

tive in achieving the writer's purpose and meeting the reader's needs. Then, bring your documents and notes to class. In groups of three to five students, share your findings.

5. In a small group, examine several different documents—one supplied by each group member or one or two of the document sets prepared for group exercise 4. For each document, consider what other design choices might have made the visual presentation more effective. When you've finished your analysis, share your findings with the rest of the class.

Part 2

Strategies for Understanding Visual Representations

On a street-corner billboard, a man is biting into a jelly doughnut while driving, a look of horror on his face. He's horrified because a big blob of purple jelly (captured in midair) is about to land in the middle of his white dress shirt. The only other picture on the billboard is a detergent manufacturer's logo.

Other billboards on this corner advertise such diverse commodities as fast food, cell-phone services, and the radiology department at a local hospital. Thousands of drivers pause at this intersection to wait out a red light—a captive audience for aggressive and compelling visual representations. It's a good location for the detergent ad: drivers who pass the billboard, especially those who are eating in their cars, will relate to the problem of food spills on nice clothes. Obviously, the company that sponsored the ad hopes these people will remember its brand—the one that can tackle even the worst stains on the whitest shirts—the next time they buy laundry detergent.

The specific images on these billboards change with time, but images are a constant and persistent presence in our lives. The sign atop a taxi invites us to try the new ride at a local tourist attraction. A celebrity sporting a milk moustache smiles from the side of a city bus, accompanied by the familiar question, "Got milk?" The lettering on a pickup truck urges us to call for a free landscaping estimate. On television, video, and the Web, advertising images surround us, trying to shape our opinions about everything from personal hygiene products to snack foods to political candidates.

Advertisements are not the only visual representations that affect us. Cartoons, photographs, drawings, paintings, logos, graphics, and other two-dimensional media originate from a variety of sources with a variety of purposes—and all work to evoke responses. The critical skills you develop for analyzing these still images also apply to other types of visual representations, including television commercials, films, and stage productions. We can't help but notice visual images, and whether we respond with a smile or a frown, one thing is certain: visuals help to structure our views of reality.

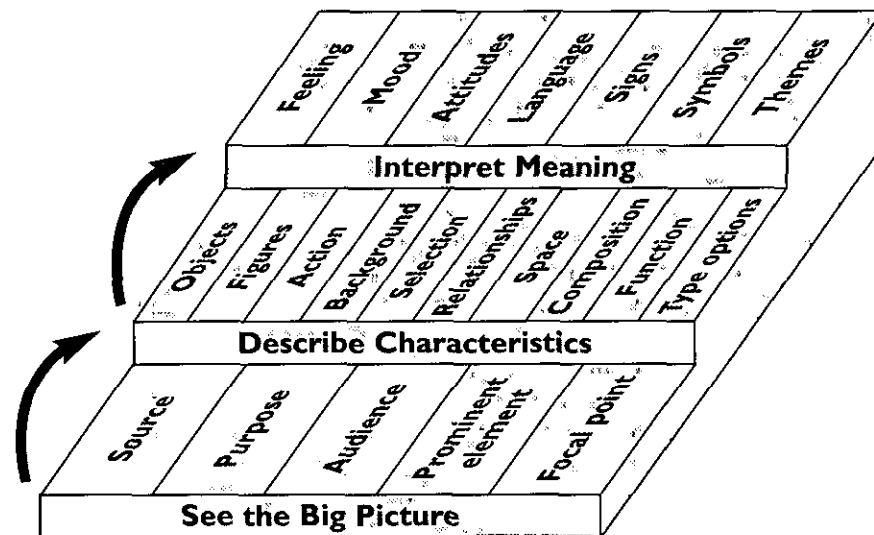
Using Strategies for Visual Analysis

Begin a visual analysis by conducting a *close reading* of the image. Like a literal and critical reading of a written text, a close reading of an image involves careful, in-depth examination of the advertisement, photograph, cartoon, artwork, or other visual representation. Your close reading should focus on the following three levels of questions:

- What is the big picture? What is the source of the image? What is its purpose? What audience does it address? What prominent element in the image stands out? What focal point draws the eye?
- What characteristics of the image can you observe? What story does the image tell? What people or animals appear in the image? What are the major elements of the image? How are they arranged?
- How can you interpret what the image suggests? What feeling or mood does it create? What is its cultural meaning? What are the roles of any signs, symbols, or language that it includes? What is the image about?

Figure 2.1 reviews these three levels of visual analysis, and the rest of the chapter explains them in more detail. You may discover that your classmates respond differently to some images than you do. Your personal cultural background and your experiences may influence how you interpret the meaning of an image. If you plan to write about the image you analyze, take notes or use your journal to record your observations and interpretations. Be sure to include a copy of the image, if one is available, when you solicit

FIGURE 2.1 Three levels of visual analysis



peer review of your essay or submit it to your teacher. (For a checklist for analyzing images, see p. 47.)

Level One: Seeing the Big Picture

Begin your close reading of an image by discovering what you can about its source and its overall composition. If you include the image in a paper for your class, you will need to cite the source and its “author” or artist, just as you would if you were including text from a reading, an article, or a literary work.

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Identifying the purpose and intended audience for an image is sometimes complicated. For example, an image may appear in its original context or in a different situation, used seriously, humorously, or allusively. Use the following checklist to help you find out as much as you can about the purpose and audience for the image:

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE CHECKLIST	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is the context for the image? For example, if it is an advertisement, when and where did it run? If it is a photograph, painting, or other work of art, who is the artist? Where has it been published or exhibited?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is the purpose of the image?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What audience does the image aim to attract?

After considering purpose and audience, examine the overall composition of the image. The photograph in Figure 2.2 (p. 37) will serve as a guide to this process.

PROMINENT ELEMENT

Start with the overall view. Look carefully at the whole image and ask yourself, “Is there one prominent element—object, person, background, writing—in the image that immediately attracts my attention?” Examine that element in detail, and ask yourself how and why that prominent element draws you into the image.

In Figure 2.2, many people would first notice the dark-haired Caucasian girl. Her prominence in the picture can be explained in part by her position at the left side of the photograph, framed by the white porch railing. People who read from left to right and top to bottom—including most Americans and Europeans—also typically read photographs in the same way, which means that the viewer’s eye is likely to be drawn into the photograph at the upper left corner. For this reason, artists and photographers often position

the key elements of their photographs—the elements they want their viewers to see right away—somewhere in the upper left quadrant of the page. (See Figure 2.3, p. 37.)

FOCAL POINT

There is another reason the reader's eye might be drawn first to the girl on the left: notice that all of the other children are turned slightly toward her, straining to see the pages of the magazine she is holding. Not only is she positioned so as to provide a focal point for the viewer, but she is also the focal point of action within the photograph.

Now, take a look at the child on the right side of the picture. You may have noticed her first. Or, once you did notice her, you may have been surprised that she didn't attract your attention right away. After all, she provides some contrast within the photograph because she sits apart from the other girls, seems to be a little younger, and does not appear to be included in their little group. What's more, she's not wearing any clothes. Still, most people won't notice her first because of the path the eye typically travels within a photograph. Because of the left-to-right and top-to-bottom reading pattern that Americans and Europeans take for granted, most of us view photographs in a Z pattern, as depicted in Figure 2.4 (p. 37). Most viewers would notice the child on the far right last but would pause to look at her, observe that she's naked, and see that she's looking over at the other girls. Thus, the bottom right corner of an image becomes a second very important position that a skilled photographer can use to retain the viewers' attention. When you look at the "big picture" in this way, you can see the overall composition of the image, identify its prominent element, and determine its focal point.

Level Two: Observing the Characteristics of an Image

As you concentrate on the literal reading of a written text, you become aware of the information it presents, you comprehend what it means, and you are able to apply it in relation to other situations. Similarly, your close reading of an image includes observing its *denotative* or literal characteristics. At this stage, you focus on exactly what the image depicts—observing it objectively—rather than probing what it means or signifies.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Objects. Examine the condition, colors, sizes, functions, and positions of the objects included in the image. In Figure 2.2, for example, only one



FIGURE 2.2 (top)

Photograph of four children,
Kodak Picture of the Day,
October 22, 2000

FIGURE 2.3 (above left)

Photograph divided into
quarters

FIGURE 2.4 (above right)

Z pattern often used to read
images

FIGURE 2.5 (right)

Close-up detail of photograph



object is depicted in the image: a large magazine. Everything else in the image is either a figure or part of the background.

Figures. Look closely at any figures (men, women, children, animals) in the image. Consider their facial expressions, poses, hairstyles and colors, ages, sexes, ethnicity, possible education, suggested occupations, apparent relationships to each other, and so on.

Figure 2.2 shows four girls; three are about eight or nine years old, and the fourth appears to be a few years younger. Three of the girls are Caucasian, and one is African American. The dark-haired Caucasian girl is wearing a colorful bathing suit. Next to her sits a light-haired Caucasian girl, wearing shorts and a short-sleeved blue and white flowered T-shirt. The African American girl sitting beside the light-haired girl also has on a colorful print swimsuit. All three appear to be dressed appropriately for the weather. The three girls pore over the magazine held by the dark-haired Caucasian girl. Judging from their facial expressions, they are totally engrossed in the contents of the magazine, as well as a little puzzled. The girls seem to be looking at a picture; the magazine is turned sideways with the spine at the bottom.

The fourth child, the youngest in the photograph, sits slightly apart from the others. Her light hair appears damp—we might wonder if she has recently bathed or is perspiring from exertion. Because two of the other girls are attired in swimsuits, we might conclude that the youngest child's hair is damp from swimming. We can see that her skin is tanned and that she has several small bruises on her legs, probably acquired during normal play. Her right leg is crossed over her left, causing her body to turn slightly away from the other girls. Her face is turned toward them, however, and she seems to be trying to see what they are looking at. Her hands are raised, her eyes are bright, and she's smiling at whatever she is able to see of the magazine.

STORY OF THE IMAGE

Action. The action shown in an image suggests its "plot" or story, the events surrounding the moment captured in the image. In Figure 2.2, four children are seated on the steps of a house looking at a magazine on a summer day. Because no adults appear in the picture and the children look puzzled, we might assume that they are looking at something they don't understand, possibly something adults might frown on. On the other hand, they are not acting secretive, so this impression may not be accurate.

Background. The background in an image shows where and when the action takes place. In Figure 2.2, the children are seated on the wooden steps of a blue house. We might conclude that the steps are part of a back porch rather than a front porch because the porch is relatively small and the steps begin immediately: there is no deck and consequently nowhere to sit except

on the steps themselves. The top step is painted blue, and the railing is painted white to match the white metal door and window frames. In a few places the paint is chipped or worn away. But these signs of disrepair simply seem to indicate that the house is lived in and comfortable; they are not severe enough to suggest that the occupants are poor. In the windows next to the steps and on the door, we can see the reflections of trees. The children's clothes identify the season as summer.

DESIGN AND ARRANGEMENT

Selection of Elements. When you look at the design of an image, you might reflect on both the elements within the image and their organization.

- What are the major colors and shapes?
- How are they arranged?
- Does the image appear balanced? Are light and dark areas arranged symmetrically?
- Does the image appear organized or chaotic?
- Is one area of the picture darker (heavier) or brighter (lighter) than other areas?
- What does the design make you think of—does it evoke a particular emotion, historical period, or memory?

In Figure 2.2, the most prominent shape is the white porch railing that frames the children and draws the viewer's eye in toward the action. The image appears balanced, in that the white door provides the backdrop for the youngest child, while the blue siding and white porch railing seem to frame the other girls. Therefore, the image is split down the center, both by the division that separates the figures in the image and by the shapes that make up the background. The brightly colored summer clothing worn by the girls on the left side also accentuates the youngest child's monochromatic nakedness.

Relationship of Elements. Visual elements may be related to one another or to written material that appears with them. As you notice such relationships, consider what they tell you. In Figure 2.2, for instance, the three older girls are grouped together around the magazine, and the youngest child is clearly not part of their group. She is separated physically from the others by a bit of intervening space and by the vertical line formed by the doorframe, which splits the background in two. She is further set apart from them by the fact that they are clothed and she is not. Moreover, her body is turned slightly away from them. However, her gaze, like the other girls', is on the magazine that they are scrutinizing; this element of the picture connects all of the children together.

Use of Space. An image may be surrounded by a lot of “white space” — empty space without text or graphics — or it may be “busy,” filled with visual and written elements. White space is effective when it provides relief from an otherwise busy layout or when it directs the reader’s eye to key elements of the image. The image in Figure 2.2 does not include any empty space; its shapes and colors guide the viewer’s eye.

In contrast, look at the image in Figure 2.6 (p. 41). It specifically uses white space to call attention to the Volkswagen’s small size. When this advertisement was produced back in 1959, many American cars were large and heavy. The VW, a German import, provided consumers with an alternative type of vehicle, and the advertising emphasized this contrast. (For more information on white space in document design, see pp. 16–18.)

ARTISTIC CHOICES

Whether an image is a photograph, a drawing, or another form of representation, the person who composes it considers its artistic effect, its function, and its connection to related text.

Composition Decisions. Aesthetic or artistic choices may vary with the preferences of the designer and the characteristics of the medium. For example, if an image is a photograph, the photographer might use a close-up, medium, or wide-angle shot to compose it — and also determine the angle of the shot, the lighting, and the use of color.

The picture of the four children in Figure 2.2 is a medium shot and has been taken at the children’s eye level. If the photograph were a close-up, only one aspect of the image would be visible. Notice in Figure 2.5 how the meaning of the picture changes when we view the girls’ faces as a close-up. We have no way of telling where the picture was taken or what the girls are doing; moreover, by moving in closer, this view completely cuts out the youngest child. The girls’ attentiveness is still apparent, and it is clear that they are all attending to the same thing, but we can’t quite tell what this thing is.

In contrast, in the Volkswagen ad (Figure 2.6), the white space creates the effect of a long shot taken from below with a telephoto lens. We see the car as it might appear if we were looking down at it through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars. This vantage point shrinks the car so that an already small vehicle looks even smaller.

Function Decisions. When using an image to illustrate a point, either alone or in connection with text, a writer must make sure that the illustration serves the overall purpose of the document; in other words, form should follow function. For example, the 1959 Oldsmobile ad, Figure 2.7 (p. 42), shows people who seem to be having a good time; in fact, one scene is set near the shore. These illustrations suggest that those who purchase the cars will enjoy life, a notion that undoubtedly suits the advertiser’s goals.

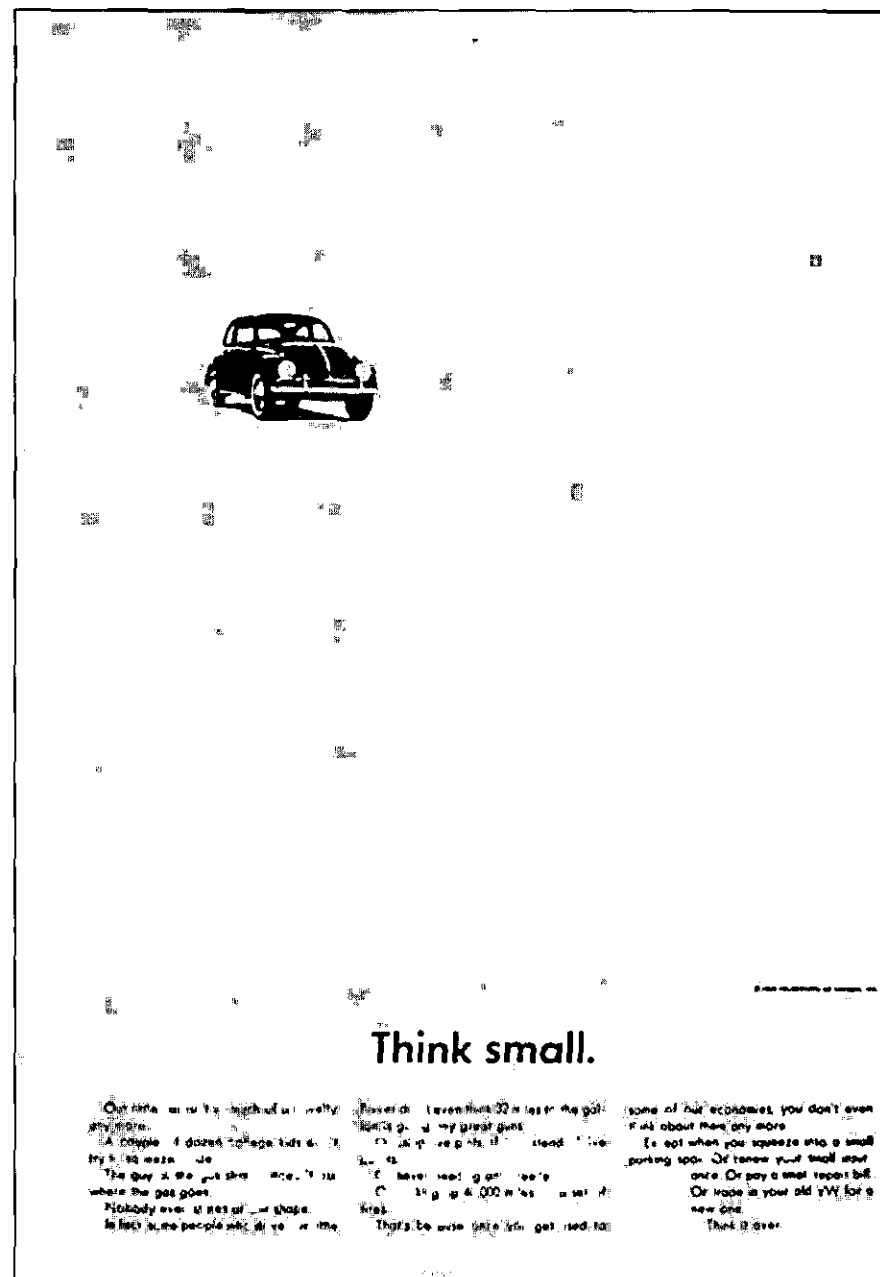


FIGURE 2.6 Volkswagen advertisement, about 1959

Writers have many choices available to them for illustrations — not only photographs and drawings but also charts, graphs, and tables. As discussed in Part 1 of this booklet (see pp. 25–30), certain types of visuals are espe-

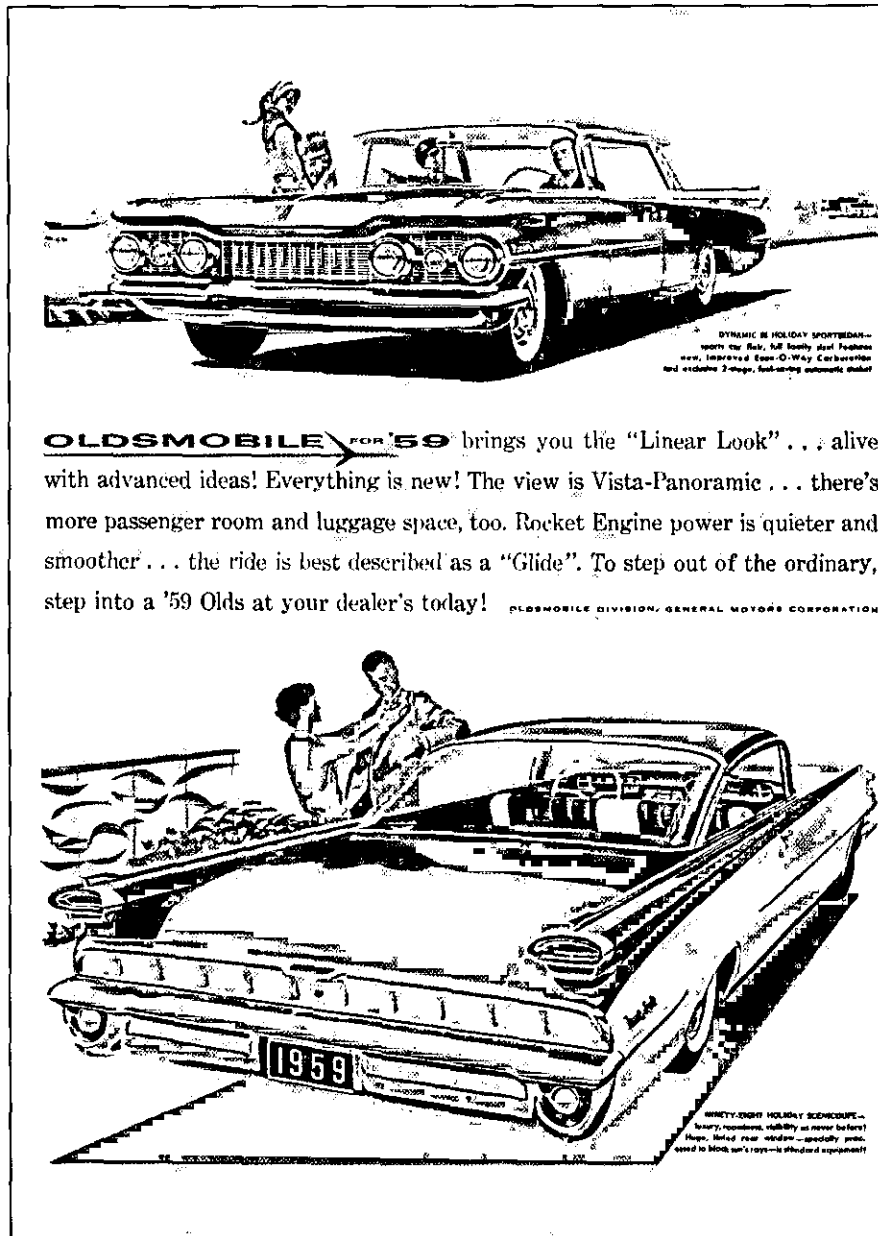


FIGURE 2.7 Oldsmobile advertisement, 1959

cially suited to certain functions. For example, a pie chart is perhaps the best way to convey parts of a whole visually. (For a sample pie chart, see Figure 1.23, p. 28.) A photograph effectively captures the drama and intensity of the moment—a child's rescue, a family's grief, or an earthquake's toll.

When you look at newspapers, magazines, and other publications, consider how the various visuals function and why the writer might have chosen to include them.

Typeface Options. Many images, especially advertisements, combine image and text, using the typeface to set a particular mood and convey a particular impression. For example, Times New Roman is a common typeface, easy to read and somewhat conservative, whereas Comic Sans MS is considered informal—almost playful—and looks like handwriting. Any printed element included in an image may be trendy or conservative, large or small, in relation to the image as a whole. Further, it may be meant to inform, evoke an emotion, or decorate the page. (For more on typefaces, see pp. 9–13.)

Look back at Figure 2.6, the 1959 Volkswagen ad. The words "Think small" are printed in a sans serif typeface—sparse and unadorned, just like the VW itself. (For a definition and example of sans serif type, see p. 10.) The ad also includes a significant amount of text across the bottom of the page. While this text is difficult to read in the reproduction in this booklet, it humorously points out the benefits of driving a small imported vehicle instead of one of the many large, roomy cars common at the time.

In contrast to the VW ad campaign, the 1959 Oldsmobile marketing strategy promoted a big vehicle, not a small one, as Figure 2.7 illustrates. Here the cars are shown in medium to close-up view to call attention to their length. Happy human figures positioned in and beside the cars emphasize their size, and the cars are painted in bright colors, unlike the VW's serviceable black. The type in the ad, like the other visual elements, reflects and promotes the Oldsmobile's size. The primary text in the center of the page is large enough to be read in the reproduction here. It introduces the brand name by opening the first sentence with the Oldsmobile '59 logo and praises the cars' expansive size, space, power, and other features. Near the bottom of each car image, however, are a few lines of "fine print" that are difficult to read in the reproduction—brief notes about other features of the car.

Other images besides advertisements use type to evoke a mood. For example, Figures 2.8 and 2.9 (p. 44) use type alone to set a mood or convey feelings and ideas. Figure 2.8 is a design student's response to an assignment that called for using letters to create an image. The student used a simple typeface and a stairlike arrangement to help viewers "experience" the word *stairway*. Figure 2.9 illustrates how certain typefaces have become associated with particular countries—even to the point of becoming clichés. In fact, designers of travel posters, travel brochures, and other such publications often draw on predictable typographical choices like these to suggest a feeling or mood—for example, boldness, tradition, adventure, history.

Just as type can establish a mood or tone, the absence of any written language in an image can also affect how we view that image. Recall Figure 2.2, the photograph of the children sitting on the porch looking at a magazine. Because we can't see the magazine's title, we are left to wonder—

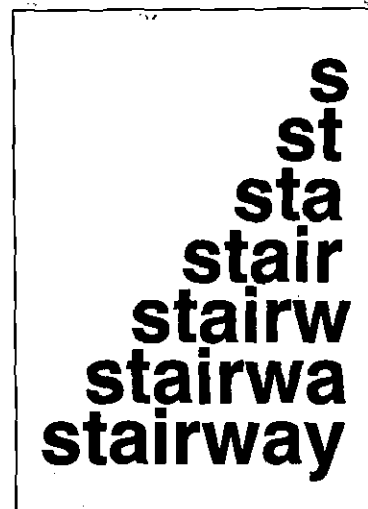


FIGURE 2.8 Artistic use of type
Source: Design for Communication:
Conceptual Graphic Design Basics

perhaps with amusement—about what has so engrossed the children. If the title of the magazine—*Sports Illustrated*, *Wired*, *People*—were revealed to us, the photograph might seem less intriguing. By leaving us to speculate about the identity of the magazine, the photographer may keep us looking longer and harder at the image.

Level Three: Interpreting the Meaning of an Image

When you read a written text on an analytical level, you engage actively with the text. You analyze its parts from different angles, synthesize the material by combining it with related information, and finally evaluate or judge its significance. When you interpret an image, you do much the same, actively questioning and examining what the image *connotes* or suggests, speculating about what it signifies.

Because interpretation is more personal than observation, this process can reveal deep-seated individual and cultural values. In fact, interpreting an image is sometimes emotional or difficult because it may require you to examine beliefs that you are unaware of holding. You may even become impatient with visual analysis, perhaps feeling that too much is being read into the image. Like learning to read critically, however, learning to interpret images is a valuable skill. When you see an image that attracts you, chances are good that you like it because it upholds strong cultural beliefs. Through close reading of images, you can examine how image makers are able to per-



FIGURE 2.9 Type as cultural cliché
Source: Publication Design

petuate such cultural values and speculate about why—perhaps analyzing an artist's political motivations or an advertiser's economic motivations. When you interpret an image, you go beyond literal observation to examine what the image suggests and what it may mean. (For a checklist for analyzing images, see p. 47.)

GENERAL FEELING OR MOOD

To begin interpreting an image, consider what feeling or mood it creates and how it does so. If you are a woman, you probably recall huddling, around age eight or nine, with a couple of "best friends" as the girls do in Figure 2.2. As a result, the interaction in this photograph may seem very familiar and may evoke fond memories. If you are a man, this photograph may call up somewhat different memories. Although eight-year-old boys also cluster in small groups, their motivations may differ from those behind little girls' huddles. Moreover, anyone who was ignored or excluded at a young age may feel a rush of sympathy for the youngest child; her separation from the older children may dredge up age-old hurt feelings.

For many viewers, the image may also suggest a mood associated with summer: sitting on the back porch after a trip to the swimming pool, spending a carefree day with friends. This "summer" mood is a particular cultural association related to the summers of childhood. By the time we reach college, summer no longer has the same feeling. Work, summer school, separations, and family responsibilities—maybe even for children like those in the picture—obliterate the freedoms of childhood summer vacations.

SOCIOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, OR CULTURAL ATTITUDES

On the surface, the Volkswagen ad in Figure 2.6 is simply an attempt to sell a car. But its message might be interpreted to mean "scale down"—lead a less consumer-oriented lifestyle. If Volkswagen had distributed this ad in the 1970s, it would have been unremarkable—faced with the first energy crisis that adversely affected American gasoline prices, many advertisers used ecological consciousness to sell cars. In 1959, however, energy conservation was not really a concern. Contrasted with other automobile ads of its time, the Volkswagen ad seems somewhat eccentric, making the novel suggestion that larger cars are excessively extravagant.

Whereas the Volkswagen ad suggests that "small" refers both to size and affordability, the Oldsmobile ad in Figure 2.7 depicts a large vehicle and implies a large price tag. By emphasizing the Vista-Panoramic view and increased luggage space and by portraying the car near a seashore, the ad leads viewers to think about going on vacation. It thus implies luxury and exclusivity—not everyone can afford this car or the activities it suggests.

Sometimes, what is missing from an image is as important as what is included. Viewers of today might readily notice the absence of people of color

in the 1959 Oldsmobile ad. An interesting study might investigate what types of magazines originally carried this ad and whether (and if so, how) Oldsmobiles were also advertised in publications aimed at Asian Americans, African Americans, or Spanish-speaking people.

LANGUAGE

Just as you would examine figures, colors, and shapes when you observe the literal characteristics of an image, so you need to examine its words, phrases, and sentences when you interpret what it suggests. Does its language provide information, generate an emotional response, or do both? Do its words repeat a sound or concept, signal a comparison (such as a "new, improved" product), carry sexual overtones, issue a challenge, or offer a definition or philosophy of life? The words in the center of the Oldsmobile ad in Figure 2.7, for instance, are calculated to associate the car with a leisurely, affluent lifestyle. On the other hand, VW's "Think small" ad in Figure 2.6 turns compactness into a goal, a quality to be desired in a car and, by extension, in life.

Frequently advertisements employ wordplay to get their messages across. Often such ads are lighthearted, but they sometimes have a more serious tone. Consider, for example, the public-service advertisement in Figure 2.10, which was created by a graphic-design student. This ad features a play on the word *tolerance*, which is scrambled on the chalkboard so that the letters in the center read *learn*. The chalkboard, a typical feature of the classroom, suggests that tolerance is a basic lesson to be learned. Also, the definition of tolerance at the bottom of the ad is much like other definitions students might look up in a dictionary. (It reads, "The capacity for, or practice of, recognizing or respecting the behavior, beliefs, opinions, practices, or rights of others, whether agreeing with them or not.")

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Signs and symbols, such as product logos, are images or words that communicate key messages. In the Oldsmobile ad in Figure 2.7, the product logo doubles as the phrase that introduces the description of the 1959 model. Sometimes a product logo alone may be enough, as in the Hershey's chocolate

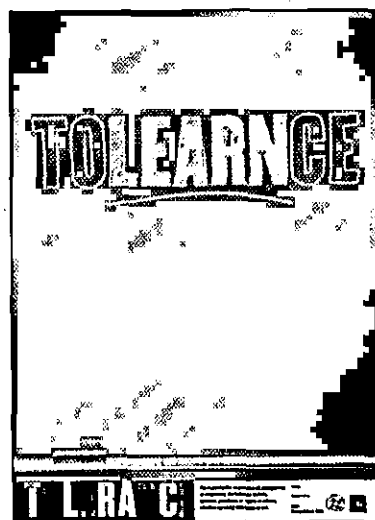


FIGURE 2.10 Public-service advertisement showing wordplay
Source: Design for Communication: Conceptual Graphic Design Basics

company's holiday ads that include little more than a single Hershey's Kiss. The shape of the Kiss serves as a logo or symbol for the company.

If you look back at the second magazine spread in Figure 1.3 (see p. 5), you'll see a prominent symbol—the U.S. flag. The flag is held by a little boy who is sitting on a man's shoulders. (Presumably, the man is the boy's father.) In this spread, the flag is associated not only with the Fourth of July, the article's subject, but also with a family's values. Even without the headings and quotations, the symbolism comes across clearly.

THEMES

The theme of an image is not the same as its plot. When you identify the plot, you identify the story that is told by the image. When you identify the theme, on the other hand, you explain what the image is about. An ad for a diamond ring may tell the story of a man surprising his wife with a ring on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, but the advertisement's theme could be sex, romance, longevity, or some other concept. Similarly, the theme of a soft-drink ad might be competition, community, compassion, or individualism. A painting of the ocean might be about cheerfulness, fear, or loneliness. Through a close reading, you can unearth clues and details to support your interpretation of the theme and convince others of its merit.

Ask the following questions as you analyze an image or as you prepare to present your analysis in an essay:

VISUAL ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

Seeing the Big Picture

- What is the source of the image? What is its purpose and audience?
- What prominent element in the image immediately attracts your attention? How and why does it draw you into the image?
- What is the focal point of the image? How do the elements of the image direct your attention to this point? What path does your eye follow as you observe the image?

Observing the Characteristics of an Image

- What objects are included in the image?
- What figures (people or animals) appear in the image?
- What action takes place in the image? What is its "plot" or story?
- What is in the background of the image? Where does the action of the image take place? What kind of place is it?
- What elements contribute to the design of the image? What colors and shapes does it include? How are they arranged or balanced? What feeling, memory, or association does the design evoke?

- How are the pictorial elements related to one another? How are they related to any written material? What do these relationships tell you as a viewer?
- How does the image use space? Does it include a lot of white space, or does it seem cluttered and busy?
- What composition decisions has the designer or artist made? What type of shot, shot angle, lighting, or color is used?
- What is the function of the image? How does its form support its function?
- What typefaces are used? What impressions do they convey?

Interpreting the Meaning of an Image

- What general feeling do you get from looking at the image? What mood does the image create? How does it create this mood?
- What sociological, political, economic, or cultural attitudes are reflected in the image?
- What language is included in the image? How does the language function?
- What signs and symbols can you identify? What role do these play in the image?
- What theme or themes can you identify in the image?

Exercises

1. Find a print ad that evokes a strong emotional response. Conduct a close reading of the ad, observing its characteristics and interpreting its meaning. Write an essay in which you explain the techniques by which the ad evokes your emotional response. Include a copy of the ad with your essay, and consult others to determine whether they have the same response to the ad.
2. Volkswagen continues to produce thought-provoking advertisements like the one shown in Figure 2.6 on page 41. Video clips of some of the company's recent television ads can be found at www.vw.com/musicpillar/ads.htm. View one or two of these advertisements, considering such features as their stories or "plots"; the choice of figures, settings, and images; the angles from which subjects are filmed; and any text messages included. Based on your analysis of the ads, decide what message you think that the company wants to communicate about its cars. In an essay, describe this message and the audience that Volkswagen seems to be aiming for, and discuss how the artistic choices in the ads might appeal to this audience.
3. Compile a design notebook. Over the course of several weeks, collect ten or twelve images that appeal to you. You may wish to choose examples of a particular genre, or your teacher may assign a genre or theme. For example, you might select advertisements, portraits, or landscape pho-

- tographs, or you might choose snack food advertisements from magazines aimed at several different audiences. On the other hand, your collection might revolve around a theme, such as friendship, competition, community, or romance. As you collect these images, "read" each one closely, and write short responses explaining your reactions to the images based on your close readings. At the end of the collection period, choose two or three images. Write an essay in which you compare or contrast them, analyzing how they illustrate the same genre, how they convey a particular theme, or how they appeal to different audiences.
4. Visit a music store, and find a CD cover whose design interests you. Make notes about design choices such as its prominent element and focal point, the use of color and imagery, and the use of typography. Based on the design, try to predict what kind of music is on the CD. If the store has CD-listening stations, try to listen to a track or two. Did the music match your expectations based on the CD design? If you were the CD designer, would you have made any different artistic choices? Write a brief essay discussing your observations, and attach a copy of the CD cover, if possible. (You might be able to print it out from the Web.) As an alternative assignment, listen to some music that's new to you, and design a CD cover for it, applying the elements described in this chapter. Describe in a brief paper the visual elements you would include in your CD cover. If you wish, include a sketch of your design for the cover, using colored pencils or markers to suggest color choices or pasting in images or type from print sources, such as magazines or newspapers.
 5. FOR GROUP WORK: Select some type of image (for example, an advertisement; a visual from a magazine or image database; a CD, DVD, or videocassette cover) and, on your own, make notes on its "literal" characteristics. (For guidance, see "Observing the Characteristics of an Image," pp. 36-44.) Then, bring your image and notes to class. In small groups of three to five students, share your images and discuss your literal readings.
 6. In a small group, pick one or two of the images that the group members analyzed for exercise 5. Ask each group member, in turn, to suggest possible interpretations of the meanings of the images. (For guidance, see "Interpreting the Meaning of an Image," pp. 44-47.) What different interpretations do group members suggest? How do you account for the differences in these interpretations? Share your findings with the rest of the class.