shoveled loads of meat and wheelbarrows full of spices; in these great bowls were whirling knives that made two thousand revolutions a minute, and when the meat was ground fine and adulterated with potato flour, and well mixed with water, it was forced to the stuffing machines on the other side of the room. The latter were tended by women; there was a sort of spout, like the nozzle of a hose, and one of the women would take a long string of "casing" and put the end over the nozzle and then work the whole thing on, as one works on the finger of a tight glove. This string would be twenty or thirty feet long, but the woman would have it all on in a jiffy; and when she had several on, she would press a lever, and a stream of sausage meat would be shot out, taking the casing with it as it came. Thus one might stand and see appear, miraculously born from the machine, a wriggling snake of sausage of incredible length. In front was a big pan which caught these creatures, and two more women who seized them as fast as they appeared and twisted them into links. This was for the uninitiated the most perplexing work of all; for all that the woman had to give was a single turn of the wrist; and in some way she contrived to give it so that instead of an endless chain of sausages, one after another, there grew under her hands a bunch of strings, all dangling from a single center. It was quite like the feat of a prestidigitator--for the woman worked so fast that the eye could literally not follow her, and there was only a mist of motion, and tangle after tangle of sausages appearing. In the midst of the mist, however, the visitor would suddenly notice the tense set face, with the two wrinkles graven in the forehead, and the ghastly pallor of the cheeks; and then he would suddenly recollect that it was time he was going on. The woman did not go on; she stayed right there--hour after hour, day after day, year after year, twisting sausage links and racing with death. It was piecework, and she was apt to have a family to keep alive; and stern and ruthless economic laws had arranged it that she could only do this by working just as she did, with all her soul upon her work, and with never an instant for a glance at the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who came to stare at her, as at some wild beast in a menagerie. (Chapter 13)

Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again. Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass; there was nothing on it except a tiny golden key, and Alice's first thought was that it might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted! Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; "and even if my head would go through," thought poor Alice, "it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only know how to begin." (*Down the Rabbit Hole*)

Analysis: This model expands upon the concepts explored in the previous model to allow students to explore the rich, interconnected realm of text and image through a variety of methods. By selecting key words from the passages and symbolizing major themes through visual methods, the student incorporates flexible digital tools to link art and words into new forms of text-image expressions.

The Emergence of Digital Poetry and Future Directions for Literary Studies

As the computer becomes more capable of simulating human sensory experiences, methods to interpret, express, and understand poetry continue to evolve. Concrete poetry and *poesia visiva*, a term used to describe the more experimental blends of words and images, now use photography, film, and soundscapes in combination with letters and words to create new forms of expression. These include flash poetry, holographic poetry, digital poetry, and audio-poetry, with more new forms evolving every day. Dick Higgins, an early advocate for the computer to be used as a tool for art, sees a trend toward forms of expression that foster a sense of “immediacy, with a minimum of distractions,” as well as forms of art “based on the underlying images that an artist has always used to make [her] point” (49). He compares these new forms to the Cubist art movement, stating, “As with the Cubists, we are asking for a new way of looking at things, but more totally, since we are more impatient and more anxious to go to the basic images” (50). He asserts that the best works fall between types of media.

He uses the term *Intermedia* to describe approaches to communicate through multiple forms of media. “The idea has arisen, as if by spontaneous combustion throughout the entire world, that these points are arbitrary and only useful as critical tools, in saying that such-and-such a work is basically musical, but also poetry. This is the intermedial approach, to emphasize the dialectic between the media” (Higgins qtd. in Stiles 728-29). According to Higgins, in

intermedia, the visual element merges with words as if each visual element were a word of a sentence. Thus, the boundaries between texts and images blur as one form of expression complements the other.

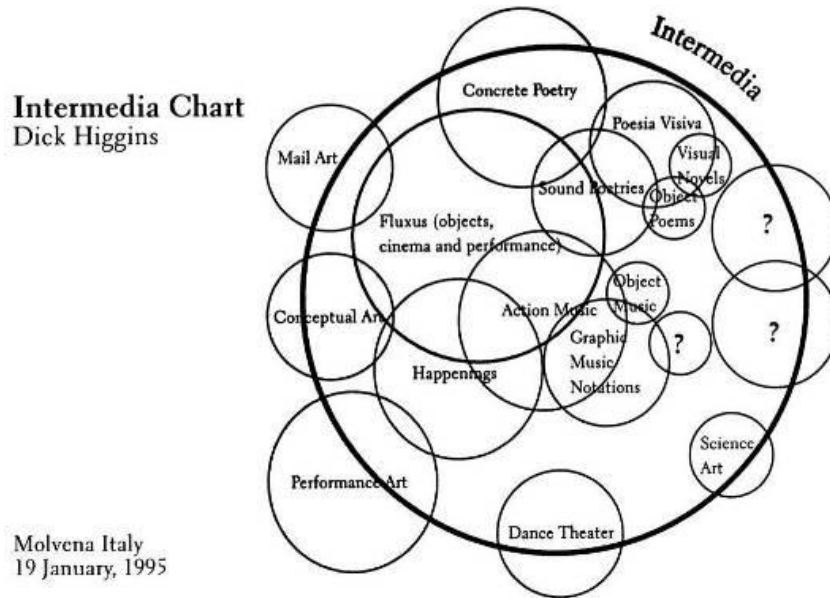


Figure 171: “Intermedia Chart” by Dick Higgins, 1995

Higgins claims that human experience remains as diverse as it is flexible, with its future journeys dynamically interconnected with its past adventures in interrelated circles that both recycle and recharge communicative experiences.

Yet Maria Engberg and Jay David Bolter point out that even though poets and writers continue to shift from the fixed texts and static links characteristic of original hypertextual formats that began twenty years ago toward more dynamic forms, “the cultural status of digital literature has not changed since those early days. Despite the efforts of N. Katherine Hayles and others, the general literary and academic communities continue largely to ignore digital

literature. These communities still regard the static page, or its digitized counterparts, as the only literary medium” (1). They claim that part of the reason is because digital works remain unfamiliar for the reader of literature, with most of the innovative, important critical and creative work being produced outside of the boundaries of what is currently called digital literature.

Engberg and Bolter encourage us to re-envision the cultural position of the field by “putting it in relation to the contemporary emergence of digital writing in various forms through social media, and other contemporary writing practices” so that it may be explored by critics and writers alike as a viable form of literary expression (9). If indeed the medium is the message as Marshall McLuhan purports, then seeking new ways to incorporate the latest tools of technology into the ongoing study and creation of literature and composition practices will allow instructors to more fully shape those very tools that continue to shape our societies.

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APPENDIX B: THE BASICS OF ART DESIGN

Art Elements and Composition Principles

A basic working knowledge of the elements of art and the principles of composition includes an ability to describe literary terms in relationship to visual imagery. These art education terms form the foundation for the visually-oriented conceptual models. The composition of art works includes the following elements: line, shape, form, space, texture, and color, and/or tone /value. The arrangement of the elements is the composition. Composition includes: balance, gradation, repetition, contrast, harmony, dominance, and unity. Art theorists maintain that a working knowledge of the basic terms facilitates an understanding of the meaning of artworks.

Art Elements

Lines define shape, contours, and outlines, as well as suggest mass and volume.

Characteristics of a Line:

Width: thick, thin, tapering, uneven

Length: long, short, continuous, broken

Direction: horizontal, vertical, diagonal, curving, perpendicular, oblique, parallel, radial, zigzag

Focus: sharp, blurry, fuzzy, choppy

Feeling: sharp, jagged, graceful, smooth



Figure 172: "Lines of Roofs"

Shapes occur when a line crosses itself or intersects with other lines to enclose a space it creates a shape. Shape is two-dimensional; it has height and width but no depth. *Size* refers to the relationship of two or more shapes.

Categories of Shapes:

Geometric: Precise, mechanically-produced circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles.

Organic: Natural, free-flowing, informal, and irregular, such as leaves, seashells and flowers.

Positive: Solid shapes in a design such as a bowl of fruit.

Negative: The empty shape around and between the solid shapes.

Static: Shapes that appears stable and resting.

Dynamic: Shapes that appear moving and active.



Figure 173: "Shapes: Santa Monica Beach"

Forms are shapes that appear to be three dimensional. Shapes include four main types: cube, cylinder, cone, and sphere:

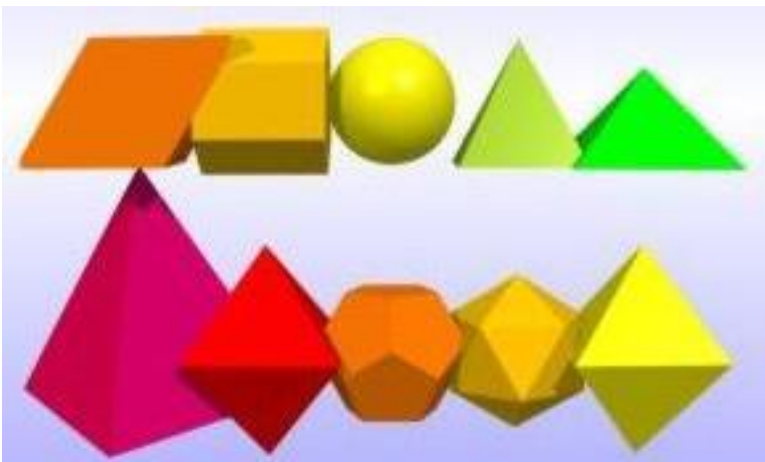


Figure 174: "Forms"

Space refers to the emptiness determined by shapes and forms. *Positive space* refers to the actual shape or form; *negative space* refers to the empty space around the actual shape or forms. Note how the moth emerges as positive space when it is perceived first and as negative space when the two men with their thumbs up are perceived first.



Figure 175: "Moth or Two Men with Thumbs Up?"

Texture refers to the surface quality of an object, such as smooth, soft, velvety, or rough. A texture may be an actual surface, or a suggested surface. Suggesting textures is a method of manipulating ideas into concrete forms:



Figure 176: "Texture"

Color occurs when light strikes the light-sensitive elements in the human retina. The twelve hue *Color Wheel* is the spectrum of light bent into a circle. The three primary colors are separated by the secondary and intermediate colors:

Primary colors include the three basic hues—**RED**, **YELLOW** and **BLUE**—that cannot be produced from any others. Mixing primary colors creates all other colors.

Secondary colors result from mixing the primary colors. **ORANGE** results from mixing equal parts of red and yellow. **GREEN** results from mixing equal parts of blue and yellow. **VIOLET** results from mixing equal parts of red and blue.

Intermediate colors result by mixing a secondary color with a primary color: **RED-ORANGE**, **RED-VIOLET**, **BLUE-VIOLET**, **BLUE-GREEN**, **YELLOW-GREEN**, and **YELLOW-ORANGE**.



Figure 177: “Color Wheel”

Tone refers to the lightness or darkness of an image, and *value* refers to the lightness or darkness

of a color. Shades and tints result from mixing different values. *Shades* are colors mixed with black and *tints* are colors mixed with white.

Contrast applied to figure-ground segregation models refers to any opposing aspects. For example, the range of **green**, **blue**, and **purple** colors form the “cool” side of the color wheel, evoking images of cool grass and expansive skies, while the range of **yellow**, **orange**, and **red** colors form the “warm” side, evoking images of fires and sunsets. Both aspects form a cohesive whole.

Complementary colors complete each other when brought together. Theoretically, when mixed together in the proper proportion, they produce a neutral color (grey, white, or black). Artists often juxtapose opposing aspects to achieve a desired effect. In Francois Boucher’s painting, “Madame Marquise de la Pompadour,” Boucher contrasts predominately analogous (side-by-side) cool colors, against a touch of red, a warm color. One might interpret the hint of red as passion lurking beneath the cool demeanor of Boucher’s subject:



Figure 178: “Madame Marquise de la Pompadour” by Francois Boucher

Composition Principles

The *seven principles of composition* also influence the desired effect. These include balance, gradation, repetition, contrast, harmony, dominance, and unity. *Balance* occurs when the parts of an image have the same visual weight, and imbalance occurs when the visual weight differs.

While balance gives a sense of equilibrium, order and stateliness, imbalance creates tension and discomfort. Filmmakers often shoot scenes with skewed camera angles to increase the tension of a situation. The search for balance in all relationships underlies all figure-ground segregation models. Gestaltists assert that humans seek balance as a form of order. A large shape close to the center balances a small shape close to the edge, and a large, light-toned shape balances a small, dark-toned shape. The darker the shape, the heavier it appears.

Gradation refers to the series of gradual, successive stages of an art element, such as the progression of size and direction, to produce linear perspective. Gradation from dark to light causes the eye to “move” along a shape, creating the illusion of movement and depth.



Figure 179: "The Parthenon" by Jeff Sirmons

Repetition refers to the act of repeating of an element within a work. Repetition with variation arrests interest, while repetition without variation leads to monotony. The repetition may be subtle or pronounced to create the intended effect. Note how Andy Warhol's title, "Green Coca Cola Bottles" thematically connects the interplay of the repeating elements of color and shape with the single Coca Cola logo sharply contrasted in red:



Figure 180: "Green Coca Cola Bottles" by Andy Warhol, 1962

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Contrast refers to the juxtaposition of two unlike qualities to heighten the relationship between these qualities. For instance, note how tiny and buoyant the nine-week-old baby appears next to her sure-footed teacher:



Figure 181: “World’s youngest swimmer, Julie Sheldon” by Edward Clark

High contrast evokes a dramatic effect while *low contrast* creates a more soothing and settled atmosphere. Caravaggio’s “David and Goliath” exemplifies an extreme form of contrast called “tenebrism.” Contrasts of all degrees employed in figure-ground segregation models examine the relationship between both aspects:



Figure 182: “David and Goliath” by Caravaggio

Harmony combines elements in a work of art to emphasize the similarities of separate but related parts. The following mosaic demonstrates the Gestaltist notion that the whole effect exceeds the sum of the parts. It also demonstrates a harmonious relationship between warm colors and cool colors, as well as a harmonious relationship between lines, shapes, and tones.

Dominance foregrounds one or more elements as more significant than the rest. Note how Vincent Van Gogh’s title, “Café Terrace at Night,” underscores the contrast between the vibrant, warm colors of the foregrounded (dominant) café against the cool colors of the night sky, as well as the darker tones of the distant buildings:



Figure 183: "Cafe Terrace at Night" by Vincent Van Gogh

Unity refers to the arrangement of the elements to create a coherent whole. While lack of unity produces disharmony, unity without contrast can be uninteresting.



Figure 184: "Water Lily Pond, Symphony in Green" by Claude Monet

END NOTES

1. Andy Clark asserts that human's tendency to enroll material objects into our extended cognitive systems is a defining characteristic of our species. For a greater discussion, see *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.

2. According to Hutchins, materially anchored blends vary on a number of complexly related dimensions, including the extent to which the blend relies on the presence of material structure in the perceptual field, the complexity of the material structure, and whether the material structure was designed to support the blend or is used opportunistically.

3. Prior to becoming one of the founders of Gestalt psychology in 1910, Wertheimer studied with Austrian philosopher Christian von Ehrenfels who pointed out that a melody is still recognizable when played in different keys, even though none of the notes are the same. Thus, if a melody and the notes that comprise it are independent, then a whole is not simply the sum of its parts, but a synergistic whole effect, or gestalt. Wertheimer applied this observation to apparent movement, arguing that the effect of apparent movement is generated by the dynamic interrelationship of the individual elements. For an illuminating discussion into the origins of Gestalt psychology, see Roy Behrens, "Art, Design and Gestalt Theory," *Leonardo* 31.4 (1998): 299-303.

4. A noteworthy debate on the relevancy of Gestalt Theory in the field of Art is David Carrier's "Part IV: A Response to Rudolf Arnheim's 'To the Rescue of Art,'" 19.3 *Leonardo* (1986): 251-254. Carrier argues that many modern artists do not fit easily within the framework of Gestalt psychology which emphasizes the perception of a system of spatial relations. He considers

Arnheim's views too traditional. Arnheim counters that art allows us to experience the world in clarified, orderly, and impressive images.

5. One of the best sources that traces the influence of Gestalt Psychology in the fields of Art and Literature is Joseph Glicksohn and Chanita Goodblatt's "Metaphor and Gestalt: Interaction Theory Revisited," *Poetics Today* 14.1 (1993): 83-97. The authors note, for example, the similarity between the Gestaltists' concept of a Gestalt as an "organized whole and the Formalist-Structuralist's notion of a literary work as a "complex structure, integrated by the unity of [a]esthetic purpose" (84).

6. Hayles invites instructors and practitioners of literary art as well as students to expand their sense of literary without abandoning their literary past by visiting the *Electronic Literature Collection Volume One* at <<http://collection.eliterature.org>>.

7. Ramus views everything in the world as composed of small corpuscular units, which he calls *simples*. He considers "all intellectual operations as a spatial grouping of a number of these corpuscles into a kind of cluster, or as a breaking down of clusters into their corpuscular units. The clusters, once formed, can be regarded also as corpuscles which in themselves admit of further combination and which form still further clusters of clusters," according to Walter Ong (203). Ramus thus concludes that individuals and species are exactly the same thing. For example, the concept of *man* "extends to all individual men in a way parallel in all respects to that in which *animal* extends to various species of animal" (203). By proposing a one-for-one

correspondence between terms and things, Ramus “opposes allowing words to mean more than one ‘thing,’ and regularly frowns on discussion of divergent meanings, which Ramus says is the business of grammar and not of dialectic,” Ong observes (203). See Walter Ong, “Metaphor and the Twinned Vision (The Phoenix and the Turtle),” *The Sewanee Review* 63.2 (1955): 193-201.

8. According to Rosemond Tuve, to a Ramist, “Perception is not a process separable from judging, nor imaging separable from the relating of significances into concepts.” Instead, a Ramist views every image as functional as the last, with each representing an argument comprised of “leaves, twigs, branches, [and] limbs of some great complicated tree which is the concept being conveyed. To a Ramist, no image could be in any strict sense decorative; all ‘arguments’ are by definition functional.” See Rosemond Tuve, “Imagery and Logic: Ramus and Metaphysical Poetics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 29 Nov. 2009, 284-287.

9. An in-depth counter argument of Roman Jakobson’s literary theories is Paul Werth’s “Roman Jakobson’s Verbal Analysis of Poetry,” *Journal of Linguistics* 12.1 (1976): 21-73. Werth challenges Jakobson’s analytical method of poetic analysis and his assumption that the intricate verbal patterns of his analysis are necessarily poetic patterns.

10. Perloff provides numerous examples of electronic enhancements of poetry in *The Poetics of click and Drag*. She invites the reader to check out the British Futurism website,

<www.futurism.org.uk>, to observe new methods to teach the fields of arts and humanities.

Hayles also encourages the reader to check out UbuWeb, an educational resource for avant-garde

material. Founded in 1996 by poet Kenneth Goldsmith, it offers visual, concrete and sound poetry, film and sound art mp3 archives. Perloff is especially impressed with the adaptations of Haroldo de Campos' Concrete poems. See *The Poetics of Click and Drag: Screening the New Poetries*, <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/perloff_poetics.pdf>.

11. For a complete survey of Qulipo activities, including word-games and teaching resources, see the *Oulipo Compendium*, edited by Harry Mathews and Alastair Brotchie, Atlas Press, 1998.

12. Szarkowski elaborates on the effect of framing on meaning, stating: "The photographer selects rather than conceives a picture by choosing what will be inside and outside the four edges of the frame in his camera's viewfinder. Those edges take things out of context and define the content of the subject. The image of a politician speaking to potential supporters could be perceived quite differently if the photographer took a tightly composed close-up view showing only an attentive crowd and the speaker or if he framed a larger view from the back of a large meeting hall that showed the same small group along with a sea of mostly empty chairs at a sparsely attended event. In this case what was left out of the frame was as important as what was included within its borders." See "Szarkowski on Criticizing Photographs," *Photography Notes*, <<http://www.phui.com>>.

13. There are two commonly known stages of Wittgenstein's thought, both which were considered pivotal in their respective periods. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Wittgenstein applied modern logic to metaphysics, through language, thus providing new insights into the

relations between language and thought. His later work, most evident in the *Philosophical Investigations*, reflects a revolutionary step toward critiquing all traditional philosophy to include some of his earlier views. While the nature of his later views is considered anti-systematic, they are nonetheless considered conducive to genuine philosophical understanding of traditional problems.

14. Barthes claims that photographs are most effective when they contain two elements, the studium and the punctum. The studium is “a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment” while the punctum is a “sting, speck, cut, little hole.” While the studium suggests a passive response, the punctum allows for a more subjective, albeit emotional response as it foregrounds a small detail. Barthes insists that a shifting process results which disturbs the surface unity and stability of the photograph much like a physical cut “disturbs” a person’s skin. Thus, foregrounding a detail allows the enlarged space to be examined in a new context, challenging the conventional codes of meaning. See *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982.

15. Bruno Ernst notes that Escher’s works are essentially about ambivalence within one drawing. “Thus, even a single line drawn on a blank sheet of paper allows of two quite distinct interpretations, and obviously this twofold interpretation can also be a feature of the most complicated figures, indeed of every print, every photograph, and every picture. The fact that we usually do not notice this is due to the way in which numerous details of the picture represent things that clearly have only a single meaning in the tangible world of experience. Whenever this does not apply it will be found that one interpretation can be arrived at just as well as another,

especially if we change the direction in which the light is shining on the paper.” For a deeper analysis of Escher’s work, see Ernst’s *The Magic Mirror of M. C. Escher*. Singapore: Taschen Press, 1994.

16. An exception to the notion that iambic pentameter reflects sincerity is Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 130.” The sonnet is written entirely in iambic pentameter except for line 13, the first line of the couplet, when he adds an extra syllable with the addition of “by heaven.” The addition breaks the rhythmic flow of the regular meter, thus emphasizing the sincerity behind the speaker’s oath of passion for his mistress. The speaker’s assertion comes as a surprise to the established mood of the poem in the two quatrains and reflects the genuine feelings of the speaker.

17. Hayles notes that “systems theory needs narrative as a supplement just as much, perhaps, as narrative needs at least an implicit system to generate itself. Narrative reveals what systems theory occludes.” She credits Niklas Luhmann for his foresight in “seeing that every system has an outside that cannot be grasped from inside the system” and for his honesty in noting that the concept of closure also has an outside it cannot see. Thus, one enlarges as well as escapes from a system by interrogating from without that which cannot be made logical, straight, or ordered from within a particular system. Hence, for one to explore the dividing line between contextual positions (or systems) involves a willingness of the participant to enter another system that is contingent on a different time and place, with the goal of reaching toward the new while at the same time building upon what has gone on before. See “Making the Cut: The Interplay of

Narrative and System, or What Systems Theory Can't See," *Cultural Critique* 30, The Politics of Systems and Environments, Part I (Spring, 1995), pp. 71-100.

18. For a complete listing of Brecht's epigrams, see *War Primer*, which was not published in English until 1998. Most of his epigrams, which come from *Life* magazine, reflect his observation that "photography, in the hands of the bourgeoisie [was] a terrible weapon against truth." See *War Primer*, London: Libris, 2001.

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