Reading the Visual
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In order to Support Readers in the 21ˢᵗ Century, We Need to Expand / Revise:
- Definitions of Text
- Reader Competencies
- Analytical Perspectives

Assertion #1
The texts children interact with today have become more visual, digital, and multimodal.

Changes in the Literacy Landscape
- From Print-Based to Digital Texts
- From Monomodal to Multimodal Texts
- From Static to Interactive Texts

Assertion #2
We have to develop new competencies for designing, producing, navigating, and interpreting multimodal texts.

Multimodal Competencies
- Call students' attention to aspects of multimodal texts that often go unnoticed.
- Discuss HOW images and design elements work, as much as WHAT is included.
- Consider various perspectives from which to consider the production and reception of multimodal texts.
- Understand how various modes work individually and collectively in multimodal ensembles.

Assertion #3
Students need different analytical perspectives from which to interpret visual images and multimodal texts.

Analytical Perspectives
- Serve as **guides** to help readers understand what to pay attention to.
- Helps readers **approach** different visual and multimodal texts in different ways.
- Provides a vocabulary or **metalanguage** to discussing various elements of visual and multimodal texts.

3 Analytical Perspectives
Perceptual - Noticing, Navigating, Naming Elements of Multimodal Texts
Structural - Grammar and Conventions of Visual Images and Multimodal Texts
Ideological - Socio-Cultural Contexts of Visual Images and Multimodal Texts

Analytical Perspectives: A Brief Example
Art as Visual Object
Art as Semiotic Ensemble
Art as Cultural Artifact

Instructional "Points of Entry"
- **Art Movements:** Various techniques and styles in the history of art criticism
- **Visual Grammar:** Perspective, Viewer Interactions, and Interpersonal Distance
- **Design Elements:** Borders, Endpages, and Image-Text Interplay

4 Art Movements
Realism
Folk Art
Modern Art
Surrealism

Elements of Visual Grammar: Perspective
Point of view for viewer and actors in an image – where viewers are positioned.
Has socially determined meaning potentials.
Provides viewer with their "window on the world."
Creates involvement or detachment, and suggests power structures.

Questions to Ask
- Where are the characters located?
- Are objects or people above, below or straight on?
- Where are you positioned as the viewer?
- How does your position as viewer affect your interpretations?

Elements of Visual Grammar: Viewer Interactions
Demand - requires active response to characters in an image.
Offer - placed in voyeuristic position, viewers look at what characters are looking at

Questions to Ask
- Which characters are looking at you? How does this affect your relationship with the character?
- Which characters are looking away from you?
- What are you being asked to consider?
- How would the image change if the characters looked at you or not?

Elements of Visual Grammar: Interpersonal Distance
The social distance suggested by an image as to how close or far away you are positioned from the characters.
Creates intimacy and closeness with characters or suggests an informal, distanced relationship.
Can provide us with perspectives we rarely have in real life (close ups).

Questions to Ask
- Which characters are portrayed close-up and which ones are from a greater distance?
- How does distance affect the meaning potentials of an image?
- Which characters seem more powerful because of their position and distance?

Design Elements: Borders
Windows into Illustrations
Boundary between Reality and Imagination
Sets Images Apart from Text
Bordered or Full-Bleed Images
Breaking Borders "Call for Interaction"

Questions to Ask
- Are physical borders part of the image or design layout? If so, what purpose do they serve?
- How do the borders frame the image?
- How do the borders add to the overall design of the text?
- Are the borders broken? If so, what meaning potentials might this suggest?

Design Elements: Roles of Endpapers
Connections to Story
Thematic
Part of the Narrative

Questions to Ask
- Are the endpages the same in front and back?
- If they are the same or single colored pages, is there a thematic connection to the narrative?
- If they are different, how do the endpages add to the narrative?

Design Elements: Interplay of Text & Illustrations
Symmetrical - images parallel the information provided in the text and vica versa
Enhancing - illustrations enhance the text and vica versa
Counterpoint - images provide information that is contradicted by the text and vica versa

Questions to Ask
- What meaning potentials are available through the image that are not part of the text and vica versa?
- How does the image change the text and the text change the image?
- What would be lost if you took away one of these meaning systems?

Some Final Thoughts
- As texts continue to evolve into digital and multimodal ensembles, the strategies readers will need to be successful will have to evolve as well.
- Teachers need to expand their interpretive competencies if they expect to support their students interpretive competencies.
- Texts are only encountered within particular social practices and contexts, and these contexts influence how we understand them.

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