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Understanding the Standard

Achievement Standard 1.2 - Studied Visual or Oral Texts AS90850

Title: Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), using supporting evidence.

Assessment: External

Credits: 4

Subfield: English

Domain: English Written Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Achievement with Merit</th>
<th>Achievement with Excellence</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), using supporting evidence.</td>
<td>● Show convincing understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), using supporting evidence.</td>
<td>● Show perceptive understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), using supporting evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To pass this Standard you will have carefully studied a variety of visual or oral texts (close reading, viewing and listening).

In preparing for the external examination you will select, view and critically examine, with your teacher’s help, a variety of texts chosen from the following selection: film, television programme, drama production, graphic novel, radio programme or oral presentation.

During the examination you will be required to answer ONE essay question only. You are advised to take at least an hour to finish the entire paper. You are required to describe a particular aspect of the work(s) studied, to explain its significance and discuss the use of aspects of visual or oral language.

You may choose to answer on a combination of the above text forms (inter-textual studies). If you chose to write on more than one text your answer will need to be well balanced in order to obtain the full range of grades. Being well prepared will enable you to choose a question to answer in the examination that best fits the work(s) you have studied.

Skills Required for Success in this Achievement Standard

- Close listening / reading / viewing: involves identifying and considering significant aspects of the visual or oral text(s). These aspects can include, the purpose of the writer / director / creative person in writing, directing or performing the text, who is the audience, what ideas are used (e.g. character, theme, setting), what visual / oral text features are used (e.g. lighting, sound, layout), what structures are used (e.g. drama, comedy, television hour, feature length film) and text genre conventions (e.g. use of music, use of voice / body language, structure).

- Showing Understanding: involves making statements about the significant aspects listed above that explain the meanings and effects the writer / director / creative person creates by using these aspects.

- Showing Convincing Understanding: involves explaining how the significant aspects listed above work together to create the meaning the writer / director / creative person wishes to communicate.

- Showing Perceptive Understanding: involves explaining how the significant aspects listed above work together to communicate the writer / director / creative person’s meaning and place these ideas in the wider context of how they relate to society and the wider world.

- Identifying Supporting Evidence: involves using specific and relevant details from the text that support your understanding of the text.

Determining Your Grade - Levels of Thinking

The grades Achievement, Merit and Excellence represent different levels of thinking. Consider the following two questions.

Describe at least ONE character or individual who played an important role in the text(s).

Explain how and why the character(s) or individual(s) helped you understand an idea in the text(s).

These questions can be answered showing a simple understanding or a deep understanding. For questions like this the full range of grades (Achievement, Merit and Excellence) are available and your awarded grade will depend on the level of understanding you display in your answer.

The key words from the standard are ‘Show understanding’ and ‘using supporting evidence’.

The key words in the questions are ‘Describe at least ONE character or individual . . .’ and ‘Explain how and why . . .’

You need to answer both parts of the question in order to pass the external examination.
2 Training for English AS 1.2

Determining Your Grade - Levels of Thinking - continued

Achievement Level Thinking

First you need to show that you understand the meaning of the terms, character or individual. Then you need to identify the important role that the person played in your studied visual/oral text. Next you need to provide a specific example of the way in which the character or individual behaved in the visual or oral (spoken) text which helped you to understand a key idea. Finally, you need to show that you understand the term, discuss, by writing paragraphed, structured answers in which you respond to both parts of the question and provide at least one quote or relevant example to support your answer. You demonstrate that you have been reading ‘on the lines’ on the page.

Merit Level Thinking

As well as doing all of the tasks identified for Achievement Level Thinking (above) you will need to demonstrate that you have taken note of precise instructions such as, ‘Explain how and why the character(s) or individual(s) helped you understand…’ You need to select two or more relevant examples and explain these in some depth and detail. In order to be convincing your answer will need to show an understanding of the writer/director/creative person’s purpose and intended audience and you will need to support the points that you make by using relevant quotations or examples, selected from the piece of studied visual/oral text. You must demonstrate that you have been reading ‘between the lines’ on the page.

Excellence Level Thinking

As well as doing all of the tasks identified for Achievement and Merit Levels of Thinking (above) you will need to answer at some length and in depth, showing insight and perception. To demonstrate these two qualities your answer must show a thorough knowledge of the studied visual/oral text based on analysis of the specific form of the text(s) and the way the writer, director or creative person has manipulated the language of their specific genre. You will need to provide a balanced answer where you not only describe the significance of the character or individual’s role in the text, but equally develop the explanation about how the character/individual enabled you to understand a key idea and support your reasoning by discussing specific aspects of visual/oral language used in the text.

You need to engage with the text at a personal level, understanding that ‘Explain why’ questions require a comment about the writer/director or creative person’s craft. Your writing must be fluent and coherent and show that you understand the connection between the writer/director or creative person’s craft, purpose and audience. You demonstrate that you have been reading ‘beyond the lines’ in your reading, viewing and listening to the text.

Understanding Standard AS 1.2

Introduction

For this standard you need to study one or more visual or oral texts, which means one film, television programme, drama production, radio programme, graphic novel, oral performance or a combination of these forms (inter-textual studies). In the exam you will be given a choice of questions covering different aspects of the text. For example you may have a question that invites you to write about character development and the techniques used for character development. Your answer will be an essay of at least 200 words.

AS.1.2 is a standard that you can work on throughout the year both in and out of class. It definitely relates closely to a number of other standards such as AS 1.1 (Close reading of studied written texts), AS 1.3 (Close reading of unfamiliar written texts), AS 1.8 (Making connections across texts) and AS 1.11 (Close reading of visual and oral texts).

Things you need to know

This standard is all about techniques and how the creator used different techniques to affect your response to the text. There is a huge range of possible techniques; some will be important for your text, others won’t be. For AS 1.2 you need to know about a small number of the possible techniques. These techniques or features are divided into visual and oral groups. Visual language features are the ways the creator of the text has controlled what you see. Oral features are the ways the creator of the text has controlled what you hear, including speech, sound effects and music.

Visual Language Features

If your text includes film, television or online media you need to be able to discuss film shots and camera angles - strictly speaking two different features, but every frame of a film has both a kind of shot and a camera angle so they are usually described together. First you need an overview, then you can move on to record what is important in your own text.

Develop Viewing and Listening Experience

The key to achieving this standard is to view or listen to a variety of New Zealand and World visual or oral texts, not only the ones supplied to you by your classroom teacher. You need to feel comfortable with texts from all sections of the library, but especially in the film and video and graphic novel sections. In addition, you could view New Zealand TV programmes or films screened on free to air television such as Maori Television or listen to Radio New Zealand programmes, including dramas and documentaries suitable for your age bracket. You could also watch plays being performed by members of the school community or visiting school shows or attend organised school visits to professional theatre productions or view newly released New Zealand films at your local movie theatre.

You should check with your school librarian or class teacher about the appropriateness of the text you select to study for this standard.
Viewpoints

Think P.A.M.T

Considering the way texts are constructed develops excellence level thinking.

Think P.A.M.T.: Purpose, Audience, Message and Techniques.

In every piece you read, try to identify what the purpose or reason is for the writer/director to create this particular work, who the chosen audience for the text is, what key messages or themes are being delivered in the text and what techniques (language features) are being used to get those messages across to the desired audience. By studying the exact details of the writer’s choices of words, you can begin to appreciate the writer’s style and note how it effectively communicates their viewpoint.

Four Kinds of Viewpoint

The Writer/Director’s Viewpoint

You need to know about viewpoints. Here this doesn’t mean opinion or attitude. Nor does it refer to your own thoughts on the value of a text. It means the writer/director’s approach to the viewer/listener and the ideas being presented in the visual or oral text. Each different kind of viewpoint has its own advantages. Discover what they are.

First Person Viewpoint

You can find this type of viewpoint in films and television programmes, radio plays, drama productions, and oral performances, such as stand-up comedy. You can recognise this type of writing/direction because the actor or individual, who is in the spotlight, makes ‘I’ statements or sometimes talks about ‘we’ or ‘us’. The intention or purpose of the writing is to make the audience (i.e. the viewer/listener) feel that the text is personal to them. The writer wants you to see things from the central character or individual’s point of view. We are let into their thoughts and feelings. The script can also be performed as if it is an eye-witness account - which it may well be in the case of documentary film making or television news reports. In the case of first person writing the audience member (viewer/listener) has to actively decide whether or not they think the central character is telling the truth! In New Zealand there are many kinds of sports programmes on radio and television that use this type of viewpoint.

Second Person Viewpoint

You can find this type of script writing most commonly in television or radio commercials or demonstration programmes e.g. cooking shows. You can recognise this type of writing and direction because the viewer/listener who is in the spotlight is constantly referred to by the actor/individual who makes ‘you’ and ‘your’ statements. The purpose of the writing is to make the audience feel that the text is direct, that the viewer is challenged by the writer/director to respond to questions and commands to take action e.g. get fit, buy a car, take a holiday. Famous individuals who use this technique are television personality Jeremy Clarkson, who features in Top Gear, a television show about cars, and New Zealand’s Nigel Latta, a psychologist who hosts a television programme giving advice to parents raising teenagers. Fair Go, a television show which investigates consumer rights breaches, also uses this technique.

Third Person Writing/Direction

You can find this type of writing and direction most commonly in films and television programmes, radio plays, drama productions, oral performances. You can recognise this type of writing because the central character, who is in the spotlight, makes ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘they’ statements on behalf of the writer. The purpose of the writer is to make the audience feel that the script is objective and accurate. The viewpoint can be a narrated voice-over, for example, the character Ellis ‘Red’ Redding played by actor Morgan Freeman in the film The Shawshank Redemption uses this technique. The third person viewpoint gives a convincing, factual, neutral feel to the film, radio play or television drama. Using this technique, the viewer or listener is actively involved in deciding what is significant to the story and what is trivial or misleading. This is particularly true in the case of mysteries or crime dramas.

Omniscient Narration

You can find this type of writing most commonly in television serials such as the long running British programme, Coronation Street, Australia’s Home and Away or New Zealand’s Shortland Street. Another example of a television drama series that uses this method is a New Zealand children’s drama series called Kaitangata Twitch. You can recognise this type of television series because the writer/director will make statements from a ‘helicopter position’ as if they can see into an individual’s or character’s heart, mind, and house all at once to tell the viewing audience what that character or individual is thinking or doing at any moment. This type of technique is used in reality television programmes such as The Block. This scripting technique is also known as the ‘Eye of God’. If you are told by a narrator what the characters are thinking, the viewpoint is said to be omniscient. Thus even if the character is silent you can find out what they are thinking and what is motivating their behaviour. The purpose of this technique is to give the viewer or listener a feeling for the themes that the script writer wants to express and to challenge the viewer’s own perceptions and feelings.
Key Components of Visual/Oral Texts

All visual/oral texts have these things in common; regardless of whether they are real or imagined the texts will be about:

- **People** (characters or individuals)
- **Places** people live (setting)
- **Things that happen** to them (plot and conflict)

Some visual/oral texts have more depth than others. The texts with depth will be well produced and acted or written. They will contain recognisable themes and ideas that highlight what people and life are like. In order to pass the standard you need to be able to explain what the text made you personally think or feel and identify the purpose of the writing and the probable audience for the work as well. The exercises in this booklet will enable you to write your own notes for all these common aspects.

Unpacking the Treasure Chest

There are 5 major components of visual and oral texts that you need to be able to discuss (write about) in answering a question set for AS 1.2:

- **Setting** (the place where the action takes place, the time frame within which the action takes place and the social context to the action taking place including such things as race, social status, wealth, gender and age),
- **Conflict** (the main driver of action in films, television programmes, and drama productions),
- **Theme** (the key idea(s) the director and/or writer promotes e.g. that racial prejudice is bad for society),
- **Characters** (major and minor, heroes and anti-heroes or individuals as they are referred to in non-fiction texts),
- **Language features** (ways of making the text interesting and memorable e.g. use of body language, editing, lighting, acting).

The Setting - 'Beyond the Edge'

Definition of Setting

Setting is really three things: a place, a time and a social context to the story. These concepts are intertwined. Here is an example of a setting description for Leanne Pooley’s film, ‘Beyond the Edge’. The setting of the film Beyond the Edge is in Nepal in the region of Mount Everest in May and June 1953.

In terms of the social context of the film, at this time both New Zealand and Britain were recovering from many years of the Great Depression of the 1930’s and World War II (1939–1945) which caused great hardship to both countries. Leading up to the 1953 expedition led by British military man, John Hunt, there had been many unsuccessful attempts made to climb Everest with a number of resulting deaths. The expedition was costly and the risk of failure was a huge worry for John Hunt.

Compared to the British members of the expedition the New Zealanders, Edmund Hillary and George Lowe, were seen as ‘colonials’ in a lower social class, partly because they were educated in ordinary New Zealand state schools rather than in public (i.e. private) schools. Nor did the Nepalese Sherpa on the expedition have the same status as the British climbers. Hillary and Tenzing teamed up because they admired one another’s climbing skills but they were not the first choice of John Hunt to climb Everest.

The dangerous nature of the physical setting, i.e. the mountainous region surrounding Everest, is thoroughly documented in the film and the time frame covered is from the beginning of the ascent to the final moments when Hillary and Tenzing reach the summit and safely descend to meet John Hunt’s welcoming party. Flashbacks told through the use of photographs and narration, fill out other details about Edmund Hillary’s social background.
### Task 7 Setting - Locating the Story

1. Use details from a text you have studied to complete your own *Details of the Setting* table. Consider these points:
   - **Place** - Real or imagined? Rural or urban (or both)? Safe or dangerous? Big or small?
   - **Time** - Past, present or future? Peace or war? Summer or winter?
   - **Social Context** - Rich or poor? Young or old? Competing or co-operating? Good or bad?

#### Title of Text:

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

#### Type of Text:

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

(e.g. film, television programme, drama production, graphic novel, radio programme or oral presentation)

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### Task 15: Plot and Interest

1. Match one of the following 4 types of plot complication that screenwriters use to attract interest with the blurbs from a range of popular films and TV programmes. There are two films for each type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surprising</th>
<th>Mysteries</th>
<th>Conflicts</th>
<th>Suspense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- **a)** The play, *The Mousetrap*, has a classic whodunit plot – snowed in and stranded by a snowdrift at a hotel, the guests are suddenly in fear for their lives when Detective Sergeant Trotter arrives to tell them that a murderer is on the loose and may well be heading for the hotel. *(The Mousetrap by Agatha Christie)*

- **b)** *Witness* is a 1985 American thriller film directed by Peter Weir and starring Harrison Ford and Kelly McGillis. The film focuses on a detective protecting a young Amish boy who becomes a target after he witnesses a murder in Philadelphia. *(Witness was produced by Edward S. Feldman.)*

- **c)** In the long running New Zealand television series *Shortland Street*, Josh Gallagher arrived in Ferndale last May like a knight in shining armour, pulling Bella Cooper from the wreckage of the helicopter crash. Now he’s the villain, ruthlessly risking lives in the quest for glory. So how did it all go so wrong? *(Shortland Street is produced in Auckland by South Pacific Pictures.)*

- **d)** Set in Auckland, New Zealand *Sione’s Wedding*, a comedy romance film, centres around four Samoan boys : ladies’ man Michael, party boy Sefa, good boy Albert, and weird Stanley, who although they are in their mid 20s to early 30s have a reputation for behaving immaturely at special occasions such as family weddings. *(Sione’s Wedding was directed by Chris Graham and produced by South Pacific Pictures.)*

- **e)** *The Quiet Earth*, is a 1985 New Zealand science fiction post-apocalyptic film stars Bruno Lawrence, Alison Routledge and Pete Smith as three survivors of a cataclysmic disaster. *(The Quiet Earth was directed by Geoff Murphy.)*

- **f)** In a radio play called *Resistance*, people are able to control everything from their TV to their bank accounts via a surgically implanted electronic chip. But there are still freedom fighters – ‘the resistance’ – who refuse to be chipped. *(Resistance is written by Rebecca Barnes and produced by Radio NZ.)*

- **g)** A romantic comedy film with a Kiwi-Asian twist, *My Wedding and Other Secrets* is a 2011 feature film which tells the story of Emily Chu, a young New Zealand born Chinese woman, who falls in love with, and secretly marries, a European guy and consequently faces disownment from her traditional Hong Kong born parents. *(My Wedding and Other Secrets was directed by Roseanne Liang and produced by South Pacific Pictures.)*

- **h)** The 2002 feature film, *Whale Rider*, concerns Pai, the first grandchild of the whanau, she is loved by all her relatives except the one whose love she needs most - her grandfather. *(Whale Rider was directed by Niki Caro and produced by South pacific Pictures.)*
Compare and Contrast Characters

The concept of putting things side by side so that you can notice the points they have in common and how they differ from one another is known as Compare and Contrast. A writer’s purpose in making use of this common tool is to highlight specific character traits in their chosen characters. The intended audience for the film, television programme, play or radio play, is more likely to remember the work if they discover what the characters had in common and how they differed from one another.

Example:
Ian Mune, director of the 1996 New Zealand/Canadian feature film, The Whole of the Moon, (from the novel by Duncan Stuart) makes use of this technique. At the beginning of the story Kirk thinks he is in love with Tory. He is tormented by a street kid called Marty and he hates her. But little by little things change and finally Kirk falls in love with Marty as he has never loved anyone in his life.

Neither Tory nor Marty are the main character in the film, but they are really important because the main character, Kirk, loves them both. The difference in the way he loves them is one of the main ways we see he is changing and growing up fast. A clear way to show the contrast between Tory and Marty is by a Venn diagram where the facts about each girl are written in a circle. The circles partly overlap, and the things that they have in common are the points of comparison written in the overlap e.g. teenager. The things written on the outside of the overlap represent the contrasts between them e.g. healthy / leukaemia.

Task 24 Your Text - Character Venn Diagram

1 Use this technique to prepare and revise for the external examination, AS 1.2. Complete this Venn diagram to show points of comparison and contrast or points of conflict. You could contrast your central character with another central character (one who is in conflict with them) or with a minor character who has an impact on the central character’s life.

Name of your studied text: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Writer/Director: ………………………………………………………………… Text type: …………………………………………………………………

Character A: ………………………………………………. Character B: ………………………………………………………………
Visual Techniques - continued

Task 31 Your Text - Conveying Ideas

1. Choose two visual language features from the list on the left and draw lines from each of them to one or two of the effects on the right which describe how the technique conveyed an idea in your studied text.

- Gives me information about the setting (time, place, kind of people).
- Gives me feelings about the setting (pleasure, fear, anticipation etc.).
- Gives me information about the plot (past, present, future action).
- Gives me feelings about the action (tense, fast, spectacular etc.).
- Gives me information about the characters (outsides reveal insides).
- Develops my feelings about the characters (love, hate etc.).
- Shows me an idea (developed one of the writer’s themes).
- Combines with another aspect of the text to increase its impact.
- Improves the illusion that the film / play is real as I watch.

2. Record in the Essay Planner below the name of one visual feature and three detailed examples from the text you have studied (e.g. film, television programme, stage play). State how the feature is used and in the grey boxes record a clear explanation of one idea that is developed. Include in one or more responses an explanation of the impact of the technique on you as an audience and explain what the director’s purpose might be.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Technique</th>
<th>Details of example 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costume</td>
<td>The Capulets wear black costumes and the Montagues wear red costumes.</td>
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</table>

As I watched the play Romeo and Juliet I could see that the idea the director had was that she would represent the Capulets as being ‘negative’ characters by costuming them in black and the Montagues who represent the ‘good’ characters were costumed in red.
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About the Author
Susan Battye is an experienced teacher of English and Drama who has taught at secondary schools in Westland and Auckland. The creator of e-media resources for Media Studies, Drama and Dance, Susan’s many English and Drama textbooks are used widely in both New Zealand and Australian primary and secondary schools.