

Task for *Reg Saunders: an Indigenous War Hero*

Reading the front cover – answers

Observe! What can I see?

Participants in the illustration:

- Which people are represented? *There are four soldiers represented.*
- What are they doing? *They are walking, looking around and carrying guns.*
- How are they arranged in relation to each other? *They are arranged single file, one behind the other.*
- Does anything distinguish one of the people from the others? *The soldier in front has brown skin.*
- To which of the represented people are your eyes drawn? *They are drawn to the soldier leading the others.*
- What human-made things can you see in the illustration? *The hats and uniforms; the carry bags; the guns.*

Symbolic elements in the illustration:

- Which of the human-made things might have a symbolic meaning? *The uniforms of the soldiers.*

A sense of movement in the illustration:

- In which direction are the people moving? *The men are moving from left to right.*
- How is this sense of movement created? *The front soldier's leg is bent to indicate that he is walking. A gradually closing vector runs from the feet and head of the front soldier to those of the soldier at the back of the group.*

Natural features:

- Where is this illustrated scene set? *This scene is set in a jungle.*
- What is a likely visual connection between the appearance of the represented people and the background to the scene? *The green of the men's uniforms connects with the green of the jungle.*

The relationship between viewers (readers) of the front cover and the represented people:

- Is the viewer/reader positioned above, below or at the same level as the represented people? *The viewer is positioned at the same level as the soldiers.*
- Is the viewer/reader positioned in front of or to the side of the represented people? *The viewer is positioned in front of and at the same level as the soldiers.*
- Is there any contact made between viewer/reader and represented people? *No, the soldiers are not looking out at the viewer.*

The relationship between the represented people:

- Is a relationship established between any of the soldiers by the 'gaze' of one of the soldiers? *Yes, the second soldier in the file is looking angrily at the first soldier and he is not holding his gun at the ready.*

Layout:

- Where are the names of the author and the illustrator located? *They are located at the bottom of the cover.*
- Where is the title located? *The title and caption are located at the top of the cover.*
- Where is the image located? *The image occupies the central space of the front page.*
- Which element has most weight? *After we look at the image our eyes are drawn upwards to the title of the book.*

Use of colour:

- Does the colour used create a natural sense of a believable place? *Yes, the colour of the jungle is natural, the way it might look in a photograph rather than in a tourist advertisement. The use of white text on a red background is very vivid and eye-catching.*

Interpret!

What textual and visual features have been used? What meanings do these have?

Participants in the image:

The people in the image are Australian soldiers. They are walking in single file and their leader is on the right of the group. The leader is distinguished from the rest of the soldiers by his brown skin colour. My eyes are drawn to this soldier by the vector that runs from the soldier in the rear to the leader on the right. The human-made things in the image are the soldiers' hats, uniforms, carry bags and their guns.

Symbolic elements in the illustration:

The uniforms are symbolic. They are not just clothes that the soldiers are wearing. They symbolise that the men belong to a significant organisation called the Australian Army. They also carry the message that the men are loyal to each other and will defend each other to the death.

A sense of movement in the illustration:

Vectors are lines which direct our attention to certain elements of the image. The lines formed by the first soldier's forearm and gun directs our gaze forward and the arrow-head line formed by this soldier's upper and lower leg suggest that he is walking.

Natural features:

The jungle setting suggests that the soldiers are patrolling in a tropical country, perhaps in South-East Asia or in Papua-New Guinea.

The relationship between viewers (readers) of the front cover and the represented people:

The soldiers are represented for viewers to observe but there is no real contact between them and the viewer.

The relationship between the represented people:

The angry gaze of the second soldier in the line suggests that he is not happy about taking orders from his leader.

Use of colour:

The colour of the background is natural like a real jungle looks. This makes the scene seem realistic.

Layout:

The cover is designed to lead viewers' eyes upwards to the vivid title. This is the focus of the cover, a story about Reg Saunders, an Indigenous man.

Exclusions:

Soldiers search out and kill their enemy. However, an image showing killing would have been inappropriate for the cover of a book celebrating the career of an Indigenous soldier.

Conclude!

What am I being asked to believe?

The use of vectors in the cover illustration directs my eyes to the soldier on the right who is obviously the leader of the four represented men. His brown skin, which distinguishes him from the other three, alerts me to the probability that he is the Indigenous war hero, Reg Saunders, of the title. My reading path takes me from the illustration in the centre of the cover up to the title, which is presented in white letters on a vivid red background.

I am positioned by the illustration directly in front of and at the same level as the soldiers, which carries a meaning of equality between me, the viewer, and the soldiers. However, there is no social contact between me and the soldiers; none of them is looking directly out of the scene at me.

Interestingly, the second soldier in the line is 'gazing' with an angry expression on his face at the leading soldier, which suggests that he is not happy about being led by this man.