

Critical Reading and Viewing: Developing Students' Visual Literacy in the English Language Classroom

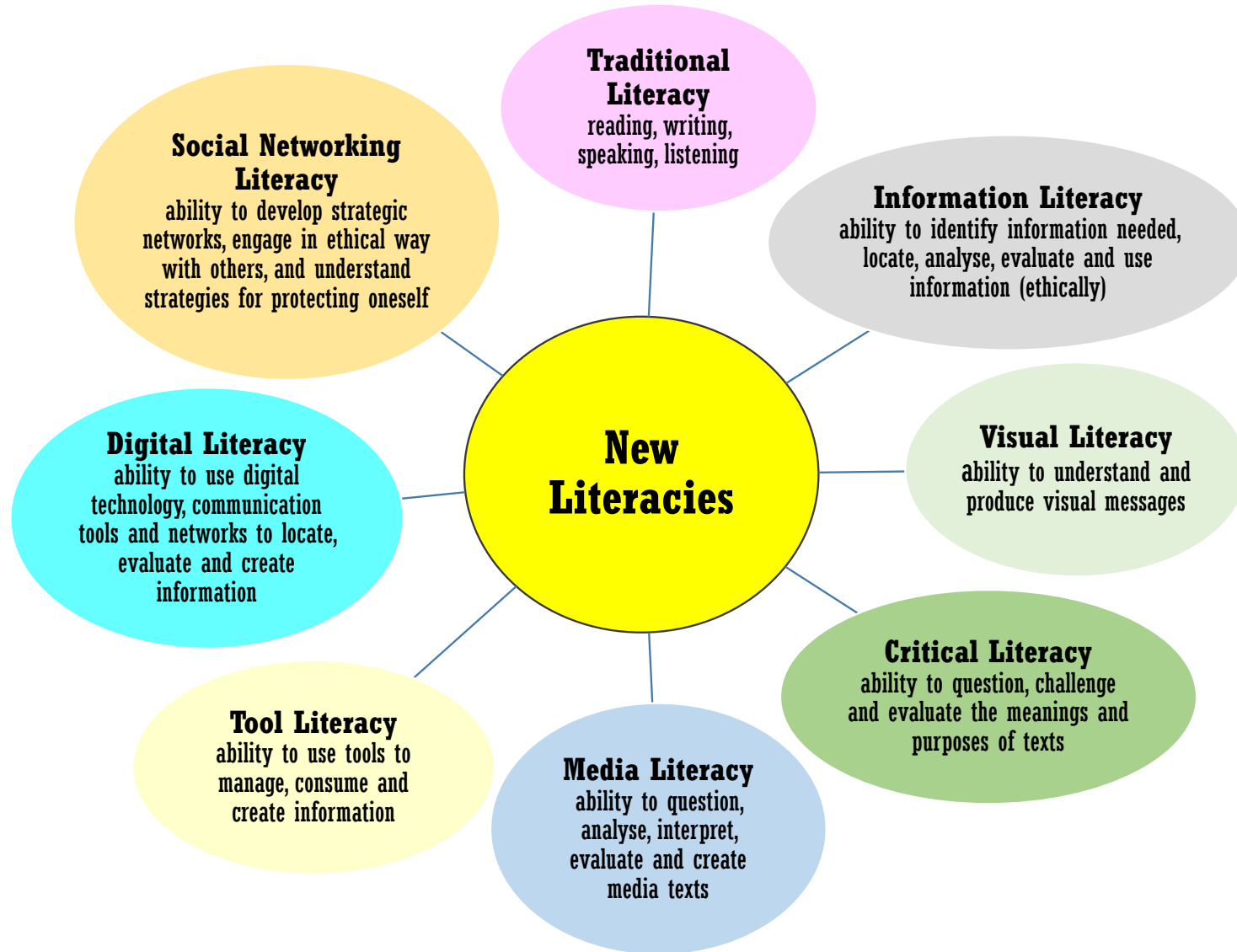
English Language Education Section
Curriculum Development Institute
Education Bureau
(July 2025)

Course ID:	CDI020250494
Course Title:	Critical Reading and Viewing: Developing Students' Visual Literacy in the English Language Classroom (Re-run)
Dates:	Start date: 18 July 2025 (Fri) End date: 29 August 2025 (Fri)
Course Structure:	There are four parts in this programme: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduction2. Analysing 2D visual texts3. Analysing audio-visual texts4. Introducing visual literacy in the secondary English Language curriculum

Assignments and CPD hours to be awarded:

Part	Task	Link	CPD hours to be awarded
2	Coursework on Analysing 2D visual texts	https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/y0Bu3Wr6GV?origin=lprLink 	1 CPD hour will be awarded upon completion and submission of the coursework before the deadline.
3	Coursework on Analysing audio-visual texts	https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/Y9Qn7WiHZM?origin=lprLink 	1 CPD hour will be awarded upon completion and submission of the coursework before the deadline.
4	Devise a lesson plan to introduce visual literacy in your English Language classroom using the template provided	(Please use the lesson plan template sent to you via email)	1 CPD hour will be awarded upon completion and submission of the lesson plan before the deadline. The lesson plan should demonstrate understanding of the course content and knowledge gained from the course.

A total of 3 CPD hours will be awarded upon submission of satisfactory work by 29 August 2025 (Fri).

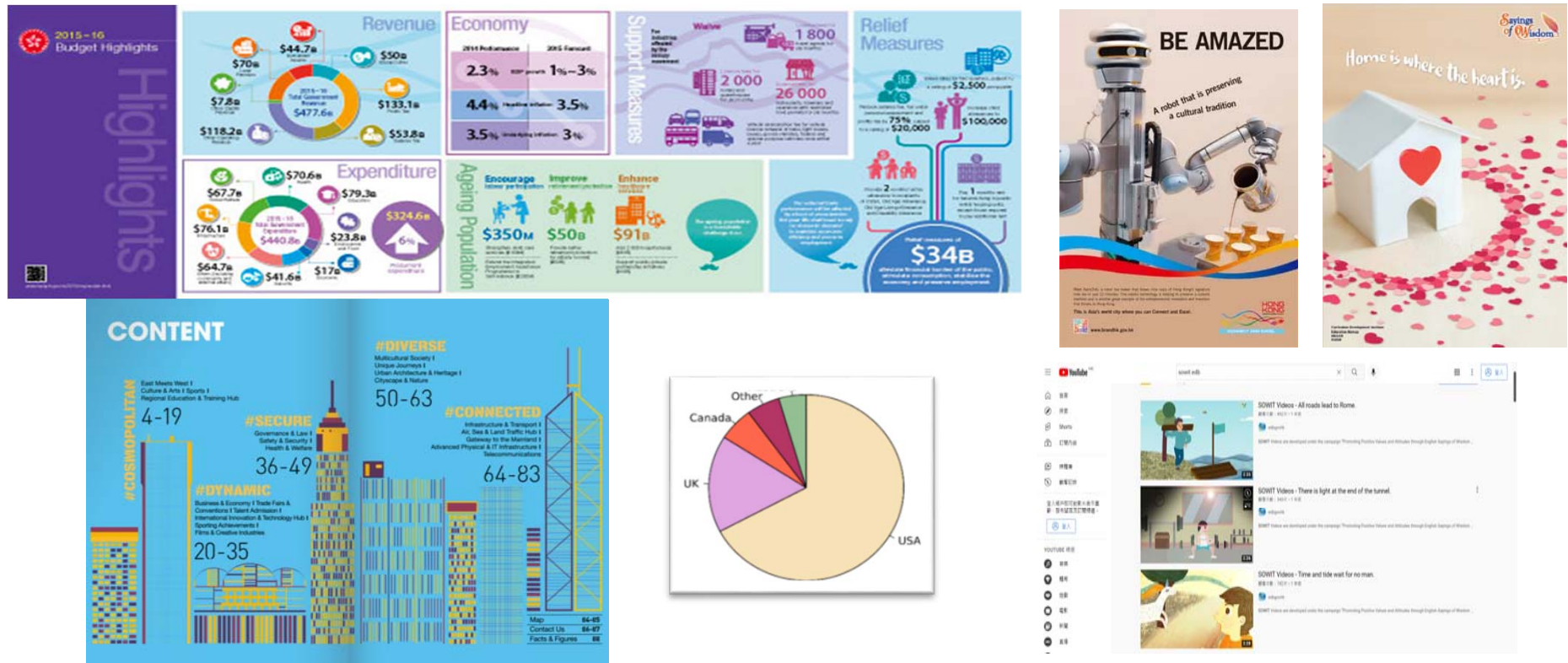


Source: Daniel Churchill "New Literacy in the Digital World: Implications for Higher Education"

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/61010522.pdf>

Visual Literacy is a Life Skill

Reading and viewing are increasingly **inseparable** with the rise of new media and abundance of multimodal texts

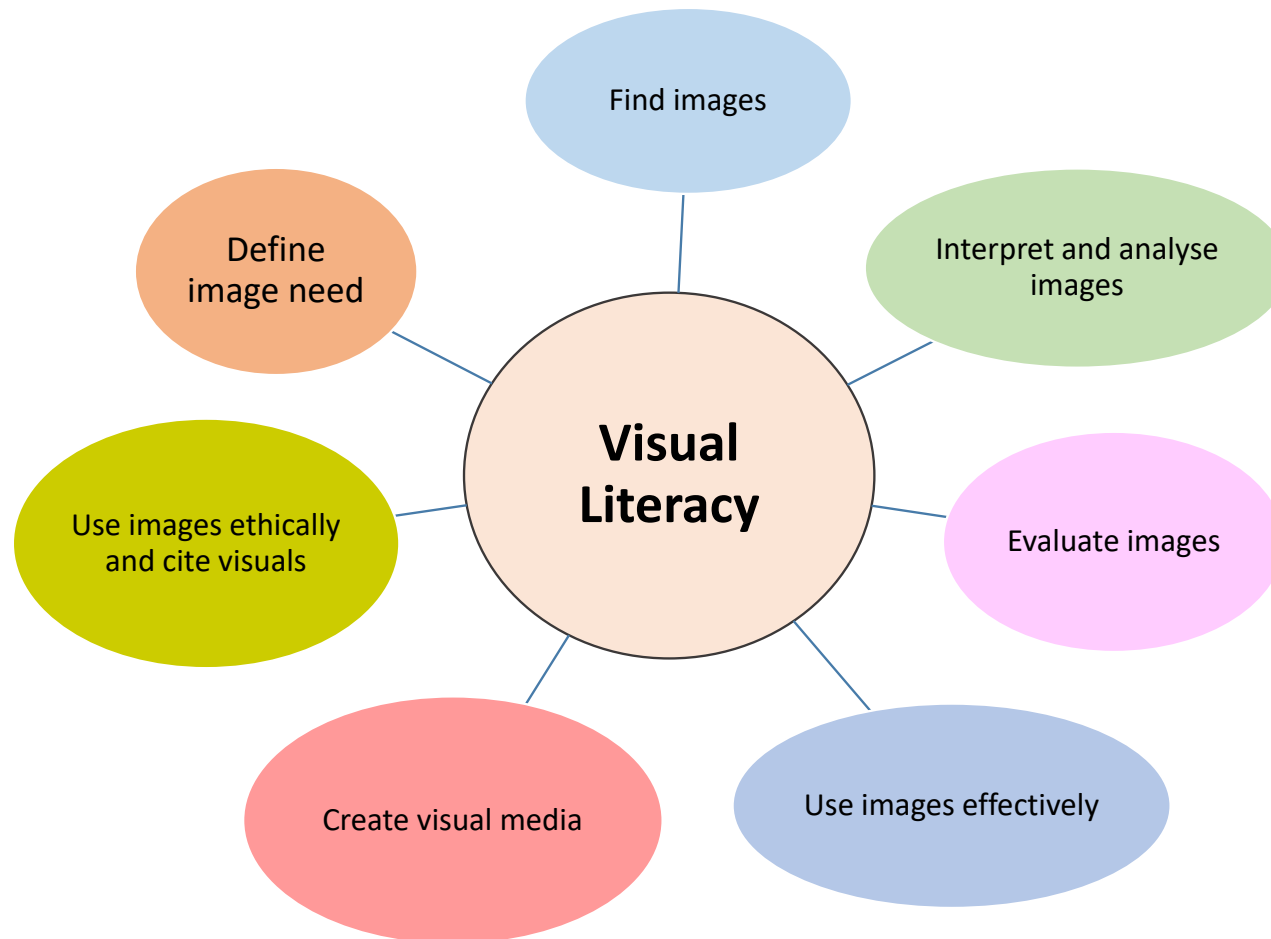


e.g. maps and signs, comics and graphic books, images and photographs, tables and graphs, infographics posters, websites, TV commercials, films, videos

The Power of Visuals

ILLUSTRATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to illustrate something
AFFECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to enhance interest and/or motivation
ATTENTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to attract and direct attention
DIDACTIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to show something difficult to convey in words
SUPPORTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to help less able learners
RETENTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to facilitate memory

What does it mean to be a visual literate?



Interpreting & Evaluating Visuals

Four components of the “rhetorical situation” :

- ❑ Sender/Author/Creator
- ❑ Receiver/Audience/Viewer
- ❑ Intention/Purpose/Goal
- ❑ Message/Content

Paradigms/Frameworks to Help Students Analyse Visual Texts

Jon Callow (2005)	Frank Serafini (2014)	Focus of the dimension
affective	perceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ viewer's feelings➤ emotional response to the text
compositional	structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ how the text is constructed and presented
critical	ideological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ hidden messages➤ embedded values➤ social-cultural impact


References:

Goldstein, B. (2016). Visual literacy in English language teaching: Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. [pdf] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Serafini, F. (2014). Reading the visual: An introduction to teaching multimodal literacy. New York: Teachers College Press.

ANALYSING 2D VISUAL TEXTS

READING AN IMAGE



(An image)

Be mindful:

- How do you “read” the image?
 - Where do your eyes land first?
 - Where do they go next?
 - Why do they move in such a way?
-
- How does the image make you feel?
 - What makes you feel this way?
 - What message is the image getting across?

APPLYING CALLOW'S THREE-DIMENSION FRAMEWORK

Dimension	Focus(es)
Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Viewers' feelings and emotional responses to the text- Personal interpretation where viewers bring their own experiences and preferences to an image
Compositional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How the text is constructed and its presentation- Concepts such as symbols, shot length, angles, gaze, colour, layout, salience, lines and vectors
Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hidden messages and embedded values of the text and its social-cultural impacts- How an image positions the viewer to think or feel a particular way

AFFECTIVE

Suggested questions:

- What catches your attention first?
- How do your eyes move across the image?
- How does the image make you feel?
- Can you relate to anyone or anything in the text in any way?
- Which part is particularly striking / weak?

COMPOSITIONAL

Suggested questions:

- What do you see? What is happening?
 - Action
 - Event
 - Setting
- What is the most salient?
- What make(s) it salient?
 - Colour
 - Shape
 - Size / volume
 - Contrast
 - Gaze / vector
 - Shot distance
 - Angle
- Any symbolic objects?
- Why?

CRITICAL

Suggested questions:

- How do the images support / stereotype certain group of people?
- Is / are there any implication(s) behind the choice of images?

SYMBOLISM

- What do you see?
- What do they symbolise?
- Does the context change your interpretation?

HKDSE PAPER 2 LISTENING

Examples:

- 2022 HKDSE Paper 3 (B2) (DATA FILE)
- 2023 HKDSE Paper 3 (B2) (DATA FILE)

HKDSE PAPER 2 WRITING TOPICS

Examples:

- 2017 HKDSE Paper 2 (Q.3)
- 2019 HKDSE Paper 2 (Q.6)
- 2022 HKDSE Paper 2 (Q.8)
- 2023 HKDSE Paper 2 (Q.4 & 5)

HOW ANALYSING 2D TEXTS RELATES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

**Paper 2 of the 2020 HKDSE
English Language Examination (Q. 8)**

Affective

Compositional

Critical

HOW ANALYSING 2D TEXTS RELATES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

**Paper 2 of the 2024 HKDSE
English Language Examination (Q. 1)**

Affective

Compositional

Critical

HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS TO ARTICULATE THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

<p>Salience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The point of salience within the image is ... • ... catches / attracts my immediate attention. • My gaze is / eyes are fixed on ... 	<p>Message / Implication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... symbolises ... • The use of ... suggests / shows / implies (that) ... • ... creates a sense that ... • ... conveys the message that ... 	<p>Vector / Eye contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pointing finger leads my eyes to shift from ... to • My eyes follow the lines of ... • The character looks directly into the viewer's eyes, establishing a connection with the viewer. • The character looks away / invites the viewer to look at what the character is looking at.
<p>Salience (reasons)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... is placed in the central foreground. • The ... contrasts in colour against ..., which makes it stand out. • The size of ... makes it the point of salience. 	<p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>When you are making a suggestion / guess, use hedging words.</i></p>	

Part 3

Analysing audio-visual texts

Examples of audio-visual texts

- Films
- TV programmes
- YouTube clips
- TV commercials



Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.



Key aspects of analysing audio-visual texts

Literary

- Characters
- Setting
- Plot
- Theme

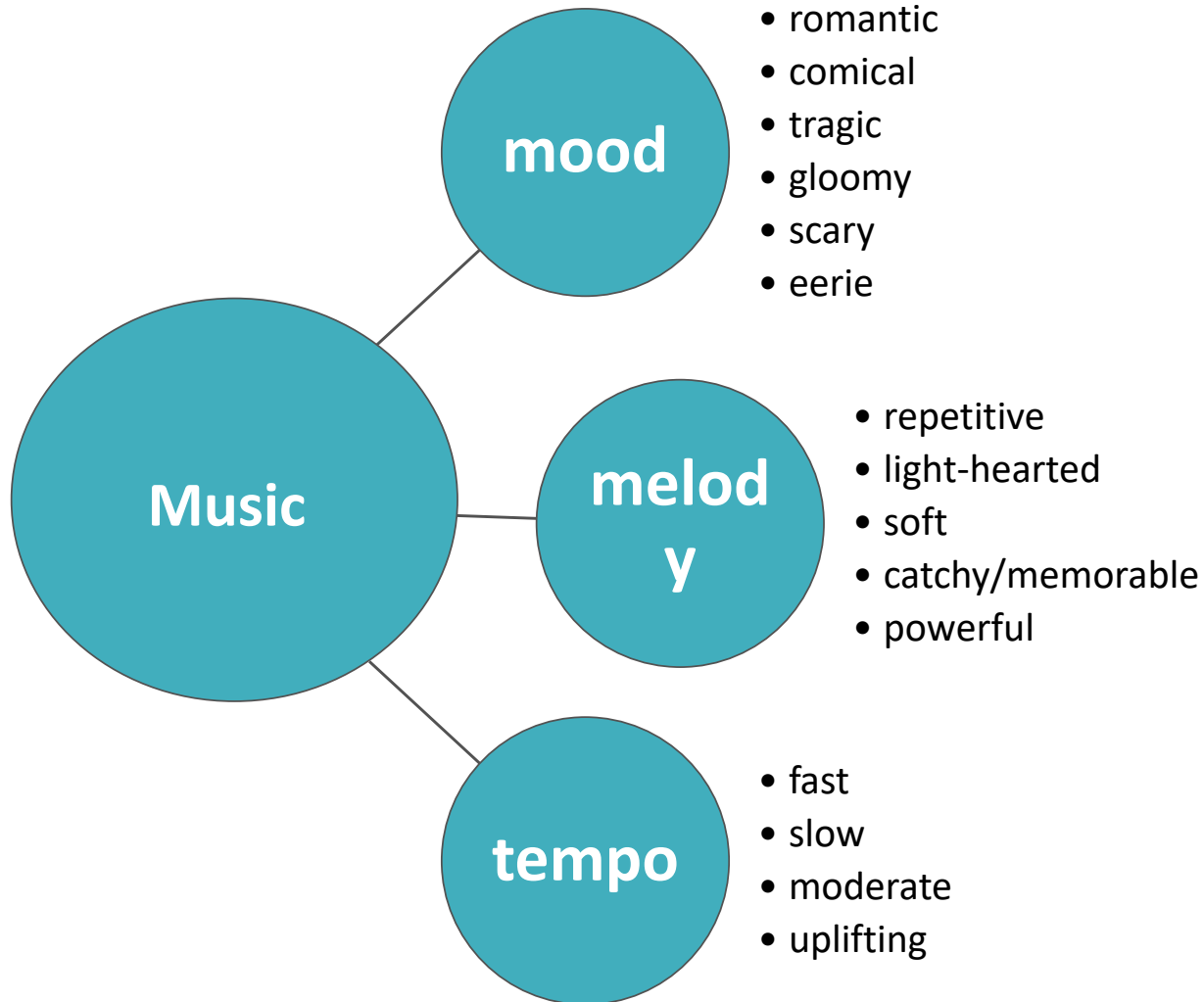
Dramatic

- Appearance
- Costumes
- Acting
 - Facial expressions
 - Body movements
 - Speeches and dialogue

Cinematic

- Use of music and sound effects
- Camera shots
- Editing

Vocabulary for describing music



Applying the Three-dimension framework (Callow, 2005)

Affective

- Viewer's feelings and emotional response to texts

Compositional

- How texts are constructed and presented

Critical

- Hidden messages
- Embedded values
- Social-cultural impact

Part 4:
Introducing Visual Literacy in
the English Language Curriculum
Planning and implementation

Possible Modes of Implementation

- 1) **Designing units / modules of work** using the **Task-based Approach**
- 2) **Incorporating multimodal / audio-visual texts** into theme-based units / modules
- 3) Addressing elements of visual literacy through **school-based / cross-curricular / lesson activities**

1. Designing Units / Modules
Using the Task-based Approach
– A School Example

Designing Units / Modules Using the Task-based Approach – A School Example

TASK 1

- Appreciating an award-winning short film to explore its message and analyse how ideas are presented

TASK 2

- Designing a storyboard

TASK 3

- Reading film synopses and commentary

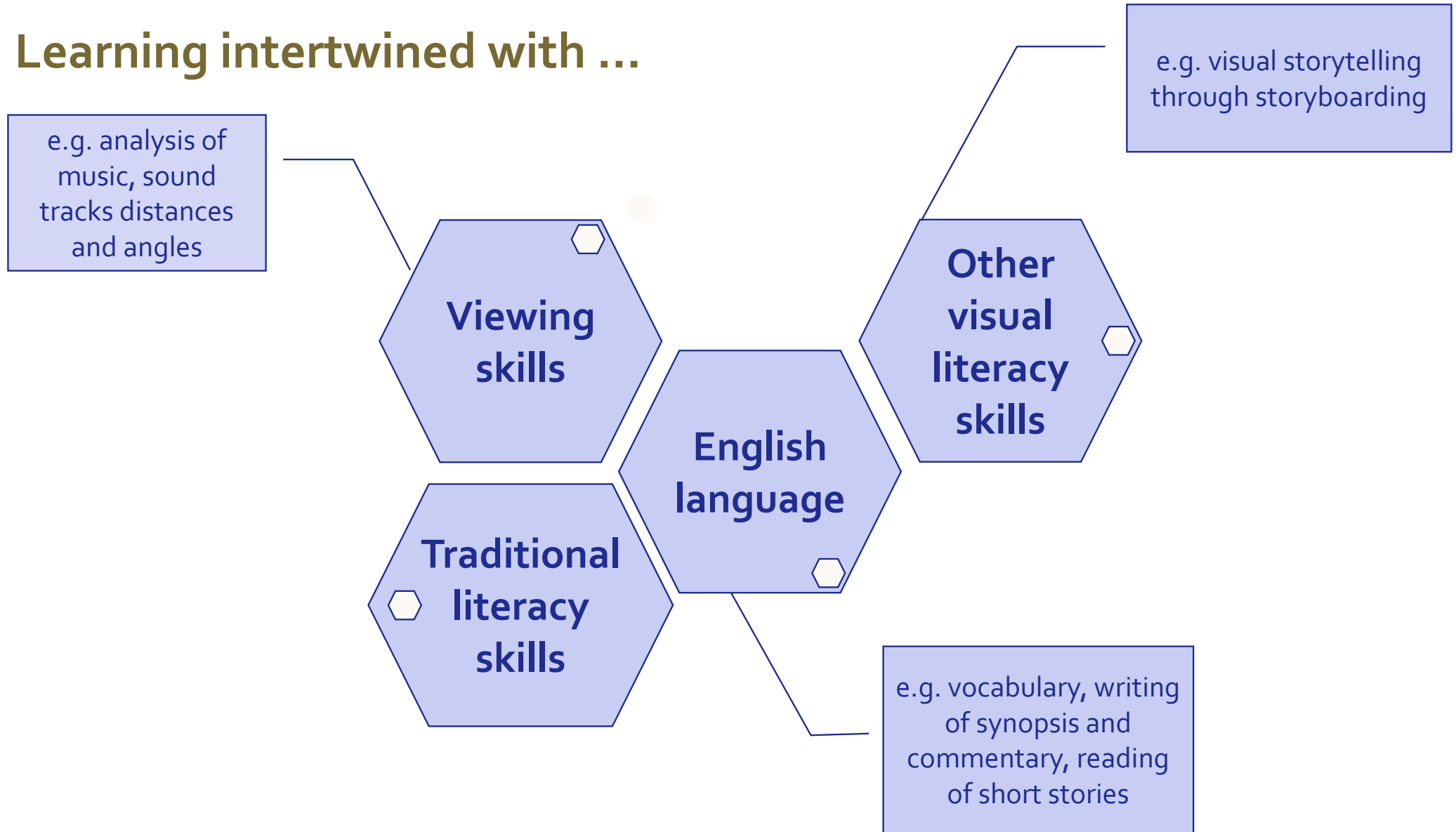
TASK 4

- Producing a 3-minute short film and uploading it onto a competition page with 100-word synopsis

Level: S3
Module: Leisure & Entertainment
Unit: Film Festival

- Students view and comment on the films submitted by other entrants and vote for the Audience Award.

Learning intertwined with ...



2. Incorporating multimodal / audio-visual Texts into Theme-based Units / Modules

Incorporating Multimodal / Audio-visual Texts into Theme-based Units / Modules

Purposes:

- to **deepen exploration** of topics
- to facilitate the development of **literacy skills** (e.g. **listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing**) in a **holistic** and **integrative** manner
- to inspire **creative thinking** and **expression**

- Getting along with Others
 - Friendship and Dating
 - Sharing, Co-operation, Rivalry
- Study, School Life and Work
 - Study and Related Pleasure/Problems
 - Experiments and Projects
 - Occupations, Careers and Prospects
- Cultures of the World
 - Travelling and Visiting
 - Customs, Clothing and Food of Different Places
- Wonderful Things
 - Successful People and Amazing Deeds
 - Great Stories
 - Precious Things
- Nature and Environment
 - Protecting the Environment
 - Resources and Energy Conservation
 - Biodiversity
 - Animal Protection
- The Individual and Society
 - Crime
 - Human Rights (personal rights, civic rights, respect)
- Communicating
 - The Media and Publications
 - The Internet
- Technology
 - Changes Brought about by Technology
- Leisure and Entertainment
 - The World of Sports
 - "Showbiz"

Example 1:

Module: Nature and Environment

Unit: Animal Protection

Analysing posters and comics

Discussion questions:

- What **message** is expressed?
- How do choices of **colour**, **font** and **font size** help draw our attention?
- What **effects** are created by the combination of **words**, **images** and **sounds** (e.g. shock, mismatch, humour)?

Example 2:

Module: Nature and Environment

Unit: Protecting the environment

Selecting powerful images to design an e-book to present an environmental problem:

- Identify the **salient and prominent message** highlighted in each image
- Compare the **emotional appeal** of different images
- Discuss how **elements of visual communication** (e.g. colour, typography/ font, size, angle, space, contrast) are used to achieve effects

Example 3:

Module: Communicating

Unit: The Internet

Reading satirical comics/ illustrations

- Unpacking visual metaphors
- Inferring attitudes and views

3. Addressing elements
of visual literacy through
school-based / cross-
curricular / lesson activities

Lesson Activities: Picture Writing / Story-telling

Interplay of words, frames & gutter

- build **the characters**
- shows **transformation/development**

Lesson Activities: Writing (based on visual input)

1. Photos and images

2013 HKDSE English Language Writing Paper (Part A - Short Task)

- Symbolism
- Theme / message
- Camera angle and distance

2019 HKDSE English Language Writing Paper (Part B - Long Task)

Font, style of illustrations, composition	Plot → Storyboard
Posture, action, facial expressions, symbols	Characterisation → sentence/paragraph writing
Critical perspective	Message for the audience

2022 HKDSE English Language Writing Paper (Part A - Short Task)

Content:

- icons → activities, areas
- shading → geographical features
- labels
 - Names of stations: activities / attractions
 - Location & year of establishment

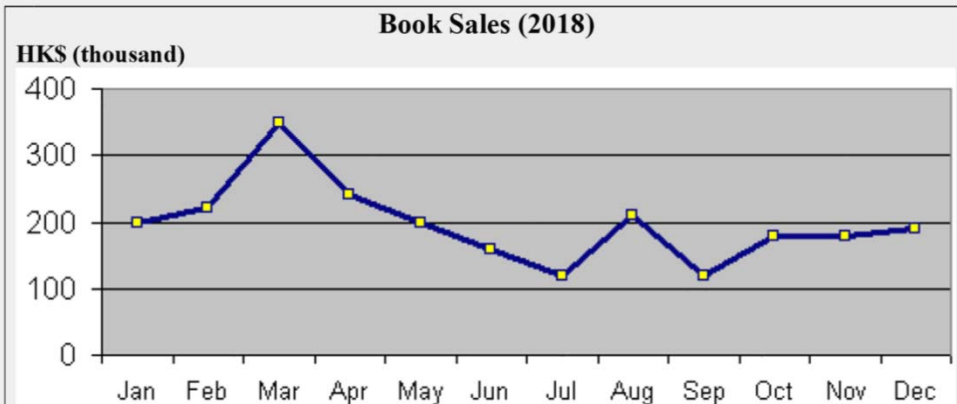
Organisation:

- the railway

Lesson Activities:

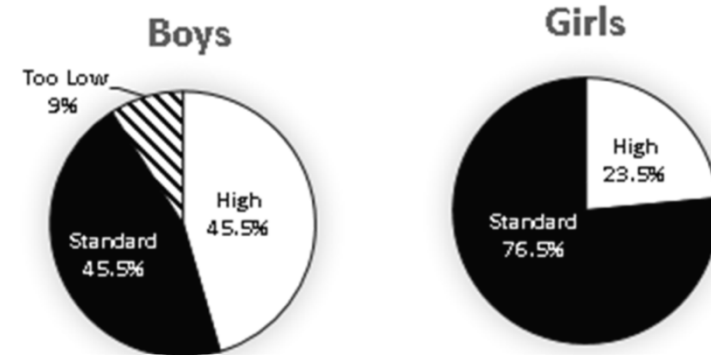
Writing (based on visual input)

2. Tables and graphs



In January, the book sales were about \$200,000. In February, they (1) **increased slightly** to \$220,000 and (2) **climbed further / rose sharply** to the peak of \$350,000 in March. Over the next four months, there was a (3) **steady decline**, reaching a low point of HK\$120,000 in July. Sales picked up in August and there was a (4) **rebound** to HK\$210,000, but this was followed by another (5) **drop / fall** to HK\$120,000 in September. Sales recovered in October and rose to HK\$180,000. Sales (6) **stabilised / remained steady** in November and December.

Body Fat Percentage Categories of 4D Boys and Girls



The two pie charts show the distribution of body fat percentage (BFP) categories of the boys and girls in S4D.

Based on the data from the pie charts, 4D girls seemed to have more satisfactory body fat percentages overall. Compared to the girls, 4D boys had a more diverse range of BFP distributions.

As shown in the pie charts, the percentage of girls within the standard BFP range was 76.5, which was significantly higher than that of the boys, with a difference of over 30%. While only 23.5% of 4D girls fell within the high BFP range, the percentage almost doubled for boys within that range. 9% of the boys were in the low BFP category, whereas no girls were found to be under the standard BFP range. (128 words)

- Reporting statistics
- Identifying trends and patterns

Lesson Activities:

Deciphering/creating visual representations of both fiction and non-fiction texts

- mind-maps / concept maps with iconography
- stories with special use of fonts, colours and shapes (calligrams)

Lesson Activities:

Deciphering/creating visual representations of sayings/quotes

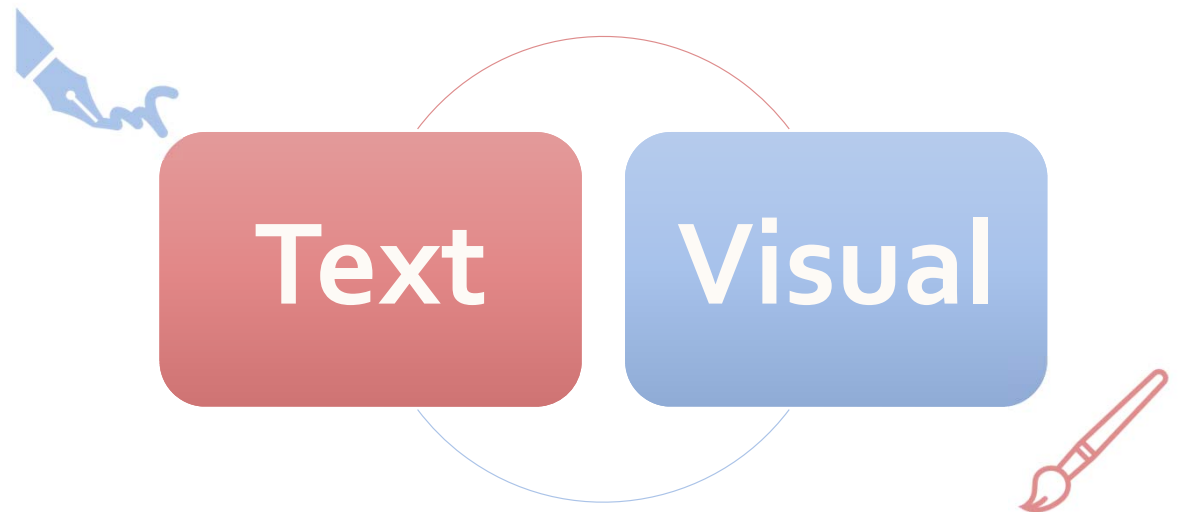
- infographic with simple illustrations and texts
- sayings / quotes with positive values

E-books

Leaflets

- Interplay of text and visual

Text Transformation Activities



Text Transformation Activities

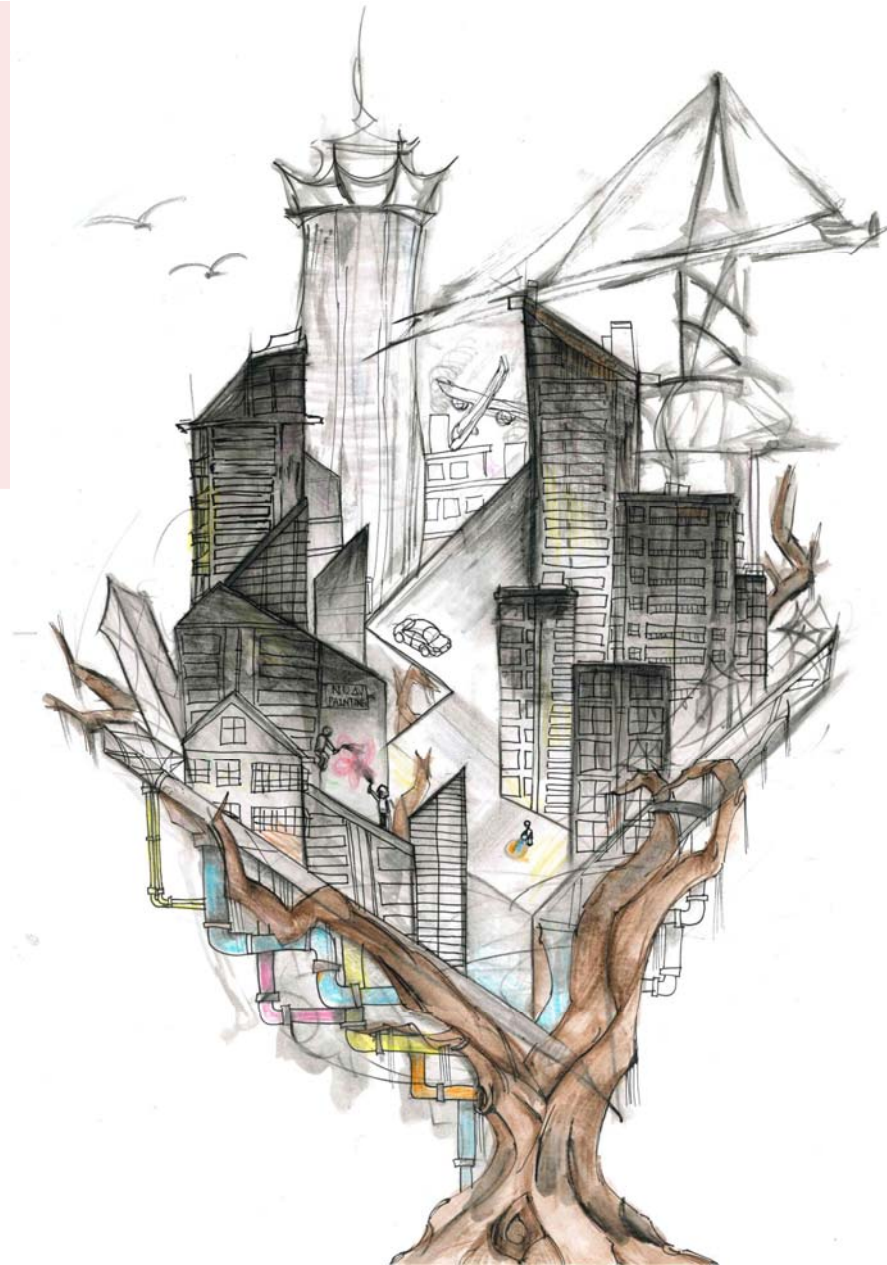
From **visual** to text – 5 second video haiku



*Glowing red lanterns
honouring great traditions
with respect and pride.*

Text Transformation Activities – Poetry Remake Competition

From text to **visual** – turn a poem into a picture (Cross-curricular – VA)



modern concrete

i try for colour
but the city's concrete does not allow me

concrete is modern as airports
bridges pavements and the river still
a river and functional

5

the cars gleam silver like fishes

i try for colour
but the city's concrete does not allow me

the new hermit
a snail of a shell is modern and not seen
like wi fi

10

he lives within a mountain
of pigeon flats
holes in an economy of a few million snails
by the bank of pale water

15

the cars gleam silver like fishes

i try for colour
but the city's concrete does not allow me

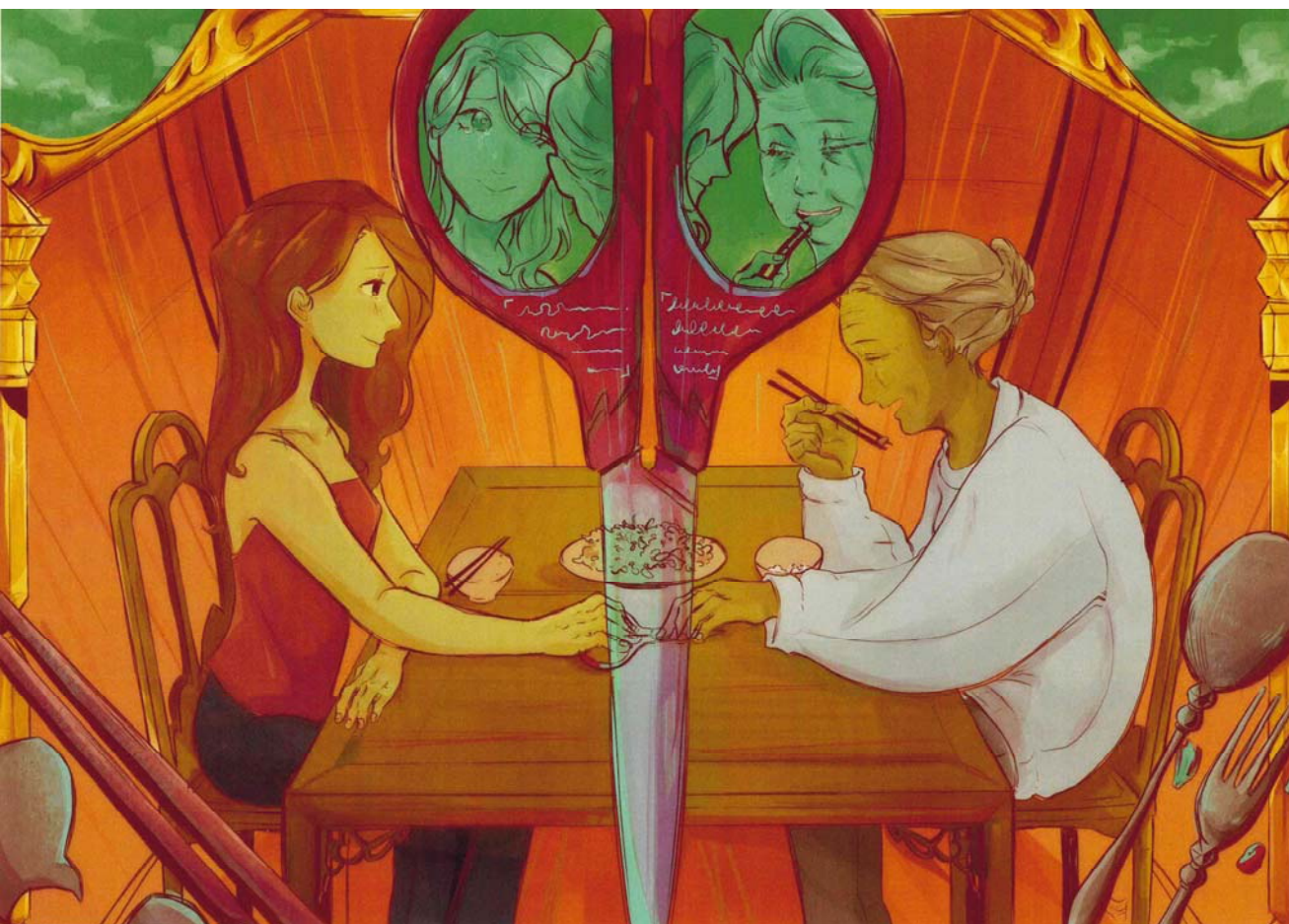
so here's the housing project in chunks
with mended words

20

the cars gleam silver like fishes

Text Transformation Activities – Poetry Remake Competition

From text to **visual** – turn a poem into a picture (Cross-curricular – VA)



Tiny scissors

Tammy Ho

Her tiny scissors, sharpened in the morning,
were dull again by the time
she acted hostess and set two mahjong tables,
side by side, in her cramped living room.

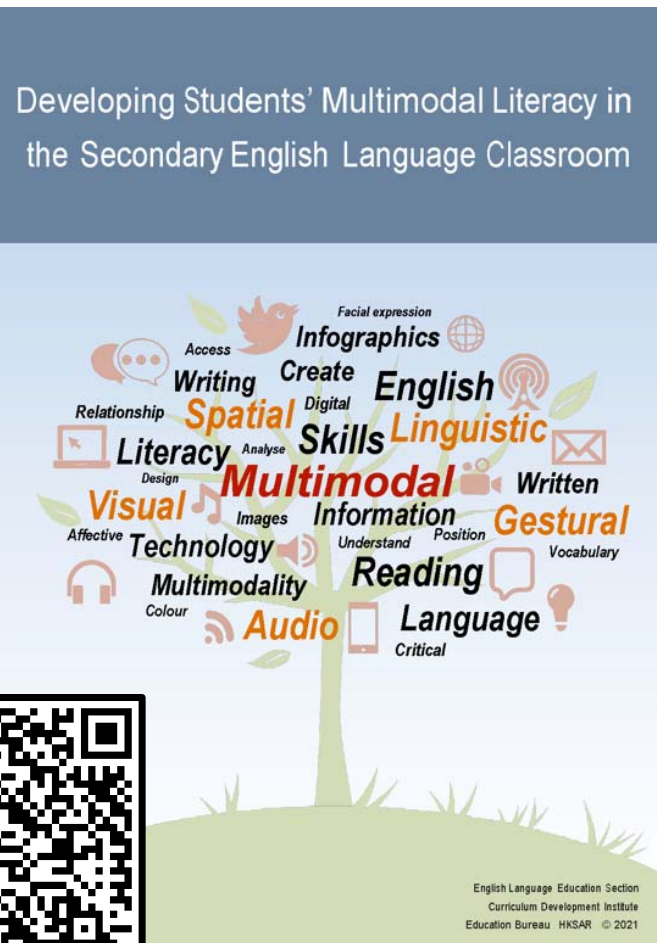
- 5 Like her mother before her, she used
the scissors to cut food into small pieces.
Toothless, gums eroded like seaside rocks,
eating was not enjoyed, only endured.

- She never learnt Cantonese, despite
10 living in Hong Kong most her life.
She held the belief that Hakka, if uttered slowly,
would be universally understood.

- Her eldest granddaughter, I was the one
for whom nothing was misunderstood.
15 In the last week, she gave me her scissors,
and reminded me that I'd too one day be toothless.

“Tiny scissors” was published in *hula hooping* by Tammy Ho, p.2. Copyrights © 2015 by Chameleon Press Hong Kong. Reprinted by permission of Chameleon Press Hong Kong and the poet.

Resources and References



English Language Education – References and Resources (Secondary Level)

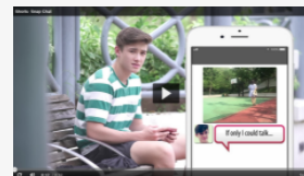
Educational Multimedia (EMM) Resources

Title



SOWIT Videos Resource Kit (Part 2)

2021 (Online)



Short Film Appreciation (II): Snap Chat

2021 (Online)

[Teacher Version](#)

[Student Version](#)

