

Hear the Images Talk – Visual Literacy in the Face of Today’s World

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ABSTRACT

The changing world of arts has its foundational pillars on 7 types art. They are Painting, sculpture, literature, film, theater, architecture, and the world of the mesmerizing music. Some of the Art Styles are Modern Art, Contemporary Art, Pop Art, typography, Still Life and Abstract Art. We have beautiful Art everywhere and the most prominent being the Visual Arts.

We all love to chat using emoji, share memes, et up beautiful profile pictures and share "edited" photographs on social media and thus our ability to successfully do so indicates our catch on visual literacy skills. In simple word visual literacy is the ability to read, write and create images. We use these skills for thinking, understanding, visualizing, communicating and expressing our thoughts and ideas. The drawings on the prehistoric caves, the signs and symbols of the hieroglyphs, tells us how long of a process it has been. Considering the idea that visual images are a language, some authors consider visual literacy to be more of a metaphor, relating imagery interpretation to conventional literacy, than a teachable skill. A human being can develop these skills by seeing the imagery and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiment. The development of these skills is fundamental to the normal human learning. It is remarkable that this field is credited with the development of educational programs that enhance students' abilities to interpret and create visual messages, as well as improvement of reading and writing skills through the use of visual imagery.

In this paper we would see a broad overview of the concept of visual literacy, focusing on its interdisciplinary nature, learning how to develop visual literacy skills, promoting visual literacy and teaching these skills to children without them even realizing it!

KEYWORDS: Communication, Image Interpretation, Analysis, Signs & Symbols

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand what is visual literacy and where it is used
- To understand how to read, analyze & create Visuals
- To promote visual literacy skills

INTRODUCTION

As the world changes, so do the different forms of Art. Below are 7 prominent Art forms though they have been they have been altered severe times because of the arrival of the different type of art forms throughout the times of Humankind —



Fig 1 : Different Art Types



Fig 2 : Types of Art Styles

WHAT IS VISUAL LITERACY?

According to the [IVLA](#) (International Visual Literacy Association) the term “Visual Literacy” was first coined in 1969 by John Debes. In simple word visual literacy is the ability to read, write and create images. It gives us the ability to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media in the context of cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use of visual materials . This current generation students are expected to use images in their academic work, and to produce visual materials that effectively communicate their research and scholarly activities. Today, our communications are more peppered with visuals than ever, including emoji, memes, profile pictures, advertising imagery, etc.



Fig 3 : Meme

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Animal drawings in ancient caves, such as the one in Lascaux, France, are early forms of visual literacy thus the concept of reading signs and symbols is prehistoric. [Classical and Medieval theories](#) of memory and learning placed a strong emphasis on how the visual format of words and lines affected the ordering of information in the mind. During the Enlightenment era new emphasis was placed on training the senses through print and manuscript technologies. By the 19th century visual literacy was a core component of the national educations systems of Europe and North America where visual tools like diagrams and models began to be used in the classroom.

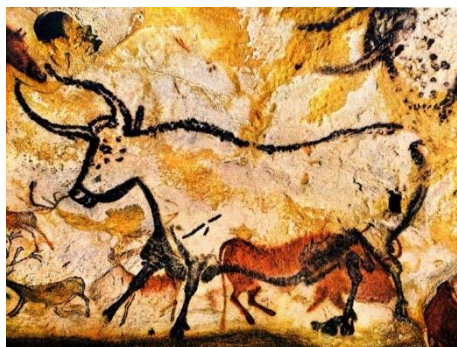


Fig 4 : Prehistoric cave painting

WHY DO WE NEED VISUAL LITERACY?

We’ve all heard the old adage “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Learning to read those pictures gives us advantages for everywhere we go. We use these skills for thinking, understanding, visualizing,

communicating and expressing our thoughts and ideas. Some of the reasons why we need visual literacy [are](#) -

- **Information processing** - Large amount of complex data can be easily presented in the form of pie charts, graphs, tables and diagrams help us understand the process the data

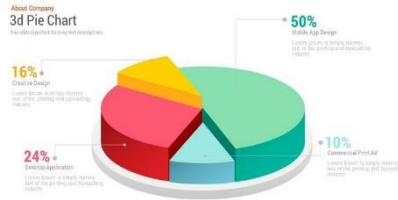


Fig 5 : Pie chart

- **Communication** - Visuals can transcend language barrier. It gives us the ability to explain our complex thoughts, emotions and ideas into simpler yet powerful visual. So a property drawn poster without any text can be understood by anyone from any country no matter whether they are literate or not. We need visual literacy skills for graphic designing, animation and even cinematography.



Fig 6 : Gender inequality poster

- **Digital literacy** - in today's digital era, visual literacy empowers us to navigate digital spaces effectively and participate in the creation and consumption of visual content in various digital platforms, such as social media, websites, and multimedia presentations.

- **Cultural understanding** - As Visuals reflect cultural, social and history context, it enables us to interpret and appreciate diverse visual expressions from different cultures and time periods by fostering empathy, cultural understanding, and by recognizing and challenging stereotypes.

- **Critical thinking** - Visuals can be manipulated or distorted to influence opinions, and being visually literate helps us question, deconstruct, and understand the intended meaning behind visuals provided that we critically analyze it.

- **Problem Solving** – It helps us in designing a product, creating an architectural plan, or analyzing data sets from a visual perspective thus allowing for innovative solutions.

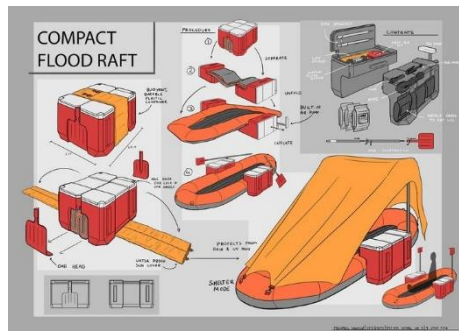


Fig 7 : Industrial design

• **Aesthetic appreciation:** It enhances our ability to appreciate the aesthetics and artistic elements like composition, color, texture, and balance of visual forms like art, photography, film and posters. Since many of us spend most of our time on social media, it would be really helpful to create aesthetic stories, posts and videos. It is especially helpful if one is a blogger or some kind of influencer
Many visual techniques are used to guide students for the interpretations of images and visual forms of literacy. Some of the most common techniques include: Angle and perspective, Body language and gaze, Color, framing, Layout and composition, Omissions, Positioning, Saliency, Symbols, Text style, Vectors.

INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE OF VISUAL LITERACY

Visual literacy is an interdisciplinary field that intersects with multiple domains and disciplines due to its broad applications and influences. In everyday life we use it for the reading of maps and x-rays, complex ideas of mathematical or chemical Formulas, architectural plans advertisement, social media, magazines, textbooks, fashion industry, graphic designs and many more. The combination of pictures plus text gives the best medium for the students for studying.

It broadly Includes the following-

VISUAL LITERACY – FUNCTIONS IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The books of [Kindergarten](#) students have mainly visual images which explains the very basic things of our life. They have detailed elaborative visuals which builds their imaginative, memory and recognizing skills. Texts just have a supplementary role here. Later as children climb up in the higher studies, diagrams play huge role in understanding human biology, botany, complicated organic chemistry mechanisms, cycles of natural sciences, astronomy, maps in geology, pie charts, bar graphs and charts in mathematics.

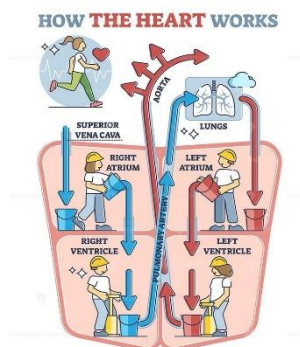


Fig 8 : Explanatory diagram of the working of Human Heart

We are also taught to make presentations and projects where are required to firstly analysis our information and put it in visual forms for the proper communication. It is important that children are given the opportunity to experiment with graphic software. Exposure to graphics packages such as Adobe PhotoShop or Adobe Photoshop Elements Broadens the scope for visual expression, allows discovery and is an ideal means for exploring Individual visual thought processes.

Creating more presentations making more labelled diagram, drawing a concept map helps specially needed children to understand concepts.

LEARNING TO DECODE PHOTOGRAPHS TODAY!

Visual Literacy in [photography](#) is all about decoding meanings from images.

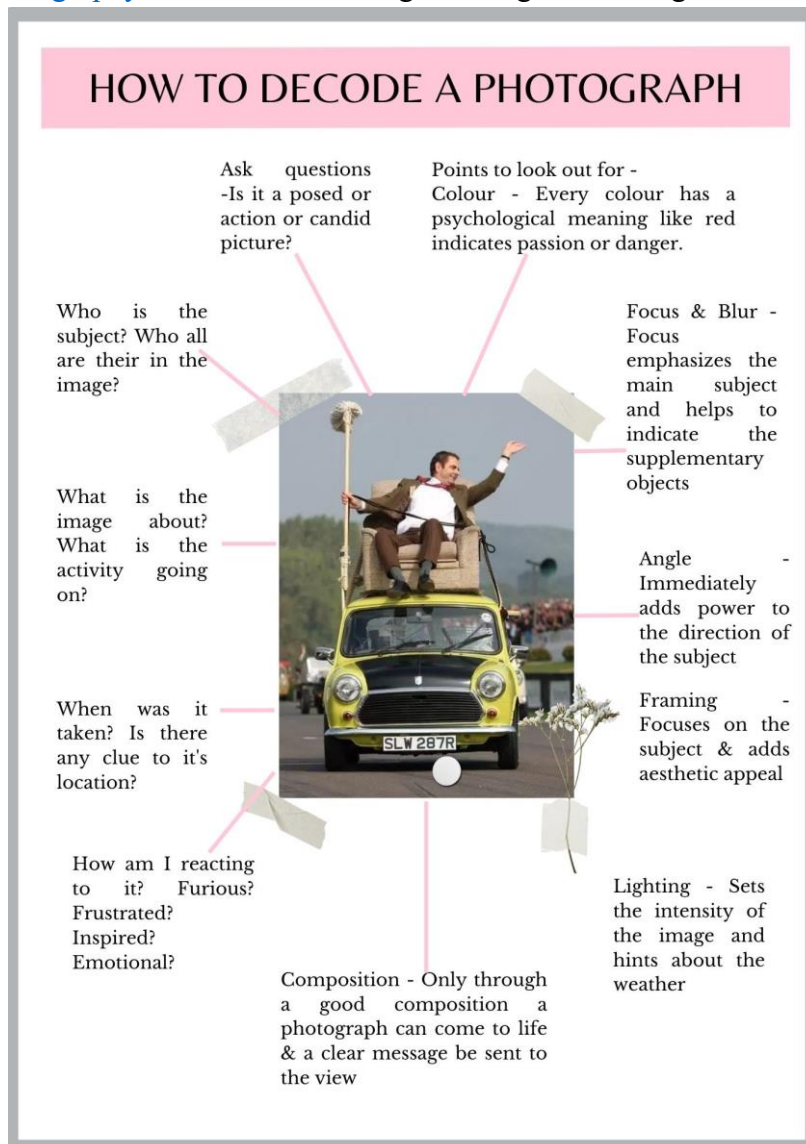


Figure 9 : How to decode a photograph

• SEMIOTICS – THE LANGUAGE OF SIGNS & SYMBOLS

[Semiotics](#) is the study and Interpretation of signs and symbols. Semiotics can include signs, logos, gestures and other linguistic and nonlinguistic communication methods. As a word, semiotics derives from the Greek *sēmeiōtikós*, which describes the action of interpreting signs. The field of semiotics focuses on

understanding how people create and interpret the meaning of signs and symbols, including how people visually communicate through metaphor, analogy, allegory, metonymy, symbolism and other means of expression.


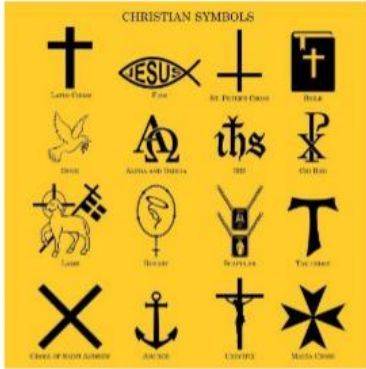
SIGNS	SYMBOLS
<p>Signs often have a universal meaning which is accepted by people from various backgrounds. Eg. Traffic signs</p>	<p>Symbol is a visual where it's meaning is interpreted differently by different people from different backgrounds. Symbols may target only certain group of people. Eg. Christian symbols</p>
	

Table 1 : Difference between Signs & Signal

• VISUAL LITERACY FOR THE ART HISTORIANS & ART CRITIQUES

In the field of Art [History & criticism](#), visual literacy involves analyzing and interpreting the elements and principles of art, understanding the cultural and historical contexts in which artworks were created, and recognizing the intentions and messages conveyed by artists.

Use in Art history – Here visual literacy allows scholars to study, analyse and interpret artworks from different periods and cultures. They are able to analyze the elements of art principles in the artworks such as line, color, shape, texture, and composition, and understand how these elements contribute to the overall visual experience. The Art Historians are able to trace artistic influences, and perceive changes and developments in artistic techniques over time.

Use in Art Criticism – Art critics use their visual literacy skills to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of artworks, such as their beauty, originality, and expressiveness. They consider the fundamental elements of art as well as the emotional, intellectual, and cultural impact of the artwork. Thus through their articulated study of the artwork, they can provide insights into their meaning and significance.

WANT TO SHARPEN YOUR VISUAL LITERACY SKILLS? THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT



HOW TO PLANT THE SEEDS OF VISUAL LITERACY SKILLS IN CHILDREN WITHOUT THEM KNOWING!

For adults simple everyday things can be used to introduce visual literacy such as reading the washing instructions on the clothes labels, health of nutritional symbols on food, images on groceries and snacks packets, book Covers, billboards, advertisements, magazines and CD covers, pamphlets, movie posters, computer games, video Covers, films, comics, animations and DVDs.

But for [children](#) we need other methods like some fun classroom activities for introducing visual literacy could include:

- Looking at greeting cards and understanding the images, text types and relationship of text to Images on and the ‘feel’ created after looking at them. Also show them various greeting cards made for various occasions.



Figure 11 : Greeting cards

- By telling the children to look at packaging, description, logos and Visuals printed on the packets of their favorite goodies in the supermarket. Tell them about what is real and what is manipulated or created.



Figure 12 : Kellogg's froot loops

- Distributing comic books and storytelling through through the use of more of visuals and less of text. Children hate texts but love images so we should try and teach them visual as far as possible
- By taking them for educational visits where a lot of symbols, signs and directions are used.
- Creating visual dictionaries by choosing stereotypical images and unusual (non-stereotypical) images for each letter. Images can found in magazines, newspapers, brochures or online. Thus they will understand more about the values and components of this world.
- Taking digital photographs of the students and using Adobe Photoshop to manipulate and change their images to teach them photo editing for fun.



Figure 13 - Photograph manipulated using PhotoShop App

- By playing games in the classroom as a group where we can teach them signs, symbols and concepts like colours as a part of the game in a fun way.

CONCLUSION

visual literacy is a crucial skill that empowers individuals to understand, analyze, and communicate effectively through visual means. It enables us to make informed judgments, express creativity, and navigate the visual-rich world we live in. This is best developed through exposure to Interesting and varied images and through thoughtful and thought-provoking questioning and discussing about them Learning visual literacy skills will not only help us successfully navigate the world but will also engage us deeply with the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals and institutions who have been instrumental in the completion of this paper. Their support, gratitude and encouragement have been invaluable, and without their assistance, this endeavor, would not have been possible

First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to my principal Dr. Jagmeet Madan and Dr. Armaiti Shukla HOD of the Textiles and Fashion Designing for giving me this Opportunity and my mentor Mrs. Anju Talshyan, for their unwavering support and expert guidance throughout this project. Their valuable insights and feedback have been crucial in shaping the direction of my research.

I would also like to thank to faculty and staff of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College of Home Science who provided access to essential resources and facilities that facilitated my research and learning process. My appreciation also goes to my friends and family for their unwavering encouragement, Understanding and patience during this time. Their belief in my abilities motivated me to persevere through challenges and stay committed to the project. Once again, thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey. Your support has been a driving force behind the completion of this paper publishing.

BIOGRAPHY

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