# VISUAL LANGUAGE:
# THE CONCEPT AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

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# ABSTRACT

This completed project is the largest step in a 10-year process during which I have studied and implemented visual language. In Chapter 1, I outline the reasons for my focus on this topic and discuss my personal viewpoints and background. A brief rationale for this topic is then suggested, followed by a review of the literature. Although a finite definition of visual language is neither possible nor desirable, a working definition is offered based on my work to this point. Relevance to classroom practice is crucial so a close examination of the *Senior High English Statement of Content* (Revised 1981) and the *Alberta Education Program of Studies for English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 9* is also undertaken.

The second chapter of the project contains suggestions for classroom application based on these curricular and philosophical underpinnings in a user friendly format. *Look Closer* is designed as a teacher guide to studying visual language. The steps are not intended as lesson plans per se but rather as activity sequences. Its theoretical base comes from a visual language standpoint, since that is the avenue I am advocating students explore, but it also includes many activities from each of the language arts (formerly known as strands). In fact, this unit encompasses all language arts at various times. The unit can stand alone or be used in conjunction with other projects. Similarly, many activities can be used by themselves without the rest of the unit. Some knowledge building will be necessary for more technical units, however, the overall aim is to raise awareness and create a more learned use of visual language.

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# I. CONCEPTS

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*Throughout my program, the use of visual language in classrooms has been the major focus. In this, the culminating and largest investigation of this topic, I will explore some new avenues and synthesize my findings from previous study.*

Briefly, my own teaching career and study of visual language is like the study of a novel. The story does not begin on the first page nor end with the last; I will explore some of the forces that have shaped and are shaping my teaching attitudes, ideas and practices specifically toward visual language.

Growing up as a late baby boomer in one of the first eras of television, it would be hard for me to say that I was not affected by it even though the medium was in its infancy. Additionally, the film medium was already well established as a recognized cultural force. Good reading habits were instilled in me but even at an early age, I remember that television and film viewing were a very seductive influence on me.

Why was I drawn to viewing at such an early age? Now, as a professional educator, I can perhaps speculate and articulate it was because of the importance of establishing a visually based mental model to use in conjunction with the printed word which would lead to more profound thinking (Dorr (1986) in Adams and Hamm, 1989, 7). But as a six-year-old, it was because it was just plain *fascinating* to see the pictures and hear the sounds. Reading? Yes, for school, for leisure often, but for my generation and the generations, which have followed, certainly not *only* reading.

What is it about visual media that holds such a strong attraction for so many today when it seems we have more innovations in communication than at any other time in mankind's history? There is a huge array of leisure activities yet viewing is by far the most popular activity. In the U.S., a poll revealed that reading was ranked last among activities children frequently engaged in while television ranked first in popularity and time commitment. (Adams and Hamm, 1989, 4) It seems to me that important questions need to be asked not only about

why this is occurring, but what roles visual language is or is not playing in education curriculua.

My belief is that the significance of visual language is not fully recognized and its potential not fully realized in many Alberta schools, particularly at the secondary level. Since I have done informal research on this very topic throughout my teaching career, I have discovered many exciting visual language projects. However, I have also found many schools lacking in this regard not only in Alberta, but as an exchange teacher in New Zealand as well.

When I began teaching in 1987 as an intern teacher, one of the first projects I undertook was the filming of a music video in a Drama 9 course. The teacher I was interning with had the idea for doing scene work using musical narratives and I suggested we try them using video. The combination was an instant hit with students since music videos were (and still are) a very big part of popular culture. This was not a silent film in the comical sense of the genre, but one in which students acted out a serious story behind the lyrics to a song. I was very impressed with not only the level of maturity but also the level of visual expertise that the students brought to the project. There was no doubt that they knew exactly what they wanted in terms of video shots and they did not have difficulty getting what they wanted. I was so impressed that I included the project in my year plans when I took over the position the next year. In fact, the project was included as an optional project for the next eight years and each of those years saw the creation of new and creative student written and directed video projects – what I have called active visual language.

After the success of Drama 9, I expanded the use of student centered visual language to other subject areas including high school English, drama and social studies. In Drama 20 we wrote and filmed scenes, in English 23 students created photo essays and concluded an advertising study with the filming of commercials. In Social Studies 10, students set out to demonstrate Canadian identity through video and still photography. My colleagues would often marvel at some of the assignments I gave in these classes and commend me for innovation, yet I felt somewhat alone in my experimentation.

Each year I would re-evaluate the worth of such projects and whether visual language was the best way to cover these curriculum topics. After all, some teachers did not even make this type of assignment an option for students when they taught these courses. I compared desired outcomes with possible strategies, weighed the benefits against the extra work and preparation necessary and considered student enthusiasm towards such projects before making my decision. I decided that a balance of instructional strategies *is* important and even though some of these projects take more time and have potential pitfalls, I would not take a narrow instructional approach to the curriculum. Given the amount of preparation, research and rehearsal such projects take on the part of students, they are certainly as effective and every bit as rigorous as any traditional research project, essay or class presentation that makes up the majority of classroom projects.

Perhaps the most determining factor was the positive student feedback and results that were received from these activities. Students still come to me and express how much they enjoyed that facet of a particular course. I have also had former students come back and ask for copies of their work. This kind of attitude and success tends to foster a more positive approach to learning and has thus led me to pursue visual instructional methods again and again with renewed enthusiasm and pushed me further along into studies of visual language.

It is worth mentioning at this point that such enthusiasm breaks both students and teachers away from the mundane learning experiences referred to in the video *Literacy Lost* by author Carman Hunter (Films for the Humanities, 1988). If students are stimulated to learn by using new methods and techniques, we may be one step closer to keeping some at risk students in school but more importantly, educating all students in a very important form of literacy. I believe that this is not an attempt to pacify students by just giving them what they want in an "easy to swallow television package." I want to go on record as saying that active visual language is but one tool of many in the teaching of language but it has heretofore been largely underused. Critical theorists like Neil Postman (in Literacy Lost, 1988) may wring their hands all they like about the impact of television and the 20$^{th}$ century but our students

have not only viewing skills but expressive skills which allow them to create using video and other forms of visual technology. Let us capitalize on this opportunity.

In the course of my involvement with this form of language, I have encountered very strong collegial support for the ideas I will present in this project. I have spoken to numerous teachers from many different schools and countries and have always received positive feedback. I have presented at numerous conventions and PD sessions and found on each of these occasions, very receptive audiences. These experiences confirmed that I was not the only teacher who has used a video camera in a classroom. In fact, I discovered that a lot of video work was taking place in classrooms in my own and neighbouring divisions. For the most part however, these teachers were experimenting and had little technical or theoretical knowledge. They too were wondering if they were on the right track, but "it seemed to be working". Certainly their experiences paralleled my own heuristic journeys.

When I started at a small rural high school in 1987, I was the only teacher there using a video camera as part of the classroom curriculum. The equipment was ancient by today's standards and comparatively difficult to use but it produced good results (for the time) and students loved using it. Naturally, since that time we have had some staff turnover and huge leaps in technological capability. We now have three video cameras, an edit suite and students who line up to create with video. I even have students asking me if projects can be done on video that I had never considered as video projects. It seems they understand the medium's potential as much or more than I do.

I am also fortunate to have had overseas teaching experience in New Zealand for two years. I taught at an intermediate school (Forms 1 & 2) and a high school. At the high school, students had access to media studies and journalism courses so it was seen that visual language was largely being looked after in these areas, at least as far as students creating with visual language goes. The regrettable aspect for me though was the lack of student creative input into some projects. Yes, students were running the cameras, but usually only to 'cover' an event. This type of assignment offered students very little creative latitude. This

unfortunately is a situation at other schools, including my own. It is interesting to note that, in my experience, students choose creative visual language projects over journalistic non-fiction projects every time.

There were other visual language projects going on in the high school English department such as film studies and static image studies which were very interesting. The film study, although not student driven, did focus on the language of film. Every conceivable aspect of a film was discussed in depth. This was encouraging to me since there are few such assignments in Alberta schools.

Another excellent visual language project at the high school level was the use of static image studies. Here students were asked to take the story of a novel and transform it into a visual display using symbols, visual metaphors, drawings and pictures from the story. The use of visual cues such as colour, texture and shape were encouraged and students thrived in this genre of visual self-expression. I taught in main streamed classrooms with a broad range of abilities and students at all levels were able to have great success on this assignment.

The above are two assignments are excellent examples of how visual language can and should be used at the high school level. Students welcomed the 'break' from essay writing and day to day reading. Only the second assignment, however, falls into what could be called active visual language where students must use visuals to convey their message. The film study, although an important first step in the use of visual language, did not carry on to the construction of students' own films. This, to me, is the ultimate use of not only available technology but, more importantly, the application of visual concepts toward curricular ends. Application, after all, is what we expect from students in written language after instruction in methods of writing so it follows that similar standards should apply to visual language.

Visual language at the intermediate level (ages 11-12) was not quite so alive. The video camera at the intermediate school literally had dust on it from lack of use. While I was there I began using it in my classroom and ran in-service sessions for staff on various applications. Teachers saw how successful students of all abilities could be using it. I assume that

previously there was simply a lack of confidence on the part of the teachers at that school because the video camera was in great demand when I left. I also left a small visual language teacher's manual with a collection of visual language application ideas that seemed to be very helpful. At the same school, I experimented with digital photography and again found students very receptive to it. They were responsible for writing newspaper stories on a particular topic and then using the digital camera to express their story in photos as well – a compliment to the written word. Both of these projects involve active visual language because they ask students to communicate by creating a visual message.

# RATIONALE

*This section briefly summarizes why it is important to create messages through visual language within a classroom context. Since the Classroom Application portion of this project is intended to stand on its own, an expanded rationale is also contained there.*

The visual media of television and film are widespread users of visual imagery in communication. They assume, capitalize on, and are in fact largely responsible for the broad visual dictionaries that students today possess. The sophisticated modern viewer is adept at picking up the subtlest visual cue, such as a raised eyebrow or a change in camera angle, and instantly understanding what the character, or in some cases the director, meant to convey. These media are such a pervasive force within our culture that over generations they have been instrumental in shaping our cultural consciousness (Adams and Hamm, 1989).

This has been well illustrated by people like E.D. Hirsch and Neil Postman in works such as *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Hirsch, 1987) and *Literacy Lost* (Films for the Humanities, 1988). The values expressed through television and film, however, will not be debated here. Rather, this discussion seeks to emphasize how ubiquitous visual language is in our society. We as teachers and curriculum designers should be paying attention to ways we can harness its power towards the educational ends in improving the visual literacy of our students. From the review of literature that follows, it seems that I am not alone in this view.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

*Since visual language involves a wide variety of disciplines, I will explore uses of visual language in human spatial relations such as stage and film movement, language theory and technical trade books on film acting which deal with specific types of visual language particular to that medium.*

One of the motivations for undertaking this project was to discover how broad a research and theoretical base exists in this area. What follows is a clear indication that such support exists.

I have always tried to advocate a balance in the English curriculum between all forms of language. If it behooves us as English/language arts teachers to help students understand and use language, surely we should be including a fair balance of all forms of language. In my opinion, this balance is lacking with respect to visual language. It is one of the dominant forms of language confronting students each day and many teachers address it superficially if at all, especially at the junior high and high school levels. It must be recognized for the place of importance it already occupies. My perspective, it turns out, is reflected in the research literature. As Adams and Hamm (1989) summarize:

> We live in a complex society dependent on rapid communication and information access. Lifelike visual symbol systems are comprised, in part, of story structure, pace, sound track, color and conceptual difficulty. Computers, distant databases, television and their associates are rapidly becoming our dominant cultural tools for selecting, gathering, storing and conveying knowledge in representational forms (Bagdikian, 1987). The idea of print as an immutable cannon is an historical illusion. [Furthermore] because electronic symbol systems play such a central role in modern communication, they cannot be ignored. (p. 17)

This does not mean however that we should in any way disregard the importance of written language and the reading of it. J.A. Anderson (1989) argues that

> It is widely recognized there is no substitute for the way print can provide for looking back over a concept covered, conveying metaphor or connecting to a rich literary tradition. When 'a picture is worth a thousand words,' that picture usually appears within a context of printed words. No matter how accessible non-print information becomes, there will be no substitute for a well-written sentence. However, since much of the learning material in the future won't be printed, a balance must be struck. (in Adams and Hamm pp. 3-4)

In fact, Dorr (1986) claims a balanced use of strategies enhances learning. "Studies confirm that the power and permanency of what we learn is greater when visually based mental models are used in conjunction with the printed word. Inferences drawn from visual models can lead to more profound thinking." (in Adams and Hamm, 1989, p. 7)

Given then that a balance must be struck between visual and written language, some work must be done to ensure that the balance is equitable. The current reality is that written and oral language hold predominant emphases in many areas of our curriculum, when compared to their visual counterpart. Until 1996, creating through visual language was not even recognized in the Alberta English curriculum. To effect a better balance overall there must be an acknowledgement that visual literacy is *basic* to human communication. As John Berger (1972) expresses in his classic *Ways of Seeing*: "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak." (p.7).

Berger goes on to say that no matter how we try to describe our world or express our feelings about the world around us, nothing can undo the fact that we are surrounded by it (and thus identify that fact with our eyes) (1972). This author has been a major source of inspiration for me in my academic study of visual language because he also places a high value on the visual and has shown the effectiveness of visual language in many applications, including more not solely having to do with young children. In his book of seven essays, three are entirely conveyed through photos. They are extremely poignant in dealing with their respective topics, doing so as effectively as the essays written with words. It was these photo essays that prompted me to give similar assignments in classroom situations.

The notion of seeing as the primal form of communication in infants is also recognized by Richard Sinatra in his book *Visual Literacy Connections to Thinking, Reading and Writing* (1986). He cites Harris (1975) and Restak (1982a) as two independent studies which both conclude that the brain's right hemisphere is developed first.

> Because many neuroscientists now believe that the right hemisphere of humans is the more predominant one in the early years of life and because visual literacy is the literacy generally processed by the right hemisphere, it follows that visual literacy must be fundamental to human thought. (Sinatra, 1986, 6)

Further, he explains, "we can say that the first stage of literacy development is that of visual literacy." (p.7)

Sinatra claims that visual literacy is divided into two facets or stages. "The first stage may be considered a given, a human necessity for all seeing-proficient peoples. Through interaction with the environment, the first stage establishes some deep underlying thoughts about the construction of reality." (p.ix). In other words, essentially the way Berger describes it. Sinatra claims that the nonverbal components of visual literacy are the real "basics" rather than the "three R's" as proclaimed by traditional educational theorists. Sinatra offers his definition of visual literacy as " the active reconstruction of past visual experiences with incoming visual messages to obtain meaning." (p. 5). Employing his definition for the purposes of this discussion, I would only clarify my use of visual language by calling it the fluent application of visual literacy knowledge and techniques in the delivery of a message.

But Sinatra (1986, ix) goes further in an effort to show how visual language literacy not only occurs first, but is inter-linked to four other stages of literacy. He outlines the stages of literacy as:

1) Visual literacy as primary – viewing, exploring, and nonverbal representation
2) Oral Literacy – listening and speaking
3) Written Literacy – reading and writing
4) Visual Literacy as representational communication – imaging, producing, aesthetic engagement

Self-explanatory visual illustration emphasizing dynamic aspects of the components is as follows:

(See Figure 1)

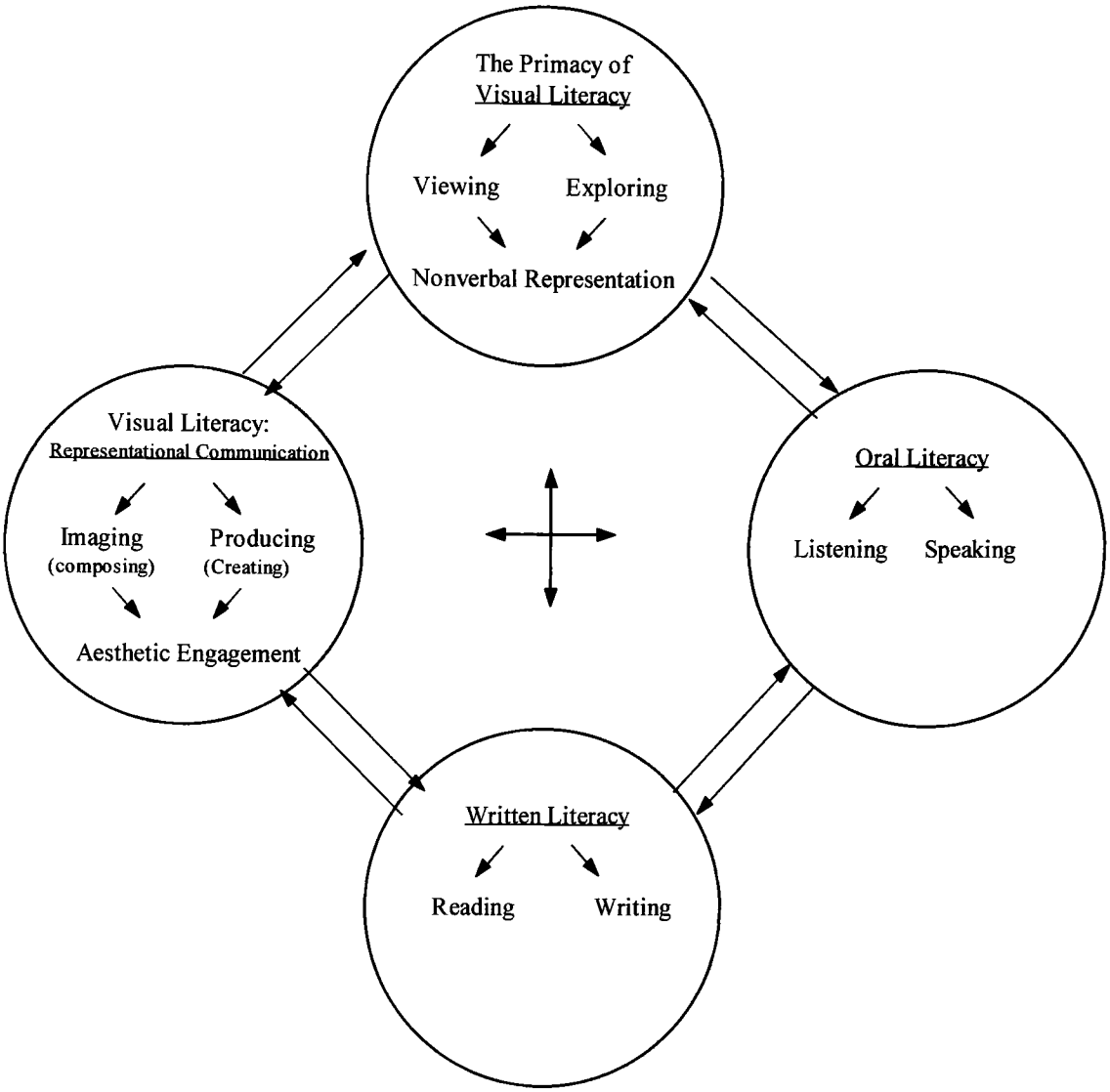



Figure 1. Visual literacy and its interactive relationship with the verbal and nonverbal literacies: Sinatra (1986) p.29

The explanations of Berger and Sinatra above demonstrate the primacy of visual language so let us focus briefly on the second stage of literacy development. Sinatra claims that *oral literacy* builds upon its visual counterpart and uses the example of a mother first showing a milk container and then using the word "milk" to introduce a connectedness between the visual and the oral. Oral language continues to develop in numerous ways from this point, but suffice to say "in the presence of significant others providing both visual and oral cues, the

child binds oral language competencies to visual features and to mental, representational images of those features." (Sinatra, 1986, 17)

Written language acquisition begins between 5 and 7 years of age in most Western cultures but again there is an interrelatedness among the written, the oral and the visual. "In other words, visual literacy can sharpen the language used in the oral and written literacies while the verbal literacies can interface directly with how we perceive visual experience." (Sinatra, 1986, 18) Sinatra goes on to explain that "many popular models of the language arts as well as Piagetian wisdom are based on the developmental progression from nonverbal experience, to oral language development, to written language usage." (pp.18-19) He cites the example of Ralph Kellogg who uses the term 'experience' as the foundation for our language development. Sinatra clearly explains however, that our 'experience' is based on viewing, exploring, and nonverbal representation (18).

Sinatra's fourth phase of visual literacy, *visual literacy as representational*, is at the heart of this discussion. It is important however to make the distinction between two stages of visual literacy. "The second stage, flourishes as a result of the unique way individuals strive to capture and express reality through nonverbal representational systems. The failure to separate these two facets of visual literacy has resulted in a confused sense of the impact of nonverbal learning in literacy development. " (Sinatra, 1986, ix)

In other words, there is the danger of confusing the notion of advanced visual language with the simple visual language of a child.

> Stage four of literacy development is based on humankind's desire to represent meaning in nonverbal, creative and symbolic ways. [It] encompasses the world of the visual and graphic arts, the media and the aesthetic." (p.28). The relationships that exist amongst the other four stages of literacy are interactive and each includes forms of expression and reception. Oral literacy contains the receptive form of listening and the expressive form of speaking. Written literacy has the receptive form of reading and the expressive form of writing. Visual literacy at the representational communication stage also has these forms through the

> desire to imagine (compose) and the desire to produce (create). (Sinatra, 1986, 29).

Siantra explains that the stages described here are "not bound in some kind of rigid hierarchy" (1986, 28) but rather that each stage is dependent upon the others to achieve a holistic use of language. The components are different from each other but also reliant upon each other.

> For instance, the representational systems of the artist or filmmaker can interact directly with the basic components of visual literacy, with those of oral literacy, or those of written literacy... We can say, however, that the comprehension gained from each literacy provides a richness, a fullness to the others experienced and mastered in a lifetime. (Sinatra, 1986, 28)

Sinatra goes out of his way to point out something of an irregularity within advanced form or the second stage of visual literacy.

> The advance of filming and videotaping of the 20$^{th}$ century has made the technology of media literacy a powerful means to influence thinking. While many visual literacy advocates focus on the media aspect of visual literacy only, they need to be aware that the dual processes of nonverbal composing and producing underlie that technology. (1986, 28)

It would seem then, that reception and expression are important components in each of the other forms of literacy. It therefore seems logical that imaging and producing visual language be included to fairly represent all forms in the classroom. Further, not only do we have the ability to function with visual language at very high levels of complexity, but other types of literacy are actually interconnected with visual literacy. Therefore, in order to use one at the optimum level, one must be conversant with them all. This includes what I have called the active form of visual language which Sinatra himself says is often overlooked.

Once students have built their visual repertoire, they possess another very powerful set of tools for use in communication. At this stage, visual language is used to communicate a message rather than merely demonstrate mastery of a technique. It goes beyond knowing how

to operate a video or digital camera to necessarily include an element of shared meaning. Through using diverse forms of active visual language, important messages can be shared regardless of format. We need to recognize that visual language must be identified as something that goes beyond the traditional reading and writing taught in school. When we do this we must recognize that we are using only two formats. We cannot "read" a film as we do a book. In the application section of this project, I suggest that it is not possible to capture something completely in a visual format when the original was created with words, but neither is it possible to completely capture something visual in a written description. Sinatra clarifies this point:

> Visions that develop from both Stage One and Stage Four levels of Visual Literacy underlie what readers "see" during reading, writing, and computer activities. (1986, 26)

Once we get past this skill mastery level of the technical, we are able to realize another very effective way of communicating meaning.

One of the conceptual bases that I have come to operate from is that we as a modern culture have changed the way in which we think. It is often said that television is a passive activity or, at least, certainly more so than reading. Research has shown that this is not the case. In fact, children must do active work when watching TV in order to make sense of its contents and utilize its message (Anderson & Bryant, 1983). They must "evaluate activities including judging and assigning worth, assessing what is admired, and deciding what positive and negative impressions should be assigned to the content. In this sense, children are active participants in determining television's meaning." (in Adams and Hamm, 1989, 11)

The important notion here is that television is a medium that has power for a number of younger and older generations and is shaping not only what we think about, but also how those thoughts are connected. The discussion in the video *Cultural Illiteracy* (Films for the Humanities, 1988) centered on a book called *Cultural Literacy* (Hirsch, 1987) which

generated a list of what its author called basic knowledge that all culturally literate persons should possess. E.D. Hirsch claimed that today's students have lost the classical literary frame of reference and thus cannot be called culturally literate in today's society. I would argue that while history continues to be studied, we must remember its somewhat fluid character. What we consider culturally significant issues today may merely be an historical footnote in another century.

For example, Hirsch implies that teenagers today do not make historical connections and while that may be true in some cases, he may in fact be considered culturally illiterate as well in certain contexts today. Whose culture is correct? Whose is more relevant and relevant for whom? What method of delivery is most valid? Is it not equally important to be conversant with modern culture in its various formats as it is with Classical written literature?

In my own classroom, I see examples of how students' thinking has changed. When asked to write plays in Drama 20, I see students who think in short encapsulated scenes just like cuts on television. The notion of one long scene of uninterrupted action is not the first way they envision plot. I point out to them that they have written in this manner and they simply accept it as the way they write or perhaps more appropriately, the way they think. This is not to say that the plays they write are superficial or any less complex than a play with long uninterrupted action. They are often very complex in terms of plot and technical requirements. "Like print, visual imagery from a TV screen can be mentally processed at different levels of complexity." (Adams and Hamm, 1989, 8)

Adams and Hamm (1989) also delve into the notion of our changing patterns of thinking.

> In the latter part of the twentieth century, there is little question that reality is being shaped by electronic information and electronic illusions. *The future will be televised.* The question is, how might the cathode ray tube be used to spark a renaissance in human leaning, thinking and communication? (7)

What impact has this had on the way students think? It means that students today think in a different way partially because they possess a different database of culturally relevant information and processes. This difference means that we as teachers cannot expect students to use only the knowledge and skills that we accept as legitimate when putting forth their ideas. Furthermore, this means that we cannot expect students to express themselves only through our pedagogically controlled channels, usually writing. We must not only accept, but embrace the fact that television and films have shaped their thinking to include new ways of expressing themselves, namely visual language, and include these methods among our accepted genres of expression. "Each communication medium makes use of its own distinctive technology for gathering, encoding, sorting and conveying its contents associated with different situations." (Adams and Hamm, 1989, 17). Rather than seeing the argument as reading being better than viewing, or vice versa, we should be focussing the most appropriate form of communication to ensure the greatest degree of learning in any given situation. (Adams and Hamm, 1989) In other words, we should seek a balance of techniques according to what the desired outcome is.

Print relies on the reader's ability to interpret abstract symbols. Video is more direct but in both cases, thinking and learning are reliant on the interpretation of internal symbolic representations and the mental interpretation of those symbols. Once these symbol systems are understood, they can be used either for actual writing on paper or video production. Adams and Hamm call these new tools "video pencils" and Sam Edwards (1996) describes it as an "electronic extension of the pen". Either way, the transfer process works in exactly the same way.

"Children can become adept at extracting meaning from the conventions of video production- zooms, pans, tilts, fade outs and flashbacks." (Adams and Hamm, 1989, 7) So if it is the case that students do in fact possess significant knowledge about the media of television and film, of the meanings behind body language, camera angles and point of view

which all of these media presuppose, then the transfer of these skills over into the realm of actively using them to create does not seem too much of a jump.

This is in fact the process I follow in my own classroom. I recently showed a video of camera angle clips in preparation for an upcoming project using the video camera. Camera techniques were discussed, including when certain camera angles and shots would be appropriate. I was not disappointed with the knowledge base since students could articulate very clear reasons for a variety of shots: why a close up shows the reaction of a character much more clearly than a medium shot, why a person might want shadows in lighting to build suspense or keep a character's feelings literally in the dark, for wanting a cut instead of a fade to keep the action moving. This is not new terminology to students and they have no qualms about using the camera. It is in their comfort zone.

In a recent discussion with a colleague, he rejected the notion of using active visual language in the form of student created video. He reasoned that any student can now operate a video camera but never to the degree that will resemble anything on television or in film. Therefore, if they cannot achieve ideal results, he reasoned we should not present the option in the first place. I considered his viewpoint carefully, however I believe this criticism is not valid. If we as teachers accepted this type of limitation, we would never teach anything. Perhaps no student will ever be able to write poetry like Robert Frost, yet we teach poetry writing and appreciation. No student may ever be able to write suspense like Edgar Allen Poe or plays like William Shakespeare but we study and attempt to write in these genres as well. Perhaps students will not produce a video to the standard of Steven Spielberg, but that is because schools do not have the capabilities of a Hollywood studio and not because students do not have equally good ideas. Students write every day, yet there are necessarily few perfect essays. Students act every day in a drama class, yet few go on to become professionals. A lack of perfection does not mean that students and teachers should not explore this method of communication.

Sinatra also deals with this issue. He quotes Sykes' (1982) assertion that rather than being so focussed on the finished product, "they [students] can be taught to respond to the aesthetic levels of meaning in literature, music, painting, film, sculpture, architecture and other manifestations of art" (cited in Sinatra, 1986, 31). Although this reference seems to be directed at the receptive form of visual language, I would argue that it would also apply to the expressive form. We teach many concepts through "process" in schools and it is as valuable in visual language as it is in any other subject area – perhaps more since students come with many of the tools for that process already in place.

Sinatra also notes Elliot Eisner's support here:

> Sensory deprivation is a major cause of illiteracy in our schools because schools fail to provide programs that allow youngsters to express meaning through sensory forms of expression. Eisner feels that literacy can be employed, developed and refined within any of the forms of representation the sensory system makes possible. (Sinatra, 1986, 32)

Richard Lewis is also cited by Sinatra as he disparages the isolation of the arts as separate subjects because it fosters the notion that things studied apart from one another, cannot be carried over into one another. The example Lewis gives is that if a student makes a toy puppet in an art class, it could also be the impetus for an oral or written composition. (Sinatra, 1986, 32) Herein lies my reasoning for transferring visual expression from drama to English to social studies classes.

# DEFINITIONS

*In a discussion about the role of visual language it is important to define exactly what is meant by visual language. Logically, a definition should appear at the beginning of this paper. However, it did not because, as evidenced by the discussion to this point, this is not an easy task. Visual language is a broad, fluid and somewhat elusive topic. My approach therefore has been to heuristically work with the reader in the attempt to let general definitions evolve. I now continue by giving some additional parameters in working toward a definition. This project will work toward a definition of what active visual language can be as applied in an English/language arts classroom. The purpose of working towards such a definition is to focus on the topic with an aim to better understanding and implementing it within these contexts. This definition does not seek to be definitive, however, as this would limit the scope of a constantly changing field.*

In almost any public setting, one cannot help but be bombarded by visual messages. On store signs, storefront windows, posters, photos, large displays in the middle of a shopping mall, walkways and, perhaps most notably, on people, we are confronted with visual language. A few years ago it would not have seemed out of place to see store employees wearing a shirt with the company logo on the breast pocket. Indeed there are still many stores that do this in a very eye catching manner but recently, even people who do not work in any store wear the apparel of one company or another in very bold manner. This is so much the case that it has become the fashion to wear a "name" in the most obvious way possible. The Nike swoosh, ties by Coca-Cola and apparel by Tommy Hilfiger are pertinent examples. This is a part of visual language that is tied to advertising through its use of name recognition, peer pressure and fad buying, but again, this is only a part of a definition.

When a boy and a girl go out on a first date, there are many non-verbal signals given as to how the date should proceed but few people take formal training on the understanding of body language or spatial relationships. What does it mean if she sits with her arms crossed? How long should you continue eye contact before looking away? How much space should be left between two people? These signals are assumed to be common knowledge by most

functioning members of society and even though non-verbal signals are often misinterpreted, most understand their general meaning. Indeed the understanding of a stage play or film is based partly on the assumption that most of the audience will understand spatial relationships, even if only at a subconscious level. If an actor slams the door and stomps across the stage to confront another actor face to face, we interpret anger, but if the same actor enters and is methodical about how he approaches the other, we use different visual clues to arrive at an understanding of intent. In fact, as an amateur director of stage and screen myself, I would argue that the subconscious level is the most important level to understand relationships.

As children, many of us enjoyed having picture books read to us. Then, we progressed to stories without pictures, but we were still encouraged by parents and teachers to "see" the pictures in our heads as the stories were read. In some cases we were asked to draw pictures that came to our mind's eye as we listened to a story. This is an excellent application of visual language, yet advanced applications seem to be used far too infrequently in junior and senior high schools.

It should be apparent from studying these isolated examples that a finite definition of visual language is not possible. As each day passes, we see new uses and varieties of visuals and so to try and pin visual language down to one definition is futile. These examples are meant to shed light on some common experiences involving visual language and hopefully serve to steer the reader in the direction of what could be interpreted as visual language. From there, a dialogue on the role of visual language may begin.

In working towards a conceptual framework that serves to define this subject, I am relying upon the notion that visual language is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, based largely on semiotics and structuralism used in television, films and computer graphics. These disciplines include an understanding of symbols, body language and spatial relationships on stage, in film and in everyday life.

> Semiology (or semiotics, as it is also called) is a study of how movies signify. The manner in which information is signified is indissolubly linked with *what's* being signified... (Christian) Metz and others developed a theory of cinematic communication founded on the concept of signs or codes. The language of cinema, like all types of discourse, verbal and nonverbal, is primarily symbolic: It consists of a complex network of signs we instinctively decipher while experiencing a movie. (Giannetti, 1996, 454)
>
> Structuralism is the study of how various codes function within a single structure, within one movie. (Giannetti, 1996, 456)

At some point, one must take a stand and try to define their topic as fully as possible. This is that point for me.

**Active visual language involves using visual media such as posters, still photography and video to create a visual message while still utilizing the other strands of language arts directly or indirectly. It uses physicalization, colour, facial expression, and point of view. It is not something that should be used for every language circumstance just as any other stand should not be. Active visual language is a very effective method of communication for a stated purpose.**

## CURRICULAR STANDPOINT

*A discussion of the existing English curriculum in Alberta, Canada identifies the present and past roles of visual language. A look at new documents will provide insight into where curriculum theorists see this strand going in the future. These documents are The Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education in English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 12 (1996) and its resulting Alberta Education Program of Studies for English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 9 (1998).*

If it is reasonable to conclude that visual language deserves a place of importance in our curricula, what position does it actually occupy at this point?

The *Senior High English Statement of Content* (Revised 1981) is currently the official document for use in secondary schools. The fact that it is sixteen years old speaks volumes about the rate of change in Alberta Education. A new document, *The Western Canadian*

*Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education in English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 12 (1996),* (hereafter called the *ELA Curriculum Framework),* is scheduled for grade 10 implementation in September 1999. Another relevant document, the *Program of Studies for English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 9,* is scheduled for optional implementation in September 1998 and is an extension of the *ELA Framework.* A Grades 10-12 document is currently under development. The *Senior High English Language Arts Teacher Resource Manual, 1991,* (hereafter called the *TRM*) which goes hand in hand with the 1981 document is also relevant in this discussion. The contributions towards visual language that each of these documents make will be the focus of discussion in this section.

It is important to study the 1981 *Senior High English Statement of Content* not only because it is in effect for almost two more years but also because it represents past and, to some degree, present curriculum philosophies. It is important for this discussion to analyze it in terms of its visual language goals and learner expectations.

At first glance this analysis is very telling since the only form of visual language actually addressed is viewing. This means that technically there are no learning outcomes at present asking students to create using visual language. The outcomes for the five concepts in this strand are indeed all passive. The learning outcome verbs include: *identify, understand, recognize, discuss, appreciate, relate, analyze* and *evaluate*. Nowhere is there mention of the verb *create*. Using Sinatra's (1986) stages of literacy, this is only using the receptive process of the representational communication literary stage and for the purposes of my study it is missing the most important part of visual language - application. Emphasis on viewing is obviously echoed in the 1991 *TRM* which also outlines the strands of language as reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. It goes very little further down the track towards active visual language.

Since this is the point from which we are beginning, perhaps the progress to date is truly remarkable. Only by interpreting these passive verbs into something which require action to demonstrate have I been able to legitimize the use of active visual language. In the 1981

document, *Senior High English Statement of Content*, there are many examples advocating comparison between the written word and the visual image, but only occasional opportunities for students to actually create using it and then only using traditional methods such as scrapbooks, posters and collage. In only one instance is there opportunity to create using modern visual technology and that is at the English 30/33 level. Here students may create a short rock video to illustrate a popular song (where equipment is available).

This last statement is perhaps a legitimate reason for not using active video much in recent times. Because personal video equipment has only come into widespread use in the last decade or so, in 1991 there were no doubt schools which did not have a video camera. This does not excuse the fact though that not one of the learning outcome verbs asked students to use their visual expertise to create anything that would express their knowledge in this area. The fact that the *TRM* specifically states "short", "rock" and to "illustrate a popular song" also severely limits the creative latitude students can explore. Television has been a factor for numerous generations and I find it incredible that there has not been a curriculum designer with the foresight to ask students to use this knowledge in an active visual language application.

Fortunately, the new English documentation has changed, or rather broadened, its focus. *The ELA Curriculum Framework* has taken some major shifts in direction with respect to all strands of language learning, but visual language in particular. It recognizes the English language arts to consist of, listening and speaking, reading and writing and viewing and representing. This is connected with Sinatra's (1989) notion that "All language arts are interrelated and interdependent; facility in one strengthens and supports the others." (Western Canadian Protocol, 1996, 2) It gives comprehensive rationalizations for listening and speaking, reading and writing but the great philosophic steps forward are under the heading, Viewing and Representing.

> Visual language is an integral part of contemporary life. Viewing and representing allow students to understand the ways in which images and language may be used to convey ideas, values and beliefs.
>
> Representing enables students to communicate their ideas through a variety of media including charts, posters, diagrams, photographs, video presentations, visual art, drama, and mime. Viewing enables them to acquire information and to appreciate the ideas and experiences of others.
>
> Visual texts, like their auditory and print counterparts, have a variety of purposes and audiences and occur in a wide range of contexts. They are often communicated through technology. Students need opportunities to create and respond to a range of visual texts. They need to recognize, analyze, and respond to ways in which media texts construct reality and influence their perceptions of themselves and others. (Western Canadian Protocol, 1996, 3-4)

This curriculum change will open the door to expressive visual language that has heretofore been officially closed, or at least not readily accessible. An opportunity exists with these documents to not only allow students the flexibility they have been seeking, but to open teachers' minds which have been locked into traditional essays, poetry and novels. The latter part of this initiative may prove to be the most difficult, or it may be the most liberating thing that junior/senior high English teachers have had come their way in years. Time will tell.

It would seem then that curriculum design has caught up, at least in perception, to where visual communication has been for at least two or three decades. The challenge now will be to give teachers who do not have this mindset, the tools to successfully implement these curricular and philosophical changes. (*The ELA Curriculum Framework* still states that oral language is the foundation of literacy however. I would disagree, but visual linguists must win one battle at a time.)

# CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

*This section is made up of classroom application suggestions and follows immediately after this theoretical discussion.*

The goal of the application component of this project is to identify and describe a variety of practical, effective and creative uses of visual language for classroom teachers to use in conjunction with the new curriculum. These activities are in the form of a visual language instructional resource and are based on specific curricular content from the Alberta Program of Studies and pedagogical strategies which have proven successful over many trials. As discussed above, these activities have a theoretical base so, ideally, curricular mandates will be married to creative application possibilities.

# CONCLUSIONS

Now that I have arrived at the end of this project, I can say with confidence that active visual language will be an education language strand for many years to come. When a government document mandates the use of a particular strategy, it often means that it has been some time in coming and is due to be implemented. Certainly this is the case for the visual language strand *Representing* in the *Western Canadian Protocol.*

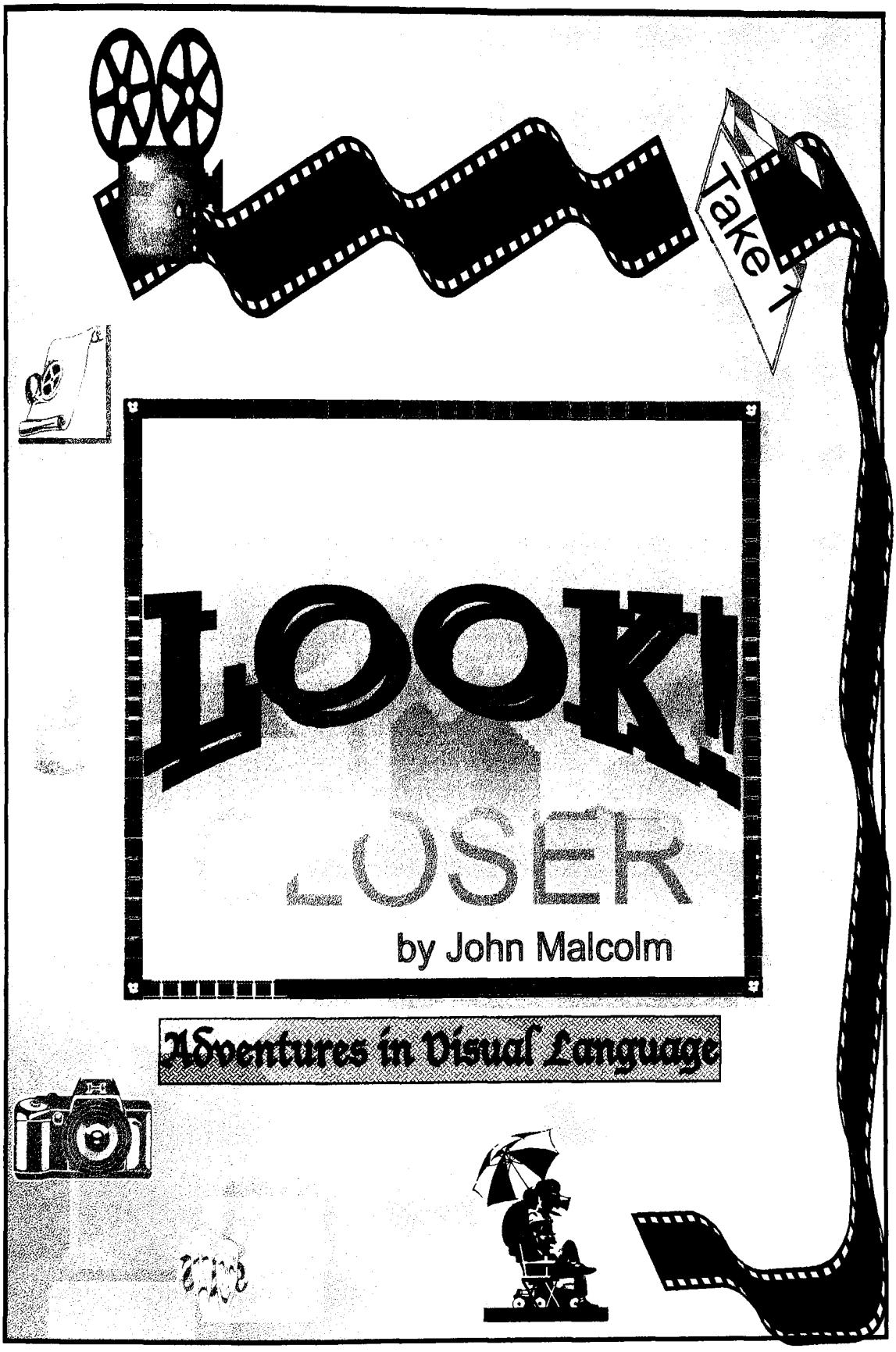
I also believe that consumerism steers educational practice to some degree and there is certainly a large market for creative visual products whether these be video, still photography or computers. It seems that consumers want to be able to create visually the way film producers have for many years. It is now possible, for example, to digitally edit video for only a few hundred dollars. The emergence of such products speaks volumes about directions we as a society are taking. I believe the 'personal creative revolution' we are currently undergoing will intensify and demands for better and cheaper technology at the consumer level will continue for some time. Certainly most electronics manufacturers are heading in this direction. If this is the case, then education institutions will be able to access it without becoming financially overburdened.

The literature I have reviewed has also given me some clear understandings about language communication. Visual language can be taken to very high levels, not only for comprehension but as a creative force as well. In fact, according to Sinatra, this is truly the highest form of literacy. Therefore it behooves us as language teachers to use any and all means at our disposal to enhance the learning of all parts of language, particularly one so prominent in everyday life.

Finally, I feel that the classroom examples that follow are curriculum-relevant as active visual language applications. I have explored them in numerous classroom settings and they have proven very valuable not only as instructional tools but as motivators as well. Thus, even though they may need to be adjusted from one circumstance to another, the activities

themselves are very worthwhile from all standpoints. Since these activities comprise a large component of this project and many years of work, I now turn to Section Two: *Look Closer - Adventures in Visual Language.*

# II. APPLICATIONS


Take 1
LOOK!
LOSER
by John Malcolm
Adventures in Visual Language

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# Foreword

## WE READ, WE WRITE, we LOOK !!!

Each of us engages in these tasks everyday and most often without a second thought. We have each been formally schooled in reading and writing but often visual language has been left to something less than formal teaching. This may be changing as curricula adjust to the vital role visual language plays in the modern age.

The British author and broadcaster John Berger says in his book *Ways of Seeing*,

> "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled."
>
> Berger (1972) p.7

Others have put the order of language acquisition differently. The Speech Communication Association of New Zealand claims, in its April 1996 *Cue Magazine*, that children first learn to listen and then to speak, read and write, in that order. (p.4). *The Alberta Program of Studies for English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 9 (1998)* also claims that oral language is the foundation of literacy and lists the language arts beginning with the listening and speaking strand. Traditional education tells us that reading and writing are crucial by ranking them as the first two of "the three R's". However as John Berger points out, seeing comes *before* words.

Visual learning does not even appear in Cue Magazine's list and has only now been added to our own language arts curriculum in Alberta. This could lead one to believe that either it has not been considered an important part of language or not language at all. In fact, the frequency, subtlety and sheer volume of visual language that each person is faced with, from a very early age, is emense in our visual world. Advertisers and the media are constantly conceiving new ways to catch our eye. Films and television are culturally pervasive and we now often refer to instructional videos, rather than owners' manuals.

If seeing does indeed come before words, then why has it been considered relatively unimportant in our secondary language curriculums until now? I cannot answer this question, but my view is, that not only should it appear, but the figures listed above should be re-examined to show the 'Order Learned' *beginning* with viewing!

A good example of how much we use visual language can be found in an understanding of the phrase, "in your mind's eye". We often say we are disappointed with the film version of a novel because our mind's eye has painted a more vivid or simply a different picture. Given that we all have different imaginations, it would seem reasonable to conclude that it is

impossible to '*show*' each person's version of a written character or setting, thus illustrating what some would call a limitation of written-text-to-film translations.
Similarly, however, one could also argue that it is impossible to fully capture a sunset with words because as John Berger says, we can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by a reality of images, not words. (paraphrase p.7) If it is true that pictures can never fully capture a written text, it is also true that words can never fully capture what is seen. Perhaps it is fair to say that the two mediums require different processes when interpreting a message, even though they are complementary in many respects. Written text allows us freedom to create in our imaginations while many aspects of daily life are experienced visually - we see images. Few would read a book and visualize *new words*.

Now consider how much of the school day is spent with written text. This is in no way meant to demean written text, but there seems to be an imbalance of time spent on written and oral language compared to visual language. In Alberta Education's *1997-98 Information Bulletin for Grade 6 English Language Arts*, it shows very clearly the two components of the Grade 6 Language Arts exam - the reading portion and the writing portion. The major part of the writing portion (63.6%) is based on a narrative to be written based on a "picture prompt". Even the terminology given to describe the activity seems over simplistic in its assumptions about the ability of students to use visual cues to develop writing ideas. Ten minutes of the exam are set aside to discuss the assignment but no emphasis is given to the interpretation of visual cues in either the instructions or the marking rubric. The photo is only there to stimulate ideas. This practice is also used in written exams at the grade nine and twelve levels. My point is that these ideas are based on the assumption that some previous visual learning has taken place, yet that seems to be missing from the curriculum outcomes as set out and therefore somewhat unfair in the testing process.

*The Common Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Grades 10-12 Draft)* hereafter called the ELA, orients itself towards language in general as follows.

> Language is the basis of all communication and the primary instrument of thought. Composed of interrelated and rule-governed symbol systems, language is a social and uniquely human means of exploring and communicating meaning. (p. 1)

It is important to note that the ELA has introduced a new language arts strand. It is the first major document in Alberta language arts curriculum development that has recognized the role of representing as a language strand. Still, the ELA suggests the strands be used together as follows.

> Students become confident and competent users of all six language arts through many opportunities to listen and speak, read and write, and view and represent in a variety of combinations and relevant contexts. All the language arts are interrelated and interdependent; facility in one strengthens and supports the others. (p. 2)

Specifically with regards to visual language, the ELA takes the following stand.

> Visual language is an integral part of contemporary life. Viewing and representing allow students to understand the ways in which images and language may be used to convey ideas, values and beliefs...
>
> Visual texts, like their auditory and print counterparts, have a variety of purposes and audiences and occur in a wide range of contexts. They are often communicated through technology. Students need opportunities to create and respond to a range of visual texts. They need to recognize, analyze and respond to ways in which media texts construct reality and influence their perceptions of themselves and others. (pp. 3-4)

Other counties and organizations have lead the way in visual language curriculum development as it applies to today's student. In New Zealand, E*nglish in the New Zealand Curriculum* (1994) and *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* are two such documents and outline the use of visual language thus:

> "The ability to use spoken and written language effectively, to read and listen, and to discern critically messages from television, film, the computer, and other visual media is fundamental both to learning and to effective participation in society and the work force.
>
> *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* p. 10

> "Although the strands of oral, written and visual language are set out separately in this curriculum statement, in practice they will be interwoven. English programs should ensure that students' experience of language is coherent and enriched through all three strands."
>
> *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (1994), page 19

The International Reading Association also feels integration of the strands is crucial as put forward in their new publication, *Standards for the English Language Arts* (1996).

> After three years of intense research and discussion among teachers, parents, and policymakers, the National Council of Teachers of English (US) and the International Reading Association proudly offer national standards designed to foster higher levels of literacy for all K-12 students. More than a set of guidelines, the Standards present a shared vision of literacy education - one that encompasses the use of print, oral and visual language. It is a view large enough to embrace all six interrelated language arts: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and visually representing.
>
> (precise from International Reading Association)

These viewpoints plainly state that all strands of the language arts should be equally balanced. I would argue further that it is vital not only for students to discern visual language messages, but ***create*** their own. The activities in this document are geared towards this very belief. It puts forward the view that students are capable of using visual language at least as well as they are text. This is especially true given the available technology in most schools and the visual demands in the workplace.

# HOW MUCH OF OUR DAY DO WE SPEND READING AND WRITING AS OPPOSED TO *LOOKING?*

Given visual language's wide spread use, it seems valid to question why business would use visual language, but since it is not the purpose of this document to explore such a rationale, I will generalize. It seems reasonable to say that all companies want to make money and in order to do so, they need a clear and efficient way of communicating their information to customers and potential customers. If visual language was not clear and efficient, surely business would not use it.

We are at a point where most of the civilized world does use visual language a great deal. Computer icons fill our "desktops" and computer programs; photographs, tables and other visuals take a place of dominance throughout newspapers and magazines. Our television media tell almost all of their stories through photo journalism. Sometimes, in fact, a story does not make it to air if there is no video footage to accompany it.

As a result of being visually bombarded through so many media, our visual literacy and technological capabilities have become increasingly sophisticated. One need only compare television ads today and 20 years ago to see that we have evolved into a society of astute viewers. Today's viewers can pick up most visual messages from very limited, quickly edited and even distorted images and while it is wonderful to see more and more schools offering courses which study the use of visual language, we have a long way to go in this area.

Too often, it seems, the visual language component of a particular language unit in the secondary classroom is relegated to the end of the unit and consists of either drawing an illustration or watching the film version of a novel. While these activities are not without merit, my point is simply that visual language consists of much more and should be an **equal** part of teaching language at all levels, not just a superficial add-on. All languages include a visual component and ours seems to be growing in leaps and bounds, yet many teachers seem to ignore its importance in favour of more traditional genres.

Reading and writing have an entrenched place in our curricula and rightfully so, but we must continue to make our case and demonstrate the effectiveness of visual language; that a photo essay is every bit as difficult to compose but more importantly, every bit as powerful as a written essay. This document is designed to enhance that literacy by focussing on a variety of visual language activities, many of which are ultimately aimed at creating a classroom video. It does, however, focus on other important issues in the visual language strand and looks to provide thought provoking activities in all areas of visual language. The process herein moves from interpretation of visual symbols to interpretation of still photographs, followed by a writing activity, which uses photography as a jumping off point. Film terminology and technology are studied to arrive at an ability to write and create a video production. An overview using icons is shown in the *Contents* and a detailed

description of each activity follows the Foreword section. The appendices provides all of the necessary resources for the unit (or places where they can easily be obtained) and examples of other visual language activities to extend students.

The ELA curriculum document as well as the Program of Studies have been followed very closely in the creation of this unit so as to ensure compatibility and ease of use.

*ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN* WAS ONE OF THE BEST LOVED PERSONAL GUIDE BOOKS OF THE 80'S. IN IT, ROBERT FULGHUM PROVIDES US WITH A LIST OF DO'S AND DON'TS FOR MOVING OUT INTO THE WORLD. HE ENDS HIS LIST WITH THIS THOUGHT:

"AND REMEMBER THE DICK-AND-JANE BOOKS AND THE FIRST WORD YOU LEARNED - THE BIGGEST WORD OF ALL - ***LOOK!*** (Fulghum (1986), p.5)

*Abstract:*

*This unit is designed as a teacher guide to studying visual language. The steps are not intended as lesson plans per se but rather as activity sequences. Its theoretical base comes from a visual language standpoint, since that is the avenue I am advocating students explore, but it also includes many activities from each of the language arts (formerly known as strands). In fact, this unit encompasses all language arts at various times. The unit can stand alone or be used in conjunction with other projects. Similarly, many activities can be used by themselves without the rest of the unit. Some knowledge building will be necessary for more technical units, however, the overall aim is to raise awareness and create a more learned use of visual language.*

## ***Curriculum Links: General and Specific Outcomes:***

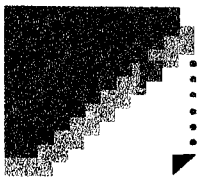
The *1998 Alberta Program of Studies for English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 9* explains that each of the five general learning outcomes can be met through listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and representing. (See Appendix A for an overview of the Program of Studies' structure). Because of this structure, some of the specific learning outcomes are focussed at one strand and age level more than another so I have matched outcomes to activities in this unit where I feel they best apply. It should be noted however, that many learning outcomes, both general and specific, overlap a great deal and so activities may easily involve more than one outcome and grade level.

Some objectives apply to the entire unit:

- identify and participate in situations and projects in which group work enhances learning and results
- address specific problems in a group by specifying goals, devising alternative solutions and choosing the best alternative
- share responsibility for the completion of team projects by establishing clear purpose and procedures for solving problems, monitoring progress and making modifications to meet stated objectives
- demonstrate new understandings through visual language exercises and projects
- develop skills in visual language interpretation - i.e.. view everyday situations in new and meaningful ways
- develop skills in naming visual techniques and concepts so as to better understand their use
- develop skills in processing their new information

*ELA* Specific Learning Objectives are shown through the following symbol at the beginning of each exercise:

Note: These steps have been placed in one order which moves from working with symbols to the production of a classroom video.



This is one logical progression but a different order may suit you better. Each activity will stand on its own.

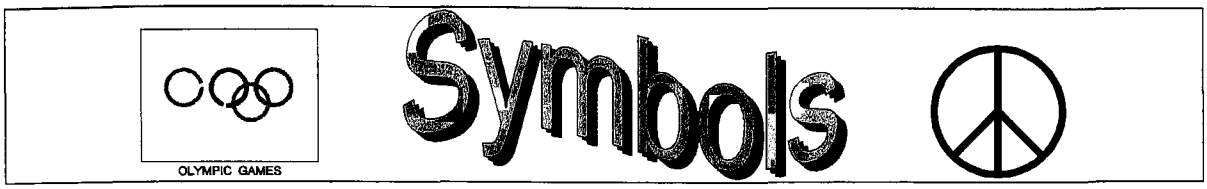
Some symbols to watch for in this publication. . .

GEMSTONES USE AT ALL COSTS

PITFALLS CAUTION

**In other "WORDS" the process looks like this**

## Exercise One:




### Interpreting common symbols

- Engage in exploratory communication to share personal responses and develop own interpretations
- Use text features such as maps, diagrams, special fonts and graphics, that highlight important concepts to enhance understanding of ideas and information

***Goal***: *to identify where symbols are used in everyday life instead of words or in combination with words. For example:*

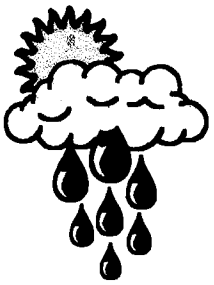
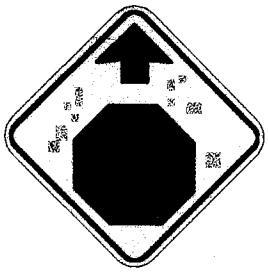
### - *Assignments*:

**Level 1** - *basic understanding of symbols*

- Find as many examples as possible: eg. newspapers, magazines, handbooks, television, clothing, traffic signs and signals and the like and discuss in class.
- Identify similarities and differences. eg. use of colour and shape
- Discuss why symbols are used at all (instead of words).
- What message does each symbol give?
- Have students cut out 5 symbols from different sources. Paste on paper and
- Write what each symbol represents or have small groups discuss their symbols.
- Students recreate one symbol (**No** words)
- colour used? Is it necessary? What effect does it have on the symbol's
- effectiveness or message?
- Display student symbols in the classroom for discussion and reference throughout the unit. Have students explain the meaning of their symbols.

**Level 2** - *Simplicity and frequency of use.*

- How does simplicity relate to the effectiveness of a symbol?

eg.  or  vs

- Try to categorize the symbols your class has come up with and discover which are seen most often ( e.g. traffic symbols, money symbols, international symbols)
- Are symbols more effective if we see them more often?

**Level 3** - *Meaningful Symbols (Connotations of symbols)*

- Some symbols, through widespread use, have taken on meanings which are in fact *more* than the basic message of the symbol. Find examples of, discuss and consider the *connotation* of such symbols. e.g. peace signs to a war victim/veteran, Olympic flag to a top level athlete. To whom might these symbols mean something special?

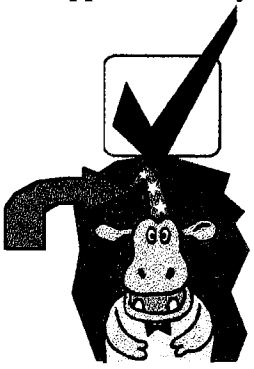
- Have students create their own symbol for display and discussion in class. It may be a symbol that is applicable only to your geographic area, a special interest or an international symbol. (*NB. Remember your original discussion of why symbols are used.) Be prepared to explain the connotation of your symbol. Examples might include:

"no tests"

"Happiness is recycling"

"no hats"

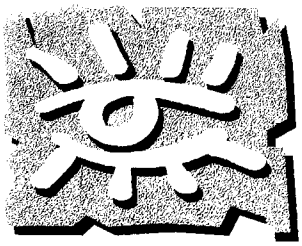
or



"you *must* wear hats"

Using and modifying clip art can work very well for creating new symbols for this activity.

(I'm sure that you will find new applications and variations on these assignments as you use them - they are not meant to be a prescriptive list.)



## Exercise Two:

# Photo Interpretation

➪ Identifying and interpreting visual cues based on still images

- Use prior experiences with oral, print and other media texts to choose new texts that meet learning needs and interests
- Engage in exploratory communication to share personal responses and develop own interpretations

***Goal:*** *to view a number of photos with NO related writing and look beyond the surface information. Try to get as much information from the photo as possible but be ready to justify your choices.*

*Author's note: This activity is extremely important since students must be able to glean such information in order to write stories or essays under provincial achievement test conditions.*

***Assignment***: Students write interpretations of a minimum of **3 photos** for discussion or presentation in class. Newspaper and magazine photos work fine for this activity.
*(Again, these descriptions are to help you but are NOT as a prescriptive list. More questions will occur to you as you go.)*

An interpretation may be based on the following structure:

## *The 5 W's*

**Who** - Who is in the photo? Physical description of "main" person(s); speculate on background, wealth, education, family, occupation, and any others you can think of based on the visual cues in the photo.
- What can you tell about who this person is or might be **based solely on the cues in the photograph**?

**What** - What is happening/has just happened in the photo?
- What is the message of the photograph?
- Is there a focal point that draws our attention in the photograph?

**Where** - Point of view, angle, proximity, location
**When** - Before/during/after what event?
- Past/present/future?
***Why** - Why was this photo taken?
ie. What does this photo tell us that words alone could not?

NEXT:

- Students find at least 3 photos from magazines, newspapers and their own collections that they feel express something important (emotion, a message, an attitude) and answer 5 W's for each. These may be linked by a theme or just photos they found interesting.

*NB Encourage students to look for photos that have not been posed and contain some emotional depth. eg. child crying, P.O.W., a happy bride

Some excellent photo collections include:

*ZOOM* by Istvan Banyai - a wordless-text book (see References)
National Geographic Magazine - any issue!
Life Magazine - any issue
*The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg

The photos I have used come mostly from newspapers and magazines. They are obviously a very good source as well not only because they are inexpensive and readily available, but because they usually contain photos with emotional depth. That may be why they catch our attention.

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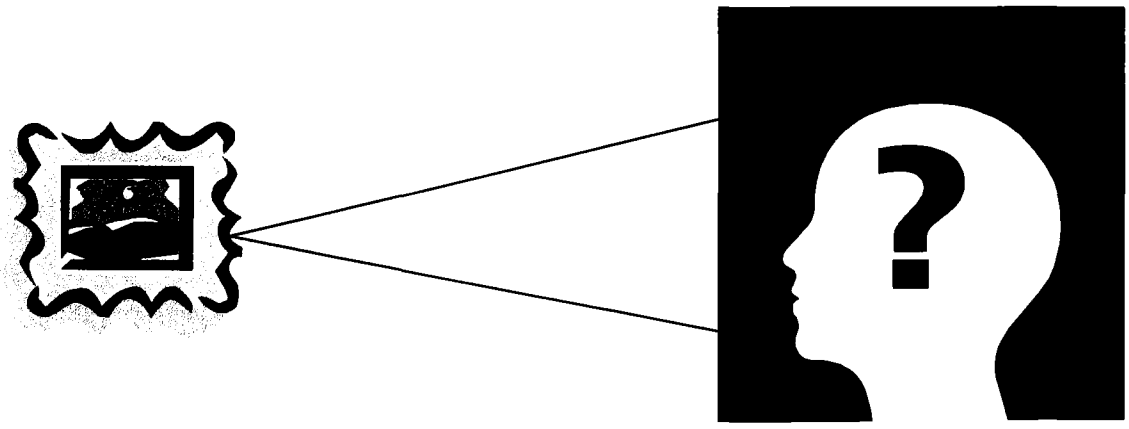
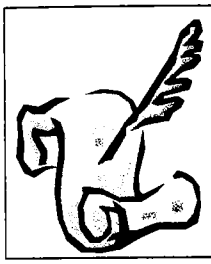


## Exercise Three:



# Photo Story

Creative writing based on visual cues from a photograph or symbol

Use talk, notes, personal writing and representing, together with texts and ideas of others, to clarify and shape understanding

***Goal:*** *to write creatively using a photo or symbol as the only stimulus and create details and events based solely on the information gathered from that photograph. The writing will build on the photo interpretation skills developed in previous activities. A picture may be worth a thousand words but this assignment only asks for a couple of hundred.*

*Author's note: This exact activity is on achievement exams in grade six, nine and twelve. If students have never examined visual cues in a photo, it will be much more difficult to draw a story from the visual details given under test conditions.*

***Assignment:*** Photo Story

Part 1: Decide on the 5 W's for this photo (Who, What, Where, When, Why) and write this information down in point form.

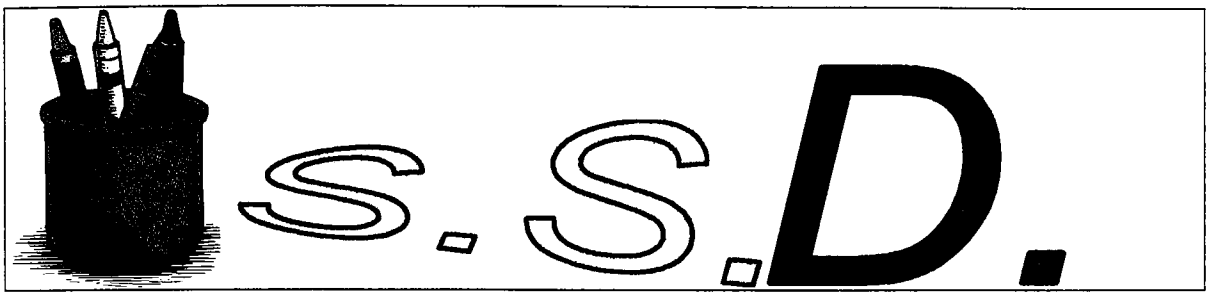
Part 2: Write a short story that tells how these people ended up standing and looking as they are in the photograph. (1-2 pages)

Part 3: Choose 3 key moments (eg. turning points) in your story and illustrate them.

*Variation:* - *Have students give a visual summary of a story through a flow chart of drawings.*
- *Do a visual storyline of a novel on the wall showing key turning points.*

See Appendix A for photo example and student task sheet.

## Exercise Four:




➪ Creative drawing and illustrating

- Experiment with a variety of forms of oral, print and other media texts to discover the best suited for exploring, organizing and sharing ideas, information and experiences.
- Use text features, such as charts, graphs and dictionaries to enhance understanding of ideas and information

***Goal :*** *To stimulate students into thinking about images through* ***Sustained Silent Drawing.*** *As students draw, they prepare themselves for the idea of images and thus, will be more receptive to discussion and activities using visual language.*

***Assignment:*** Students come into class and see SSD topic on the board. They silently draw images (you can specify how many or degree of detail if you wish) for the time allotted.

## *Sample topics:*

### A visual from your life

- your house (or any part thereof)
- on your way to school
- favourite modes of transportation
- your favourite music
- movies
- your room
- your ultimate room

- a **CHARACTER** you create (this can be carried through many stages)
  - a close up of your character
  - your character's house/car, family and friends
  - a 3-frame cartoon involving your character (also teaches beginning, middle and end of a story).
  - an antagonist for your character (conflict)
  - your own full length cartoon strip?

**Others:**

- an emotion (not necessarily a face showing emotion - maybe a design)
- a design with eye-catching colours
- cloud formations
- a setting for a horror movie
- a beautiful summer day
- daydreaming
- doodles (create your own and BE ALLOWED TO DO IT DURING CLASS!!!)
- design your ultimate school (could take more than one session but kids love it)
- traveling to. . .?
- a favourite image from your childhood

## Symbols:

- design your own symbol for:
  - "No School today"
  - "Keep off the grass"
  - "No cheating"
  - the ultimate amusement park (not a description but a roadside symbol)

### . . . add your own - on a theme or otherwise

I have had students who were not gifted artists come into class and want to continue their cartoon long after I was ready to move on.

The caution here is TIME. Some students want to draw in tremendous detail while others present no detail at all. You must decide what you will accept. I tell students to fill the time allotted. Some finish drawings at home, and others are finished in advance - like many other kinds of assignments. I have still found this a wonderful tool to get students thinking visually.

## Exercise Five:

# Terminology

Using and understanding photographic and film terminology

- Use appropriate terminology to discuss developing abilities in personal language learning and use.
- Use definitions provided in context to identify meaning of unfamiliar words

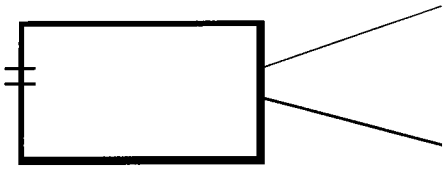
***Goal :*** *to become familiar with terminology so students are able to read and write scripts that they and others can understand. I put it to them this way, "We should all be able to look at your script and have a good idea of how shots and scenes will look."*

- Copy film terminology. Using Appendix B, consider still photographic techniques and discuss basic concepts such as foreground, background, focus, framing, angle and type of shot.

### *Where do you want your image to be in the camera lens?*

It may not always need to be in the centre. The frame area not used is called **negative space** and can be very effective. The idea, however, is to make these *choices*, not accidents. eg. You may want to show something happening in the background at the same time.

A *PIN HOLE CAMERA* works really well to demonstrate this. A pin hole camera is simply a box with a pin hole at one end and a larger hole at the other. There is nothing but black space in between. (any empty small sealed box will do).



- Ask students to frame a scene using a pin camera and then sketch *exactly* what they see. This is a great way to teach 'types of shots'.

# How can I ever get them to Learn all of those terms??? Are they really all that important?

The short answer is YES! Film is a unique medium and, thus, has a language unto itself. In order to use the concepts and equipment properly, you must use the correct terminology, just as you must in any other curriculum area. In leather work, instructors don't call it "that sharp pointed thing", it is called an "awl". Furthermore, learning the terms is not very difficult since most students and adults already have a good deal of visual terminology literacy. When students learn the terminology, they are able to be much more specific about what they mean when they write scripts. They also enjoy this process usually because it is such a popular medium. I have had 11 and 12 year old students come to me and tell me how much they enjoyed it because, "it made them sound like Stephen Spielberg." In the process, they also remove some of the mystique surrounding film and feel more comfortable with it.

## To help learn film and photo terms, you can:

- <u>View different segments of films</u>.

  This is good practice to help in recognizing and using film terminology and motivating students to learn the language of film. It is also easier to *see* a technique rather than explain it. (It can be a bit of fun too. My colleagues always comment that I just watch movies all day. . .it's a tough job).

  Some good activities for this are:
  - count the number of cuts in an action sequence
  - count the number of close ups, fades, dissolves or tilts in a sequence
  - play scenes in slow motion to see techniques in detail
  - play scenes in reverse
  - How are these techniques applied in a particular film to convey/connote a visual message? e.g. a close up used to show emotion, establishing shot to set the location, a medium shot to show conversation)

- <u>View television ads</u> in the same way and discuss techniques such as: camera angles, colours, close ups vs long shots, cuts, fades and dissolves. Why have the advertisers chosen these particular techniques? TV ads work well because they are short! This also ties in nicely when trying to demonstrate script writing in exercise seven.

- Use a game show format like Hollywood Squares or Jeopardy.
  eg. Category: Types of shot
  Q: Most films use this type of camera angle at the START of the film
  A: Establishing shot or long shot

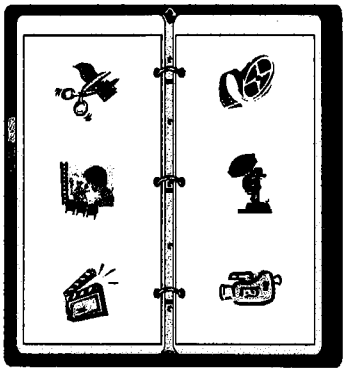
- Read segments from actual film scripts and discuss how this structure differs from the same segment in the stage play, short story or novel of the same story. Some good examples include: *A Few Good Men, Grease, Indian in the Cupboard*

*NB. Such scripts are available from many sources but for recent movie scripts, ***Script City*** in Los Angeles, CA, U.S.A. has a great current selection at reasonable prices. (about US $25.00/script - less for television scripts) Their phone number is (213) 871-0707. For Canadian scripts, try the Canadian Film Centre on the internet at http://www.cdnfilmcentre.com/ or the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television at http://www.academy.ca/

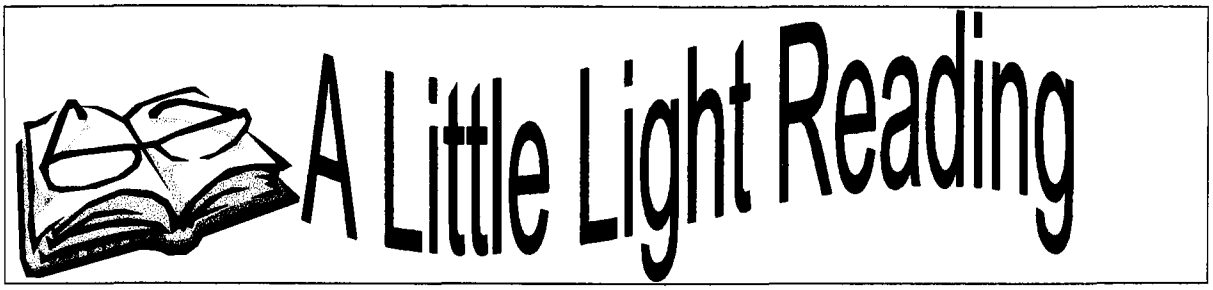
- Sequence and scene can be taught through rearranging cartoon strips
- Camera movements - There is a great bit on this at the beginning of the 50th anniversary video version of Citizen Kane by Orson Welles. He was quite an innovator in film techniques like looking up at powerful people and down at the weak; sitting close to a friend and far away from an enemy. He said you should be able to watch a film with the sound off and tell generally what was happening, especially to do with relationships.

Students write a terminology quiz (Appendix C)

If you do **half** of these exercises, students should have all the terminology they need to move into writing their own short scripts and making themselves understood.



## Exercise Six:




Reading related stories and articles

***Goal:*** *to give teachers some tools to aid in relating visual language to curriculum after they have their feet wet'.*

***NB: This is NOT a lesson plan***

*Where does reading background material fit? Certainly some preparatory work is necessary before you begin the unit but I found that after I had a sense of where the unit was going, I knew what I needed more background in. That is why I have placed this information here.*

### ***Journal References:***

**Bed-side readings for the Teacher:** (see bibliography for publication information)

**Ways of Seeing* by John Berger
**Video in Focus* by Rick Hone and Liz Flynn
**Videography* - two part video series by PBS
*Meet the Media* by Jack Livesley et al.
*Michael Caine - Acting in Film* (by Michael Caine) - in video and book formats
*Anatomy of Film* by Brenard F. Dick
*Acting for Films and TV* by Leslie Abbott
*Living Drama by Bruce Burton, Chapter 2 - "Self and Others" - (Body Language)*
*American Cinematographer* (Magazine) - any issue
*Acting for the Camera* by Tony Barr
*Understanding Movies* by Louis Gianetti

### ***Related and helpful courses:***

- Drama 3850, Film Studies at the University of Lethbridge
- *Acting for the Camera* - summer school course through *Drama Works*, offered at the University of Alberta through Theatre Alberta.

- ***Lethbridge Community College*** also offers related courses through their Communication Arts Program. Visit: http://www.lethbridgec.ab.ca/

***Related <u>Student</u> Activities***:

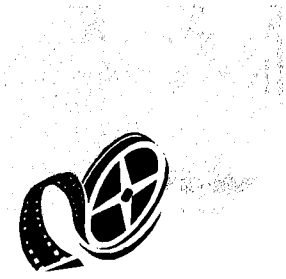
*From the list on the previous page, some readings/viewings are also very worthwhile for students:*

- *Videography (PBS tape collection)*
- *Living Drama by Bruce Burton, Chapter 2 - "Self and Others"* *(Body Language)*
- *Video in Focus* by Rick Hone and Liz Flynn
- *Lights, Camera, Action* - Unit 15 from *In Flight*, a Prentice-Hall secondary English text

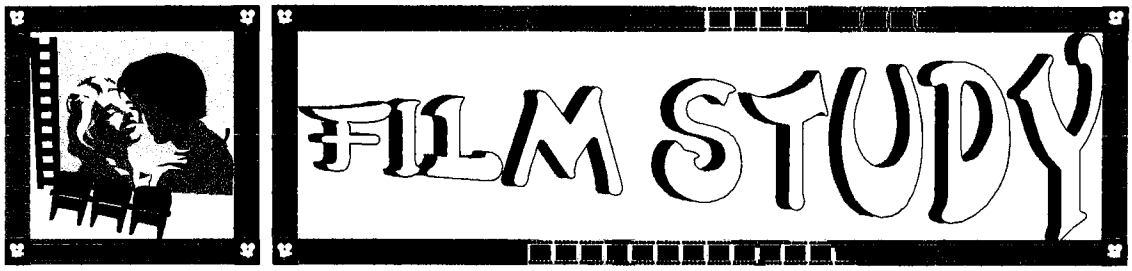
Activities may range from simple reading comprehension exercises with questions to using these articles as a basis for writing up their own "How to" guide describing the process of moving from paper to video. Some suggestions include:

- Read an article and create a brochure on how to make a film.
- Read a short story and convert it into a film script.
  (hint: script only the ACTION, not what characters *think*.)
- Make a story board for the script if you had an unlimited budget.
- Describe how making a film or TV show differs from putting on the same show on stage.
- Listen to a prose story and create a visual storyline to accompany it. Depending on time available, this can be simple (short story, black & white drawings) or complex (*The Hobbit*, colour drawings, multiple pages)

These are also activities you can come back to during later phases of the unit when other groups are finishing up.



## Exercise Seven:




Viewing and studying classic examples of the craft.

- Discuss the author's, illustrator's, storyteller's or filmmaker's intention or purpose
- Analyze how the choices and motives of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts provide insight into those of self and others
- Discuss how techniques such as word choice, balance, camera angles, line and framing, communicate meaning and enhance effects in oral, print, and other media texts
- Discuss the differences between print and other media versions of the same text
- Experience oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as autobiographies, travelogues, comics, short films, myths, legends and dramatic performances

As you can see from the other elements in this unit, visual literacy can be approached from a variety of standpoints. Certainly, a film study can be used as a starter for further work in creative and expository writing, drama and scene productions, design and art, music, taping and radio play production, film script writing and video making.

Film study activities are an excellent lead in to student video production, though some may prefer to use video making activities to stimulate student interest in film analysis. Either way, the visual literacy and critical awareness students gain from a detailed study of one film will make them more critical television and film viewers and will certainly make them better video makers. The following are suggestions for a complete film study.

### Introducing a film study

- Have a general discussion about film and students' own viewing experiences.
- View a short film (a suitable TV epeisode perhaps) to demonstrate structure: establishing sequences, conflict, character establishment, rising action, climax and resolution. Viewing these a second time may be beneficial to cement concepts a bit more.
- Ask students to list the scenes.
- Choose one or two effective shots and have students describe them using appropriate terminology.
- Read the opening to a short story or novel and ask students to describe how the same story might be shown on film.

## The Film Study Process

**1) View a feature film.**

- Depending on the age group, examples might include: *Forest Gump, Star Wars, Flubber, Indiana Jones (any of them), E.T., Roger Rabbit, Jungle to Jungle, Home Alone (1, 2 or 3), Bean The Ultimate Disaster Movie, Casablanca, Liar Liar.* These are not the best of the best but they represent a variety of genres and age groups.
- Of course permission letters home and permission to show each movie must be obtained. More and more school divisions are purchasing blanket policies for showing films so best to check with your own school board.
- Whatever film you choose, prepare a scene outline in advance so students can more easily track development of characters, plot and themes. Seeing each scene broken down also helps students begin to see the structure of the film for discussion purposes and comparisons you may wish to make.

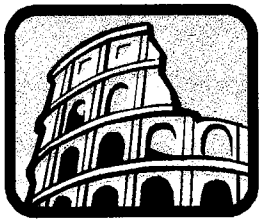
**2) General discussion:**

- What purpose did the author &/or director have in making this film?
- Comment on plot conflicts, main characters, climax, theme, and so on.

**3) Study Establishing scene(s)**

Some guiding questions:

- Where and when is the film set? How is the setting established? What details are emphasized?



- Which characters are identified as important? Who is The main character? How do you know this? How is character developed through visual and sound techniques? How are we introduced to each character? ie. what is each character doing as we 'meet' them for the first time? Does this action indicate any qualities about the character that become important later in the film?

- Is there any symbolic event which suggests what issue the film will deal with? What is the main idea/theme?

**4) View one or two particularly important or effective scenes.**

Ask students to:

- look at some crucial shots and describe them (ie. type of shot, purpose of shot, camera point of view)
- examine some effective sequences introducing the concepts of editing, pacing and transitions
- discuss the information in the soundtrack: voice-overs, sound effects and music
- decide on main theme(s) in the film and say how these are presented through events and characters and through techniques such as camera angle, type of shot , music and lighting

**5. Character Seminars**

These are similar to literature circles in that each student is assigned a role and must report back to the group. Identify five important characters in the film and assign one character to each student in the group.

a) How is the character introduced and what is he/she doing when we first see them?
b) Describe the character including personality and an explanation of how this is developed.
c) Comment on the camera or sound techniques used in the presentation of this character. eg. Darth Vader's music and camera angles
d) What scenes best demonstrate a character's true personality? How?
e) How does this character relate to other main characters? What conflicts/friendships develop? What do these relationships contribute to the story?

Another way to do this group work would be to assign each group one character and then divide the group roles as follows:

a) camera work relating to that character
b) sound relating to that character
c) dialogue spoken by or about that character
d) relationships that affect the character's personality and change him/her in some way
e) key points in the film that this character contributes to in some way - ie. their function in the film

## 6) Detailed Scene Analysis

Take a short effective scene and do a shot by shot analysis:

- view the scene and divide it up as follows for analysis:

| Action | Camera work and editing | Sound and lighting |
|---|---|---|
| **Shot 1** | (allow 5 lines for each shot) | |
| **Shot 2** | | |

This is a good exercise to help students link film techniques with plot and character information. View scenes several times working through each series of shots looking for the above information.

The first column describes the action and serves as a 'coathanger' for technical details in the other two columns.

Technical details for the other columns can include:

Camerawork and Editing

- framing
- type of shot
- camera position
- camera movement
- editing style and pacing

Sound

- dialogue (What information is given?)
- voice-over ( The function of a voice-over is to provide background information, link shots, or compress time)
- music (Where is this used and why?)
- sound effects (list any sounds heard)

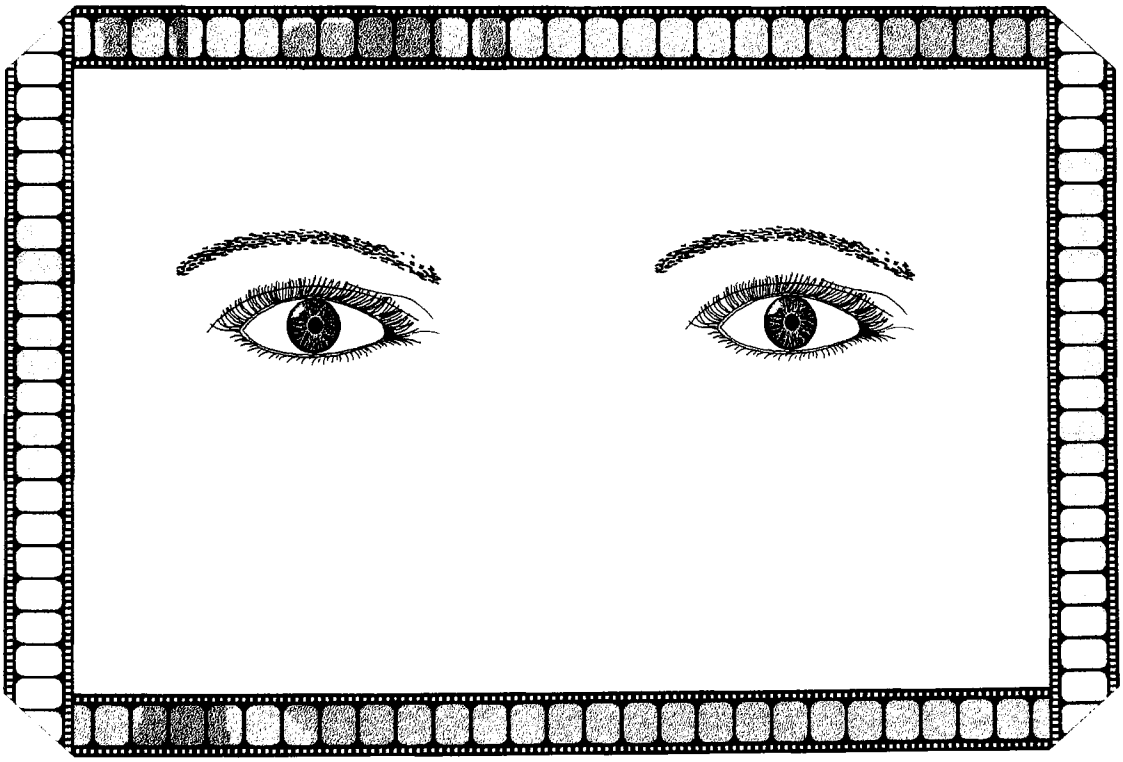
Lighting

- use of colour (warm or cool)
- filters (soft focus, colour, special effects)
- the direction of light in the frame (main source)
- How are shadows and silhouettes achieved? Effects?

## 7) Theme Study

The scene study also serves as a framework for exploring the development of the main theme. Ask students to study their own copy and locate the scenes which are crucial in presenting the theme. Review those scenes before undertaking discussion or writing tasks on the theme.

A study or discussion of a major theme is always a good starter for creative writing, visual work or drama. Students can respond to the theme of the film in one of these ways to demonstrate their understanding.



## Exercise Eight:

### Creative writing for film (scripts)

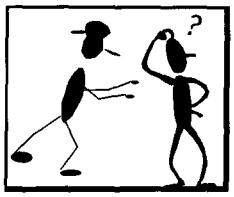
- Write and represent narratives from other points of view
- Create oral, print, and other media texts related to issues encountered in texts and in own life

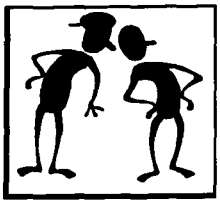
***Goal*** *- The goal is for students to be able to write a SHORT script that uses words to explain what the final video product will look and sound like. (A difficult task for anyone, since we all will envisage scenes differently to some degree, but that is the nature of* ***any*** *script.)*

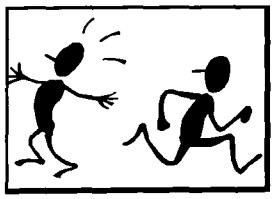
***Activities***

**1.** *Tableaux Take 3* - Tableaux is a drama technique meaning essentially, 'frozen pictures'. They must include facial and body expression and in this case, serve as an excellent teaching tool to take students through basic scene structure of beginning, middle and end. This is the essence of any story and once this basic idea is understood, more complex events can be included. 'At the end of the day, a good script starts with a simple story and a good method of doing this is to have them first act out a story, and latterly *their* story, in *3* still scenes.

Have students break up into small groups of two or three. Explain that you want them to show a series of three frozen pictures or tableaux which tell ONLY the beginning, middle and end of a story.





eg.

| **Picture 1** | **Picture 2** | **Picture 3** |
|---|---|---|
| a robber sneaks up on a person | robber takes money | robber runs away |

Obviously this activity can be taken into more depth but it does teach the basics of a scene very effectively. Try turning the lights out between scenes if that is possible in your classroom. It is VERY effective.

2. *Storyboards* - Storyboards are simple drawings of what happens in each camera shot. The stick figure drawings from exercise 1 are in fact, a storyboard of 3 camera shots. Stick figures work fine for this activity and it forces students to look EXACTLY at the shots they want to use to tell their story. A sample storyboard exercise and reproducible worksheet is included in Appendix D.

3. Using a VCR and remote control, view real advertisements as a class to point out:

   *- **presence of story in the ad**. (However simple it might be, there will still be a beginning, middle and end)
   - types of camera shots, angles and transitions (and when each is effective)
   - the dangers of camera "shake" (use a tripod)
   - difficulties with too many shots and special effects which would not be possible or necessary for class project (KISS - Keep It Simple Stupid)

4. *First Script* - using what they know from the Terminology section, students write a simple script for their tableaux scene. Include fade in, types of shots to be used, cuts, and closing shot.

For example:

Shot 1: Fade in to a close up of character A (An evil person which we know from his or her facial expression). CUT TO

Shot 2: A full shot of same character showing character B in the background. CUT TO

Shot 3: Medium shot of character B with character A beginning to sneak up from behind. CUT TO

Shot 4: Character A's POV (point of view) as he or she reaches character A

Shot 5: Medium 2 shot of Character A grabbing character B's purse and running out of frame. CUT TO

Shot 6: Medium shot of Character B turning around in direction of robber's exit. Character B yells for help as scene fades to black.

5. *Mini-Ads* - Have students do a one class planning session where they must script a simple advertisement with a beginning, middle and end.
Use these guidelines:

- choose a product (eg. breakfast cereal)
- write a script using terminology to describe shots, angles and scene transitions
- include opening shot (e.g. fade in) and closing shot (e.g. fade out)
- include at least two different camera angles

This does not adequately cover advertising techniques but the emphasis here is on getting a short script together (1 page) to demonstrate a basic understanding of story.

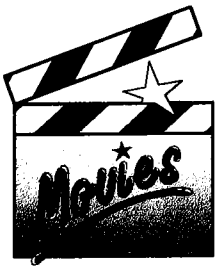
Students often want to go into great depth but should not be given the time (at least for this activity). Given the nature of this activity, perfect results are not the goal. This exercise is simply a GREAT TEACHING TOOL for script.

6. As a class, brainstorm a list of characters, settings and conflicts for each group to draw ideas from when writing. Students are terrific at these kinds of lists.

7. In small groups (4-5), assemble a basic story in script format using the brainstorm ideas provided. Use film terminology to describe scene changes, cuts, fades and so on.

Surprisingly, (or not surprisingly, given film and TV's influence) children often think and write in short scenes. The film terminology, then, simply gives them the tools to be clear and concise.

In Appendix E, I have included some actual student scripts from 11 and 12 year olds. (The names have been changed to protect the innocent.) They are not perfect but they give you some idea of the format and what you might reasonably expect the first time out. More importantly for my students, these scripts guided *their* group to a fine finished product.



## Exercise Nine:

# Computerizing

## Word Processing and Desktop Publishing scripts

- Students will compose revise and edit text, organize and manipulate data
- Students will access and use information from a variety of technologies
- Students will seek alternative viewpoints using information accessed through the use of a variety of technologies

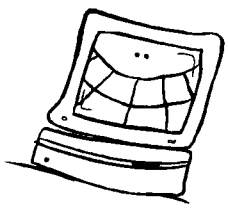
(NOTE: these outcomes are taken from sections *Organizer P & Organizer I* in the Alberta Education Technology (1997) document)

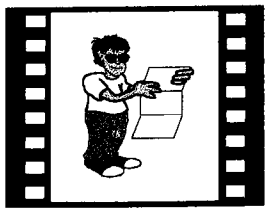
***Goal*** - *Students create a film script using a word processor.*

When I began having students write and create video from scripts, I thought word processing them was very important, but not fully practical because not all schools had sufficient access to computers. This is certainly not the case anymore. Including this step is extremely valuable for rehearsal purposes since there are usually a MULTITUDE of changes before arriving at a finished copy (as with any piece of writing). From this standpoint alone **it is worth the time and effort**.

Nicely published work also makes a nice communication vehicle to promote this type of program to parents in a 'take home' file, for example. Countless parents over the years have told me that this type of language study is long overdue.

The process is exactly the same as the writing process in any language arts class. Prewriting, rough, editing and polishing and finally, publishing. This step also allows students to see how they have taken an idea from paper to a finished video. Bringing a script to life like this is akin to producing a play (which I have also done a great deal). The bonus in scripting a film project is that they are in charge of the entire process and not reliant on someone else's ideas. They soon realize that any scripting choices they make greatly affect their final product.





## Exercise Ten:

# Acting for the CAMERA

➪ BASIC techniques for making the Dramatic happen on film

- experience oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as autobiographies, travelogues, comics, short films, myths, legends and dramatic performances
- Plan and shape presentations to achieve particular purposes or effects, and use feedback from rehearsals to make modifications

***Goal:*** *To give students the BASIC acting tools necessary for a fictional video to be produced. These skills will not be mastered in a short time and that is not the intent. Rather, understanding the process and having a bit of fun along the way will give students the confidence to go a bit further next time. More to the point, it should ensure that students* ***want there to be a next time.***

There will be those in your class who already have the confidence to stand in front of the camera and perform. At this level, that is all that is really required to make the project a success. The challenge to those students is to convey as much visually as possible. In other words, they should use visual language to 'say' the most by actually talking less. In theatre, this is called 'saying the most with the least'. It becomes even more important in film and television because of the close-up nature of the medium. Big gestures look out of place in a medium shot or close up. Students should understand, for example, that there is nothing wrong with cutting to reaction shots which contain no dialogue.

The following activities are designed to enhance students' communication on film verbally and visually, but especially the latter.

***Activities:***

These activities should be done both from a distance and close up. The sooner students understand how little they have to move in film, the better their results will be.

1) *My how you've changed* - (an observation exercise)
   Students pair off (A and B) and stand a few metres apart facing one another. After studying their partner's clothing for one minute, both turn around and

SUBTLY change one item - a button, a ring, a watch, or a shoelace. Each must try to guess within a limited time what has been changed.

This also works well for practicing facial expressions. (partners A and B) The teacher gives out slips of paper to one group of students suggesting an emotion. That student must then portray the emotion while his partner ;'B' must guess what the emotion is from a distance of three or four metres. Obviously, expressions need to be quite pronounced.

2) *Read my lips* - much the same as *My how you've changed* but students mouth words to each other, without so much as a whisper. This is an activity designed to have students watch very carefully.

Now try the same exercises with partners sitting on chairs with knees almost touching (ie. with faces less than a metre apart). See if students can notice the difference in the amount of movement necessary to identify the emotion or words.

"JACK (LEMMON) HAD COME TO HOLLYWOOD FROM THE BROADWAY THEATRE AND GEORGE (CUKOR) WAS DIRECTING HIM IN HIS FIRST FILM ROLE. JACK KEPT DOING A SCENE, AND GEORGE KEPT SAYING, "CUT. LESS, JACK, LESS." AND JACK WOULD DO IT AGAIN.

GEORGE: "CUT. LESS, JACK, LESS."

AND JACK WOULD DO IT AGAIN.

GEORGE: "CUT. LESS, JACK, LESS."

JACK FINALLY SAID, "IF I DO ANY LESS, I'LL BE DOING NOTHING."

GEORGE: "*NOW* YOU'VE GOT IT!"

Michael Caine, *Acting in Film* (p. 132-33)

FILM IS A VERY EXPRESSIVE BUT <u>CLOSE UP</u> MEDIUM. YOU CAN 'SAY' A GREAT DEAL USING ONLY YOUR EYES AND WITHOUT UTTERING A WORD.

More activities for acting in film :

3) *Looking 'through' the camera* - This is actually an acting exercise, not a cameraperson's exercise. Set up a camera in a close up shot and have students try to look from left to right (pan) without so much as a momentary glimpse at the camera. This is an activity done at film acting courses to help actors learn to ignore the camera (especially in close up). The rest of the class will notice if the subjects eyes hesitate even for a moment. Record the exercise so students can see themselves. It is very effective for teaching concentration as well as a necessary film acting tool. It also usually brings a great deal of laughter after the fact.

**REHEARSE, REHEARSE, REHEARSE!**

4) *Rehearsal and polish **without** the camera* - there is no substitute for practicing an idea with as many props and costumes as possible. The more practice the better. This is a big difference between stage and film acting because on the stage, hand props are not brought in until very late in the rehearsal process. In film, however, the opposite is true. All of the performance props are used from 'shot 1' so, before a scene is ever filmed, the actors need to know their movements inside out. Cameras are not necessary and, in fact, hinder early rehearsals for novice film actors. It ***is*** a waste of time therefore, to give them the camera until they know exactly what their scenes will look like. Even Steven Spielberg uses rehearsals before shooting 'the real thing'.

5) *Rehearsal **with** the camera* - Having said all of this, rehearse *with* the camera too! There is no substitute for having some rehearsal time with the camera in order for everyone to understand how things will work. The camera operator (cinematographer) especially, needs to practice looking through the lens to know what he or she is supposed to be shooting. Many actions need to be slowed down, especially in close up, or they will simply be missed. How fast should a person walk when sneaking up on someone? When tilting up to build suspense, how fast should the tilt be? Details? Maybe, but film is *The* medium of detail. We all recognize these techniques from films and certainly know when they are used incorrectly. To employ them correctly, or at least effectively, they need to be **practiced**. Pin hole cameras (see p. 17) can be effective for rehearsals as well.

*NB. There are other 'basic' film acting techniques such as 'hitting a mark', and 'walking into focus', but at this stage of film acting, it is beyond most students (and most basic video cameras). They are not necessary to achieve a terrific finished product. Therefore, I have not gone into detail in this document. See the attached reference list for resources that go into more detail.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THAT SCENE MICHAEL?"
"NOTHING," I SAID. "I HAVEN'T GOT ANYTHING TO SAY."
"THAT," SAID THE DIRECTOR, "IS A VERY BIG MISTAKE.
OF COURSE YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY. YOU'VE GOT
WONDERFUL THINGS TO SAY. BUT YOU SIT THERE AND
LISTEN, THINKING OF WONDERFUL THINGS TO SAY, AND
THEN YOU *DECIDE NOT TO SAY THEM.* THAT'S WHAT
YOU'RE DOING IN THAT SCENE." Michael Caine, *Acting in Film, (p69)*

## Exercise Eleven:

# Film Techniques

BASIC techniques in camera work
(Otherwise known as directing at this level)

☞ experiment with a variety of forms of oral, print and other media texts to discover the best suited for exploring, organizing and sharing ideas, information and experiences.

***Goal:*** *To give students the BASIC tools to direct a fictional video. Again, skills are the intent here, not an award winning direction.*

I know it can be dangerous to expect one student to direct another but I have found success by making the director and the camera person one and the same. This section consists of some basic camera tips to ensure that the final product is the result of visual **choices**, not merely lucky accidents.

As I mentioned above, there is nothing wrong with cutting to reaction shots with no dialogue. For that matter, there is nothing wrong with almost any type of shot if it helps to tell the story better but, again, these students are for the most part just learning the basics and until these are somewhat mastered, rule breaking must be left to the experts.

***Assignments***:

- Have directors take the camera and film some basic shapes.
(eg. film the "alphabet" using shapes around the school - swing frames for "A", monkey bars for "Z")

- Choose a setting, (a classroom or hallway) and practice going from an establishing shot to a medium shot, to a close up. Get used to setting the scene with an establishing shot first and then moving in for closer shots. This is generally the process for shooting film scenes.

- Use a pin hole camera to get used to limited peripheral vision. Have your directors sketch an establishing shot, medium shot and close up as seen through the pin hole camera to get used to using only the detail in the 'lens'.

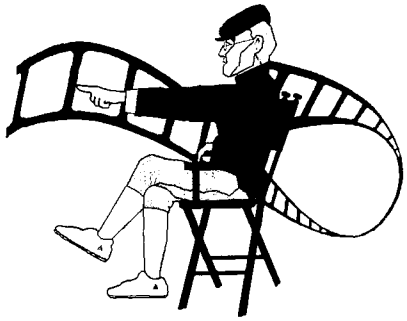
- Have each student draw a **storyboard** of a simple activity. For example, a "how to" exercise like changing a tire or baking a cake. Limit the number of sketches to make

students focus on only essential steps and the type of shot that best explains that step.

- Students take the video camera and try for some interesting angles using the local playground equipment - look down slides, through tunnels and create with shadows. ie. "Are these the most interesting shots you can create?" Remember the beginning of *The Untouchables* (directed by Brian dePalma - one of Hollywood's most creative directors) where the opening shot is looking directly down over Al Capone. Very effective and not predictable!

- It is especially important that these directors understand the sequence of shots to tell the story. Always ask your directors to tell you the story using their storyboards. (While actors are memorizing their lines, directors are making up simple storyboards.) This is the best way I've found to tell if a group is ready to film. If they can rattle off the scenes (including establishing shots, reaction shots, and effect shots) they're ready. If they are the type to come to you the first day and tell you they're ready, you might suggest some more of these shots.

NB: **ALWAYS USE A TRIPOD** - there is nothing worse than having students get motion sickness from watching each other's videos. It is a good idea to show the difference (ie. examples of bad camera work) but generally, it is ALWAYS a good idea to steady the camera with a tripod.



Key questions for groups ready to film:

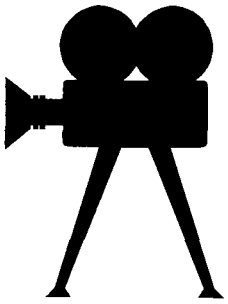
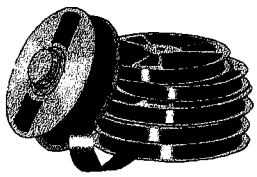
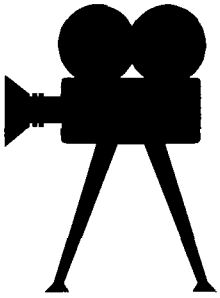
- What type of shot or effect does your story start with?
- Do you know how to do a fade in?
- What difference does it make to have a fade between scenes versus a cut?
- Can you show me the exact sequence of scenes on your storyboard?
- How long does it take you for scene changes? (After 5 minutes or so, most video cameras go to a standby mode which rewinds the tape slightly - you'll never get it back to the same spot again. Yet another reason for *lots* of rehearsal.)
- When does the climax happen?
- What happens after that?

- What is your final shot?

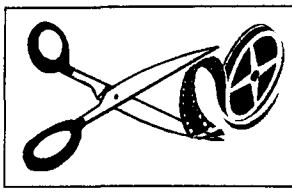
What NOT to ask...

- Are you still happy with your original idea? We, as teachers, ask students regularly about editing and improving ideas. At some point however, we must stop asking and try for a finished product. This is 'that point'. Some students, by this stage in the process want to change *completely* so to save yourself some headaches, . . .**DON'T ASK!** Reassure them that it is the process of filming that is important. Other opportunities will present themselves to create a better story.

- Consider having the students do a written self-assessment (journal) right after filming, including evaluating the group. Sometimes the way they think it went and the way it actually comes out on film are two different things and it is worth discussing *why* with the students. This sort of reflective thinking is where MUCH learning can take place.

## Exercise Twelve:



# Editing

Making the finished product look and sound professional

- Work collaboratively to revise and enhance oral, print and other media texts
- Select and record ideas and information that will support an opinion or point of view, appeal to the audience, and suit the tone and length of the chosen form of oral, print or other media text
- Select appropriate visuals, print and/or other media to inform and engage the audience

***Goal:*** *To have students arrange scenes (cut and paste) and add music and other audio as desired to match original idea and create a more professional, satisfying finished product.*

The reality here is that results will vary from school to school depending on the resources available. At present, most schools have video cameras but few have editing capability in the true sense. ie. the ability to shift scenes around and add other post production touches. If you do, great! You are one of the lucky ones and your editing will follow the steps outlined by your equipment guides. If not, please consider the following hints:

- **In-camera editing** produces the best results without external editing equipment. This simply means that the rehearsal mentioned above becomes extremely important. If students are truly rehearsed (including the director/camera person), the filming goes quite smoothly and the results can be, and often are, brilliant. Students new to the process will make more mistakes but still learn a great deal from *seeing* those mistakes.

If they are not well rehearsed (including the director/camera person), disaster may result. It is very difficult to go back and fix mistakes in camera so encourage them to be ready to **get it right the first time**. It's not as hard as they might think if they have rehearsed.

- Make it a rule that after the director has been chosen (usually quite responsible and motivated student) everyone else in the group must act in the story. Not all roles will be an equal size but it avoids anyone sitting back with nothing to do.

- If they want music or sound effects in the background, a ghetto blaster does work - it is just one more component to coordinate, but again, not that hard to do especially for that one group member with only a little acting role.

- Whatever you do, keep the editing simple and to a minimum. At this stage, they want to **see** something, not leave a project half finished!!

**For more on editing, please see *Terminology* in Appendix B**

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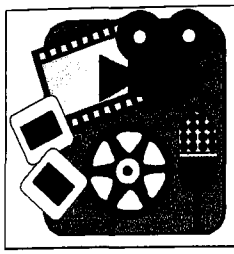
The finished products are intended for sharing with the class for teacher, peer and self assessment. The class may choose to share their finished products with another class or at events such as school Open Days, Parent/Teacher Interviews or English Curriculum Evenings.

*NB. Students will key in on certain visual language concepts for this unit but the reality is that **ALL** English skills will be inherent in the process.



# Multi Media

***Not a step in this process but a brief discussion of this new(?) and popular tool in schools.***

What is multi media? Short of writing an entire book on the subject, suffice to say that multi media is combining a variety of audio/visual effects into an information package and digitally transforming them into a multi-sensory presentation through the use of a computer. There are many programs to do this such as *Hyperstudio* and *Digital Chisel*. *Hyperstudio* is probably the best known multimedia package on the market.

*Hyperstudio* is a fantastic tool for creating using all forms of language. Students can create numerous "cards" which can be sequential or random and theme related. Visual symbols, audio, video, animation and written text can all be combined onto one or many pages. In my opinion, this can truly be one of the best all encompassing language experiences where students make choices as to what form of language they will communicate with. The only drawbacks are that students still rely on others' data banks for images, and the program is relatively expensive.

Multimedia is not a new idea because many teachers have been using it in their classrooms for years with great effectiveness. They have just not had the advantage of a computer to organize it all.

This unit ties into multi-media by combining a variety of media (text, sound, video, computers, editors, and so on) but it does so gradually and selectively. It took me one full term to go through this process with an English class and the key was, as it is in teaching anything, not to give too much information at once and overload students. They needed time to absorb the technical information and conceptualize the whole notion of going from original idea to finished product with *video*.

One writer who has had a lot to say on the subject of multi-media, Fred D'Ignazio, says "we must train our students to use media in small bites, rather than as a smorgasbord of 'all you can eat'." (D'Ignazio, *The Computing Teacher* p54) He says we should hit on short spurts of media and then give time to discuss and write about the new ideas.

With the new multi media packages available, our students will be able to access an almost limitless array of film clips, photos and sounds. By applying themselves to a project like *this*, they are forced to look at the bigger picture and select only what is

effective. Although it is not computer centered, this unit asks students to go through the same process. I have seen students look at their video in the editing stage and make a conscious decision *not* to add one effect or another. By making this choice, they are using media selectively, the way multi media is meant to be used.

To me, being selective about what to include is the *ultimate* aim of the visual language process. I have focussed a great deal on video, but the goal is to have students create their own visual messages by making *choices* about visual images and audio to create a clear and effective message using media other than written text alone.

Heretofore, after the finished video has been viewed and critiqued, I have only been able to shelve it until I needed an example for next year's class. With the advent of multi media though, each video becomes a data base for some other multi media project. You can never have too much *home grown* footage to use.

**Good luck!!**

Happy Filming

*They love it!*

IT IS THE PROCESS, NOT THE PRODUCT

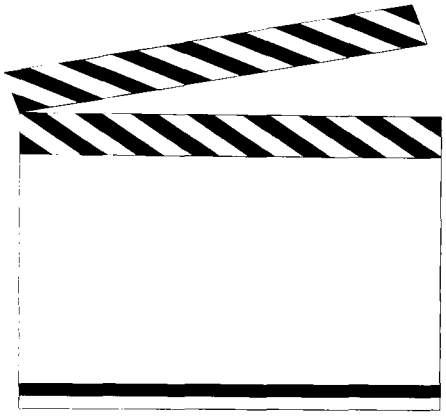
(the curriculum tells us so)

**ENCOURAGE THEM!**

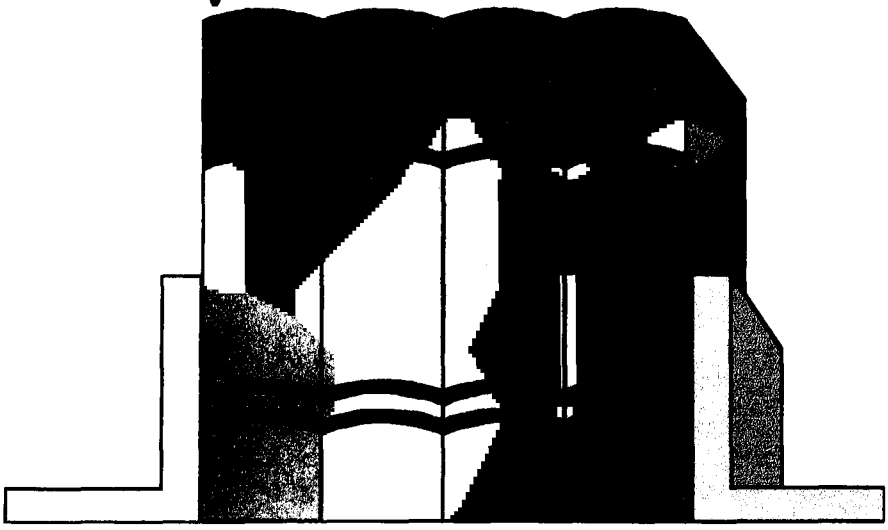
Be Creative

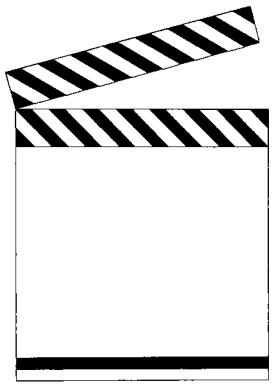
Have fun and they will!!

**IT DOES WORK!!!**



# Appendices





# Appendix A
# Photo Story

# Photo Story

Question 1:

Decide on the 5W's for this photo.
(Who, What, Where, When, Why)

Question 2:

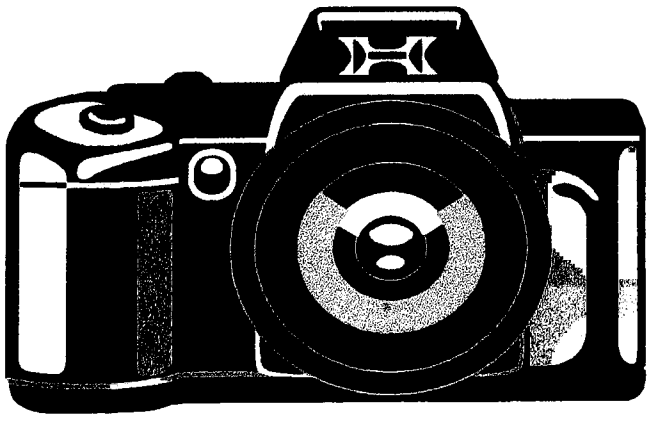
Write this information down in point form.

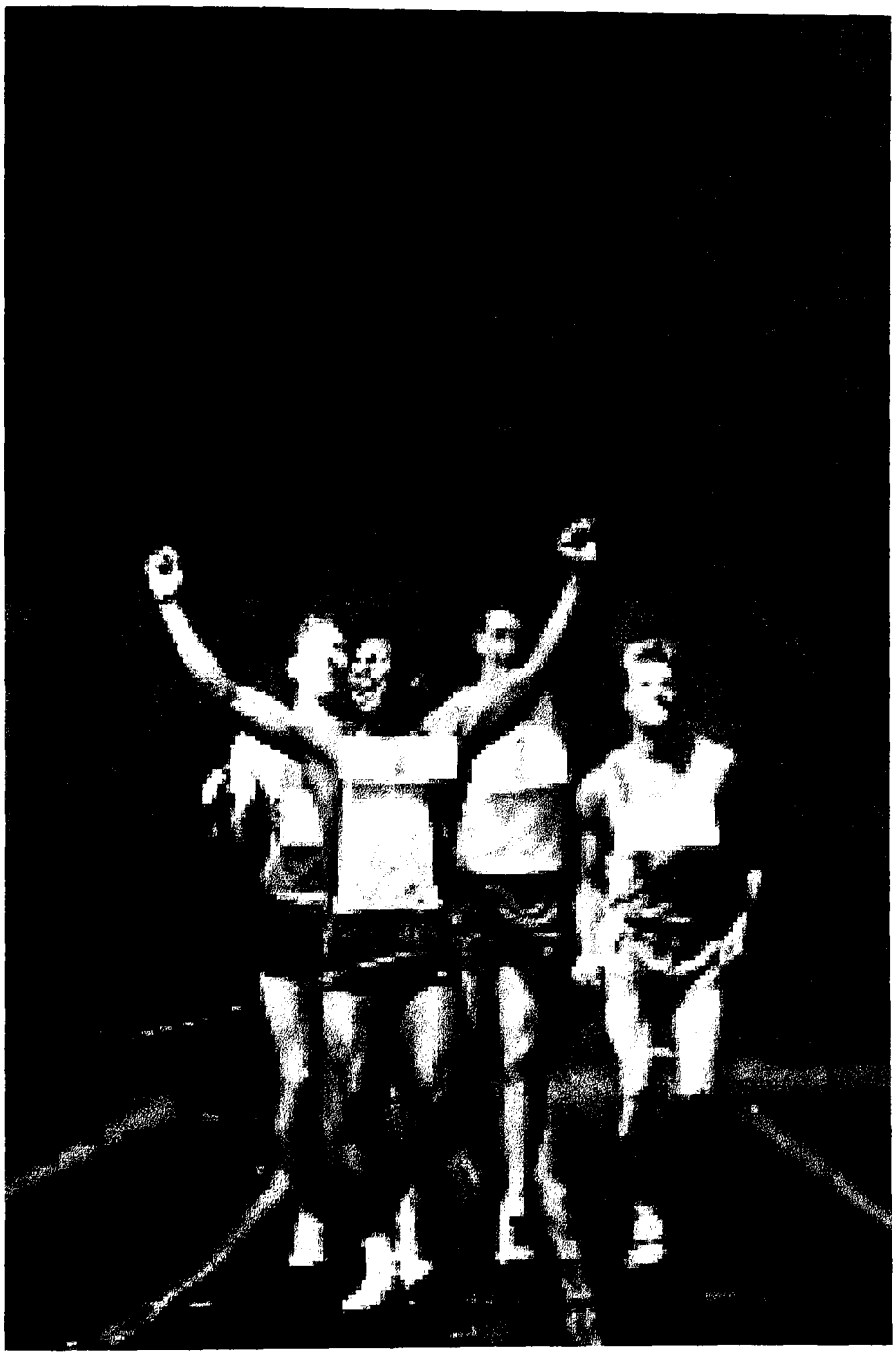
Question 3:

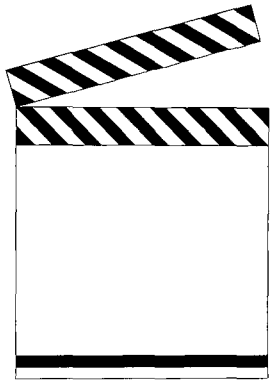
Write a one page story that tells how these people ended up as they are in the photograph.

Question 4:

Choose 3 key moments in your story and illustrate them. They should be turning points or other equally important developments in the story.







# Appendix B
# Terminology

## 1. Structure of a Film:

**Shot**
A single 'run' of the camera. The basic unit from which film is constructed. The length or duration of a shot depends on:

a. its purpose ie. establishing a place; to show action or reaction
b. the pace (or tempo) of the sequence in which it occurs

**Sequence**
A group of shots depicting one action or, which seem to belong with or depend on each other (eg. shots 3 -18)

**Scene**
A group of sequences or, for short scenes, a group of shots which:

a. depict an event in the story, and
b. occur in one place

A scene is generally a larger unit than a sequence (though sometimes a group of shots can be classified as either.)

## 2. Types of Shot

**Long Shot (LS)**
A distance shot in which a setting, and not a character, is the emphasis. This is generally used to establish the place in which action will occur, hence the term *establishing shot*. Given its function, a long shot is often used at the beginning of a scene or sequence, and may be combined with a panning movement to show us the wider area. It is often an out-of-doors shot and is approximately the equivalent of viewing a proscenium stage from the audience.

**Full Shot - (FS)**
A type of long shot that includes the human body in full, with the head near the top of the frame and the feet near the bottom.

**Master Shot**
A wide shot that includes one or more actors and often follows an establishing shot. It tracks with the movement of the performers in the

scene. This is a shot, for example, which starts in a room to further establish location and then cuts to mid shots or close ups for more detail (called *coverage*).

**Mid Shot, Medium shot (MS) or Two-Shot**
A middle distance shot which focuses our attention on a particular subject. With a mid shot, the camera is close enough to pick up detail, though still far enough away to be able to follow the subject as he/she/it moves. The two-shot is commonly used to show conversation and generally shows characters from the waist up.

**Over-the Shoulder Shot**
A shot where the camera looks over the shoulder of one actor to the face of the other. These are almost always done in pairs so that the camera looks at both backs and both actors from similar, but opposite, vantage points. They are very effective for conversations and are later *matched* or *paired* in the editing process.

**Close Up (CU)**
A close shot of an object or person, the aim being to focus our attention on a particular detail. Close ups on a person show only the neck and face and if the close up is of an object, it may serve as the inpoint to a new scene, depicting a new fact or location in the story. Close ups of a person have a number of different functions:

a. In an establishing sequence, a close up of someone suggests that he/she is a main character.
b. The first close up of a character (in a sequence of shots), establishes point of view - eg. who is watching an event
c. a close up is most commonly used to show the reaction of a character. ie. a reaction shot

**Extreme Close Up (ECU)**
A shot so close that it shows only a portion of the person or object being filmed. On a person, may be only an eye or a shoe being tied, etc. Used to draw attention to something very specific and not reveal all the details to the audience at once. VERY easy to see camera shake - use a tripod.

**Interior shot (Int)**
Inside

**Exterior shot (Ext)**
Outside

**Time of Day**
ie. morning, evening, day, night, etc.

## 3. Camera Movements

**Pan**
Side to side camera movement from a stationary position.

**Tilt**
Camera movement up or down from a stationary position.

**Tracking**
The camera is not stationary but moves to follow a moving object or person. The camera is mounted on a moving device such as a rail platform, a dolly or a vehicle. eg. as two people walk down a street in conversation, the camera 'tracks' along side.

**Zoom In**
Movement inwards in the frame towards a particular subject. May be **slow** or **fast**. A **slow zoom in** often means the director wants to draw attention to a detail in the shot or to show more clearly what a character is thinking or feeling for example, after a character finds out important information, a slow zoom in will be used to reveal his/her feelings. A **fast zoom in** may be done for effect for a variety of reasons. eg. in a music video simply for visual impact.

**Zoom Out**
Movement outwards away from a particular subject. Also may be slow or fast and again, fast is usually done for effect. A **slow zoom out** however, is often used at the end of a film or episode to show where we the audience are leaving a character at that point in time. eg. zoom out as character looks out window to ponder his/her situation.

Note: The speed of a camera movement (from very fast to very slow) can dramatically alter its effect.

## 4. Moving from One Shot to Another

**Cut**
The abrupt ending of a shot. 'Cut to' means one shot ends abruptly and the following shot begins just as abruptly. The two scenes may or may not be related but if the cut takes us to a new, seemingly unrelated locale or is a little inconsistent with the previous shot, it is called a jump cut.

**Fade In or Out**
The image appears or disappears gradually. It brightens to full strength or darkens to black usually over 5 seconds. The fade is often used as a division between scenes. It is used when a gradual exit is desired and is often used to reflect on the last thing said.

**Dissolve**
One image fades in while another fades out so that for a few split seconds, the two are superimposed.

**Whip pan**
Sometimes used to show a quick change in location.
eg. the old Batman series.

**Inpoint**
An image which starts the scene. Sometimes this inpoint is used to smooth the transition between scenes. As the word suggests, the inpoint takes us in to the next shot or scene by making a visual link (a related object or shape) with the outpoint of the previous shot.

## 5. Camera Angles

In filming a shot, a decision is made about the angle at which the camera is to be directed at a subject. High and low angles may be used to influence our impression of a particular character.
( See Terminology section, p. 19)

A character filmed from a **low angle** will seem strong, powerful, tall, proud, etc. whereas if a **high angle** is used, the subject will appear weak, insignificant, vulnerable, small, etc. Our impression of a structure or object can be manipulated in a similar way.

A **distorted** angle may be used to make a scene more frightening or to make the viewer feel anxious or queasy (especially if a fast or jerky camera movement is also used).

## 6. Editing

This is the process of assembling and splicing together the various shots which comprise a film. Editing determines the **pace** or **tempo** of the film and each sequence within the film. **Fast cuts** (with only a few seconds between each) generate feelings of excitement as in a chase sequence. **Longer shots** (5-10 seconds) have the opposite effect, slowing the pace of the film as in a love scene.

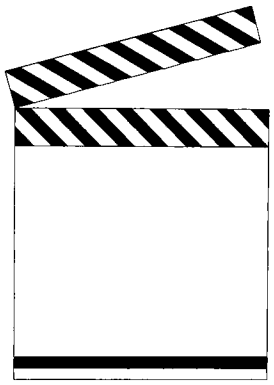
The various pieces, consisting of long shots, close ups, over-the-shoulder shots and mid shots are then put together in a series so that there is a continuous, connected and logical action on the screen. (As you can see, this can obviously be very involved requiring good equipment with flying erase heads and the rest. It is for this reason that I suggested in-camera editing, at least for your first project. See Editing, p. 70)

## 7. Other Terms

**Soft Focus**
A slightly blurred shot to make the subject seem more attractive, romantic or dreamlike.

**Hand Held Camera**
The tripod and dolly are deliberately abandoned in favour of this method when the director wants to create a sense of anxiety or confusion, exploiting the unsteady movement of the camera. A hand held shot in which the character is approached from behind usually suggests someone is being followed and creates suspense.

**Montage**
The editing together of a large number of shots with no intention of creating a continuous reality. A montage is often used to compress time or establish a particular time or place. With the absence of a visual relationship, montage shots are linked through a unified sound - either a voice-over or a piece of music.



# Appendix C
# Sample Terminology Test

# *Film Terminology Quiz*

Name:_____

*Part A*: In the spaces below, write out the sentences again explaining the **bold underlined** words. In other words, tell exactly what the shot description means from what the camera sees initially to the end of that shot.

1) **Fade in** , **Ext.** , **Day** , **CU** of a skateboard.

_____

_____

_____/4

2) **Cut to** a **L.S.** of a kid on a skateboard poised at the edge of a skateboard half pipe. **Dissolve to** ... **M.S.** of kid wiping sweat from his brow.

_____

_____

_____/4

3) **Tilt down and slowly zoom in to ECU...** underside of skateboard showing a loose wheel.

_____

_____/3

4) Cut to... **Mid Tracking shot** of a group of girls walking on sidewalk beside half pipe. **Pan** around to see skateboarder noticing the girls.

_____

_____

_____/3

| *Part B*: | Read the following script excerpt and answer the questions that follow. |
|---|---|

Cut to... MS of boy on skateboard rolling down the half pipe several times showing off and doing tricks
Cut to... MS of girls rolling eyes (reaction shot)
Cut to... CU of skateboard wheel as it flies off
Cut to... boy landing unceremoniously at the girls' feet
Cut to... CU of Girl #1

Girl #1
"Show off"

Cut to... slow zoom in to C.U. of boy's red face
Cut to... over the shoulder shot of girls walking off laughing

Fade out

1) In your own words, give a reason for why only one of the shots in *Part B* has a line of dialogue.

_____

_____ /2

2) How quickly should these shots should move from one to another, ie. editing pace

_____

_____ /2

3) What is the effect of the fade at the end?

_____ /2

_____

4) How many shots are there in the entire sequence? (Parts A and B)

_____ /2

- It is very effective to use this type of test after first doing a test based on television commercials. If you do it in the same class, the terms and more importantly, the structure of scenes is fresh in students' minds. Here are some questions to ask based on a television commercial: (I usually include 4 or 5 ads so there is a reasonable sample and play each ad twice)

  - How many shots in total?
  - How many zooms?
  - How many cuts?
  - List the type of shots and camera movements in order (for short ads only)
  - What special effect shot is used?

Answer Key:

*Part A*

1) **fade in** = a slowly revealed shot and a gentler beginning
   **Exterior** = outside
   **Daytime** (self explanatory)
   **close up** to focus audience attention and since it is the opening shot, to stimulate curiosity

2) **Cut to** = an abrupt ending to the shot before and an immediate start to the next scene
   **Long Shot** - establishes setting
   **Dissolve to** - a gentler scene transition than a cut
   **Medium Shot** - shows character detail

3) **Tilt Down** = camera's 'eye' moves down to reveal something
   **Slow zoom in** = a deliberate attempt to focus audience attention on something or someone (in this case, a loose wheel)
   **ECU** = extreme close up - showing specific detail

4) **Mid Tracking shot** - a medium shot in which the camera is moving (on a rail) with the actors
   **Pan** = camera's 'eye' moves from one side to the other - in this case to reveal someone else watching - infers that the two different

characters or groups of characters (the skateboarder and the group of girls) will interact more soon.

*Part B*:

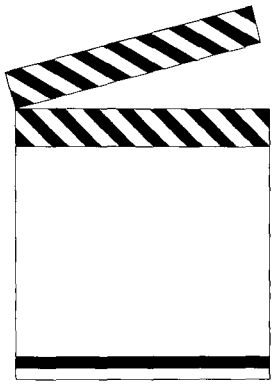
1) The majority of the shots in this sequence are **reaction shots**. Like it says earlier in this book, film is a very expressive but close up medium. You can 'say' a great deal using only your eyes and without uttering a word.

2) As you want the excitement or suspense to build in a sequence, the editing pace should become quicker.

3) A fade at the end is meant to leave the audience thinking about the characters where their situation left off. Quite often, as the fade occurs the actors will be still and the camera in a reasonably close up shot to reinforce this intention. It is a more gradual exit from the story compared to a cut like the end of *Star Wars* where the credits suddenly appear.

4) **11 total** - 4 on p1 and 7 on p2 ( even in shots like Part A #2/3 - the tilt is still part of the same shot)

Total Marks: 22

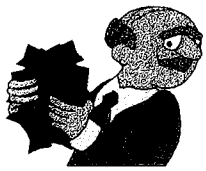


# Appendix D
# Storyboards

# Storyboards

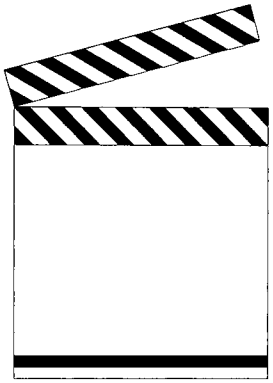
Storyboards are a visual layout of a an entire scripted scene. They show what is to be filmed, in as much pictoral detail as possible. As these storyboards are put together, an entire story is put on paper so a visual plan exists before it is filmed. Some directors use storyboards minimally while others, like the great Alfred Hitchcock, had extremely detailed storyboards for every scene. What follows is an example of a storyboarded scene and a blank format for your own use.

| CAMERA CUES AND CONTENT | VOICE OVER |
|---|---|
| 1. (3 SEC) EXTREME LONG SHOT | |
| | The city of New Metro was a sleeping giant where everything was peaceful. |
| 2. (3 SEC.) LONG SHOT | |
| | But in a quiet little house on a suburban street, an evil plan was brewing. |
| 3. (3 SEC.) MEDIUM SHOT | |
| | "If I can get into the first National Bank after hours, I'll be RICH!" |
| 4. (2 SEC.) LONG SHOT | |
| | Meanwhile, inside the First National Bank... |
| 5. (3 SEC.) FULL SHOT | |
| | "Don't worry Mr. Moneybags, I'll look after the 2 million dollars in the safe." |

| CAMERA CUES AND CONTENT | VOICE OVER |
|---|---|
| 6. (6 SEC) MEDIUM SHOT | |
| | "You'd better Biggs! I have guarenteed that money myself! If anything happens to it, you'll be the one I throw in jail. |
| 7. (3 SEC.) MEDIUM SHOT | |
| | Meanwhile, the evil scheming villian overheard all of the important information. |
| 8. (2 SEC.) LONG SHOT | |
| | HOW COULD ANYONE HAVE STOLEN ALL THAT MONEY? |
| 9. (3 SEC.) MEDIUM SHOT | |
|  | Life is good. |
| 10. (3 SEC.) HIGH ANGLE LONG SHOT (AND FADE) | |
| | I'm really sorry Mr. Moneybags. |

# Storyboard

| CAMERA CUES AND CONTENT | VOICE OVER |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |



# Appendix E
# Sample Scripts

# The Sucker-vac

Group: 3 actors(Bob, Sally, Robert)
1 director
Film in staffroom

Cut into L.S. of Bob reading a magazine on chair

Bob

*Have you cleaned your room lately?*

Cut to M.S. of Robert with vacuum

Robert

*No worries. Just clean it with the new Sucker-vac. It exhales your clothes into your wardrobe.*

Camera shows clothes/things being chucked into the closet. Cut to L.S. of Bob.

*Bob*

*Oh no, it's time to do the dishes!!*

Cut to - tilt of dirty dishes.
Cut to - C.U. of Sally

*Sally*

*Don't worry, just use the new Sucker-Vac. It cleans up with No mess.*

Cut to - M.S. of Robert sneezing while reading a book.

*Robert*

*Ahhh...AHHHH..CHOO!*

Pan to Bob.

*Bob*

*Yuck! No worries for the new Sucker-vac will suck your nose clean.*

Cut to- M.S. of Sally against wall.

*Sally*

*For this powerful new Sucker-Vac, call 0800 Sucker and at the amazing price of only $69.95*

Cut to- M.S. of Bob and immediately zoom out to L.S. of everybody.

*Bob*

*And maybe another sucker will buy it.*

*Sally*

*This presentation was brought to you by Suckerville, Pennsylvania.*

Fade out.

# Mugging in the Park

## Group - 4 actors(Helen, Rachel, Kirsty, Natasha, Joan), 1 director

*C.U. Ext Day - Slow zoom out from knife in pocket.*

*Pan over to...girl and gran walking along path, girl in front*

*Cut to- M.S. of baddy (bad guy) behind tree jumping out at girl*

*Cut to - C.U. of girl's face (screaming)*

*Cut to -L.S. of gran struggling to get gun out of pocket*

*Pan over left to girl fighting with baddy guy*

*Cut to- M.S. of gran dropping gun*

*Pan over to girl lying on the ground*

*Cut to- M.S. of ambulance coming to pickup girl and leaving*

*Cut to- M.S. of girl lying in bed covered with a white sheet and door closing*

*Scene 1 - Fade out*

*Scene 2 - Cut in to - M.S. Ext day*

*Gran talking to a detective*

*Detective*

*What happened mamme*

*Gran*

*I saw it all happen. There was a man in black and I tried to shoot him but I dropped the gun and he went that-a-way*

*(pointing)*

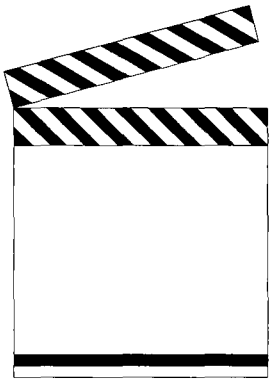
*Slow zoom out as*

*Detective walks off slowly looking for clues and gran cries.*

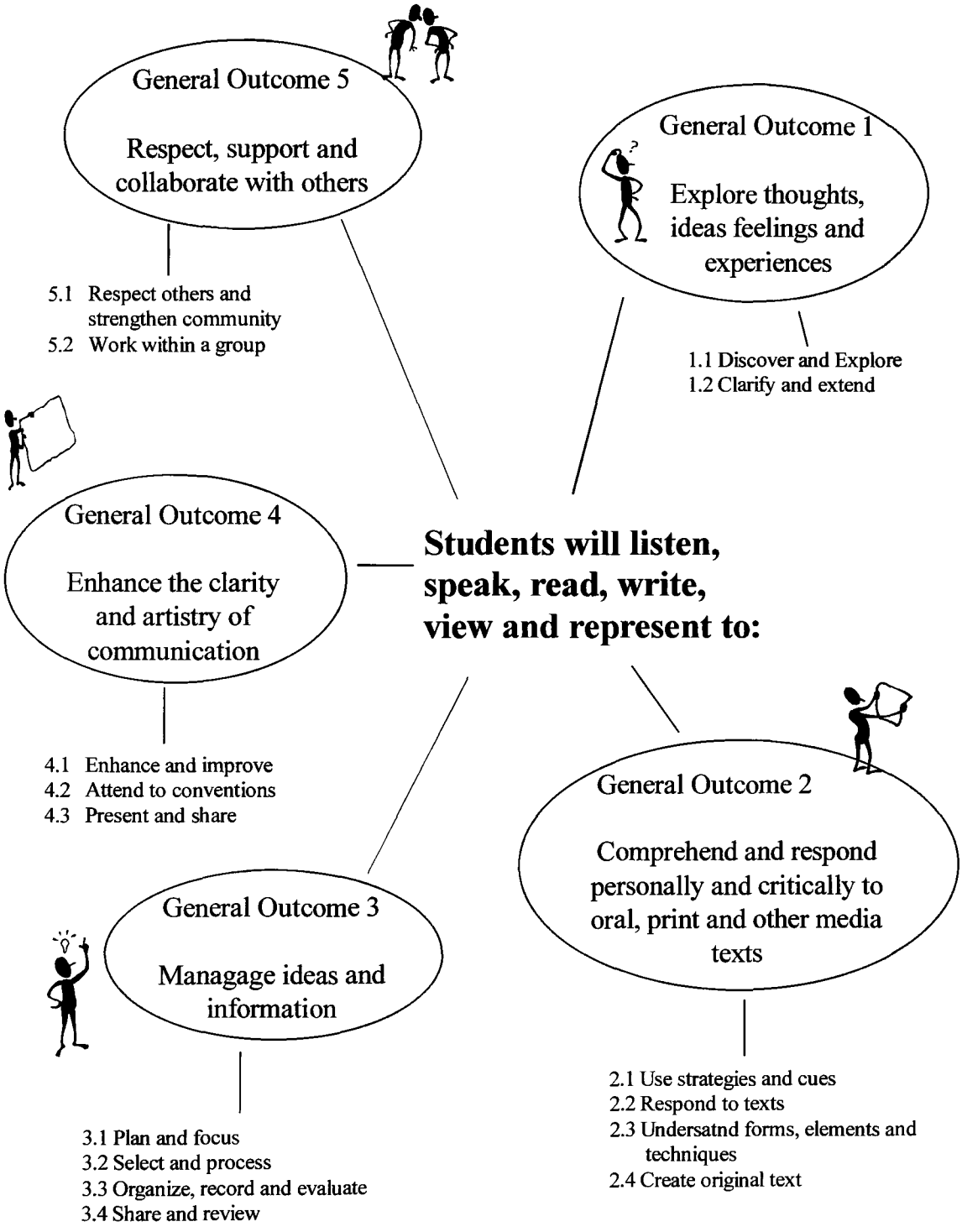
*Cut to- C.U. of knife, blood and white chalk outline*

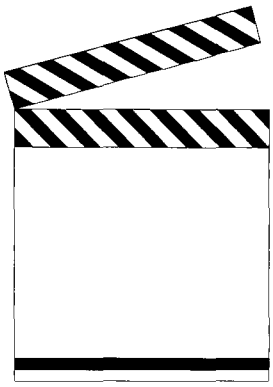
*Fade out*

*End*



# Appendix F
# ELA General Outcomes 1-5


General Outcome 5
Respect, support and collaborate with others
5.1 Respect others and strengthen community
5.2 Work within a group
General Outcome 1
Explore thoughts, ideas feelings and experiences
1.1 Discover and Explore
1.2 Clarify and extend
General Outcome 4
Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication
4.1 Enhance and improve
4.2 Attend to conventions
4.3 Present and share
Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to:
General Outcome 3
Managage ideas and information
3.1 Plan and focus
3.2 Select and process
3.3 Organize, record and evaluate
3.4 Share and review
General Outcome 2
Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts
2.1 Use strategies and cues
2.2 Respond to texts
2.3 Undersatnd forms, elements and techniques
2.4 Create original text



# Appendix G
# Other VL Activities and Examples

# Viewing Activities

**Newspaper**
Survey the newspaper. Cut out or write down those features that are eye-catching

**Street Art**
What is 'street art'?
What is graffiti?
Why do people create it?
What forms of graffiti have you seen and when?
What examples of the different kinds can be seen?
what is the difference between planned street art and graffiti?

**Cartoons**
How are words and pictures mixed together?

**Signs and Symbols**
What kinds of signs and symbols have you seen?
Why is a symbol or logo used?
What do they mean or suggest?
Where do they come from?
What impact do signs and symbols have that words may not?

**Wordless Text**
How do wordless texts convey meaning?
What techniques does the illustrator/photographer use?

**Advertisements**
What is being advertised?
Do we actually see the product?
Who is the target audience?
Do any of the objects in the ads have emotional language?
What purpose does any body language in the ad serve?
How/why is colour used?
What sort of messages do you get from the ad?

**Cereal boxes**
Study two or more boxes
What features are the same?
What features are different?
which words or pictures do you find most interesting? Why?

**Architecture**
What do the shapes and details of the buildings tell you about what they were used for.
Have they always been used for this purpose or did they serve a different purpose in the past?
What it is it used for now?
What materials were used?
What do you notice about the proportions, patterns, colours, textures and shapes?
Are the facades different from the rest of the building? How?

# Representing Activities

**Pamphlet Advertising**
Look at a selection of pamphlets. Decide who each is aimed at.
What is the mix of ages, genders and cultural groups?
What visuals are there?
Rewrite one pamphlet using a desktop publisher changing one aspect. (the target audience for example)

**Newspaper**
Redesign the front page. Use your own headlines, stories, pictures, cartoons, puzzles pictures and captions, as well as those cut out of the newspaper.

**Body Language**
Design an exercise program for a certain age group.
Using pictures, signs and symbols, design a program that is easily interpreted while moving.
See Chapter 1, page 10 in Bruce Burton's *Living Drama* text

**Magazine Advertisements**
Represent these ads more effectively
Using masking techniques, keep the best of the ad.
Reword and change visuals to make a more powerful or a humourous message.

**Cereal Boxes**
Design a cereal box for people who only eat junk food.
Think about: pictures, words, signs, symbols, fonts and ensure a balance of techniques is used.

**Cartoons**
Make your own cartoon strip (use S.S.D. over a period of days to draw your own)
Blank out speech bubbles on an existing cartoon to write your own dialogue.
Make a cartoon using frames and speech bubbles. ( You can even do this on desktop publishers)
Cut out backgrounds and layer cut-out characters over top or draw your own.

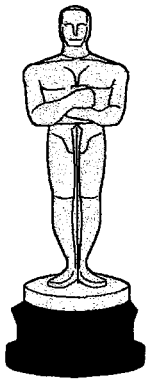
**Posters**
Design an interactive poster based on a theme you are studying. Use ideas/concepts from the unit's vocabulary list.

**Storyboard**
Read a simple story like Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood (even in upper grades).
Use the storyboard blank contained in this unit to draw the storyboard.
Create a script from your storyboard.

**Architecture**
Design a logo for your own company.
From your sketches and ideas, design a shape that best symbolizes the style of your company.
Stylize your shape to a modern abstract shape.
Add a shape or symbol that reflects the atmosphere of your company.
Add finishing details.

**Academy Awards**
After your video projects, have a class vote for the various categories and give out academy awards like the one on the next page.

# ACADEMY AWARD



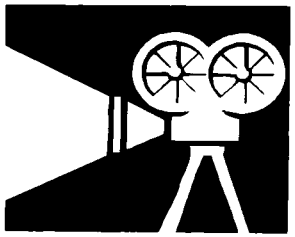
*This prestigeous award given to*

_____

*for the film*

_____

*As chosen by*_____
*and the Academy of Motion Picture Sciences*



**Best Picture**

*Signed* *Date:*

_____

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