

Task for *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings*

A metalanguage for analysing images

The constructed world of the graphic novel

- **Depicted participants:** These are people, places or things shown in an image. In a fiction book participants are called 'characters'.
- **Processes:** In a print text these are realised by verbs of 'doing', 'saying', 'thinking', 'seeing', etc. In an image 'doing' processes are represented by vectors, 'seeing' processes by the character's gaze, and 'saying' and 'thinking' processes are often shown in speech and thought balloons. Narrative processes show participants doing something, and conceptual processes introduce the characters.
- **A vector:** Two lines in the image gradually coming together to direct the viewer where to look.
- **Circumstances:** These tell viewers where, when, how and why something is happening.

The interpersonal relationship between viewer and depicted participants or between the participants in the image

- **Gaze:** The viewer looking at something in an image or one of the characters in an image looking at something else.
- **Contact/Observe:** If a character in an image looks straight out at the viewer then that is Contact; if the character looks away from the viewer that is Observe. (The viewer observes the character.)
- **Close-up/mid-shot/long-shot:** These are concepts borrowed from film language. The choice of shot determines the social distance between the viewer and the represented people in the image. Close-up: personal intimacy; Mid-shot: social contact; Long-shot: neutral public relationship.
- **Focalisation:** What is emphasised (in the foreground) in an image.
- **Proximity:** The physical relationship of characters in an illustration can carry a message about their emotional connection to each other. (e.g. close together = emotional closeness; apart = emotional distance.)
- **Power:** This can be represented on a vertical axis by whether the viewer is looking up at a character, on the same eye level or down at the character.
- **Ambience:** This refers to the use of colour. Colour can be used, e.g. to create a realistic natural world or a world of heightened sensory experiences. (Advertisements for food in a magazine often use super-saturated colour to make the food look even tastier.)
- **Salience:** The amount of weight given to each element in an image.

The composition of the image

- The 'real' and the 'ideal': On a vertical axis the bottom part of a panel represents the 'real', the 'here and now' while the top part of the panel contains the 'ideal', what is considered of most value by a social group. Often in a magazine advertisement the words describing a product (e.g. a brand of coffee) are at the bottom of the page and an image showing the product (e.g. lovers drinking a cup of coffee in a beautiful lounge room) is in the upper half of the page.
- On a horizontal axis the left-hand part of an image can show the 'Known' while the right-hand shows the 'New'.
- Words and images can occupy separate parts of a panel (the words and images are complementary) or the two elements can be integrated so that a reader/viewer must pay attention to both in order to make sense of the story. In a complementary arrangement of words and images the viewer must decide which is more important in that particular panel.
- In an integrated image what a character says (the verbiage) is contained within speech 'bubbles'.
- Sometimes images can reach out to the edge of each page but otherwise they are bound within margins. Bound images keep the world of the viewer and the world of the story separate.
- The colour of the margins can carry interpersonal meaning. (Ambience)
- Each image in a panel contains a pulse of information.
- The weighting and placement of different visual elements are used to manage the viewer's attention.