**English 3201 Analysis of Visuals**

**Visual/Artistic Terms**

* **Balance**: the degree to which elements of a picture are in proportion. If the elements are balanced, there is *harmony*. If they are weighted to one side, there is *tension*.
* **Blank space** (white space): unused space in an illustration. It helps to create *contrast* with shapes and colours in the illustration, helps to define a *focal point* (what the eye is drawn to), and makes the viewer question what is missing.
* **Line**: lines frame pictures, draw the eye to the focal points and create contrasts. *Curved lines* suggests softness; *angular lines* suggest hardness; *jagged lines* suggest energy.
* **Colour**: creates contrast and *emphasis* (i.e. a bright colour on a drab background), can have symbolic meaning (green = nature), and can suggest a mood (black = depressing, scary).
* **Contrast** – created by two elements of the visual that are different (black-white, large-small, etc.). Creates *emphasis*.
* **Background –** distance part of a landscape; surroundings, especially those behind something, and providing harmony and contrast
* **Pose**: a living thing’s body position can suggest a lot about its state of mind. Pay close attention to facial expression and body language.
* **Focal Point** – where the eye is drawn in a visual – contrast or an unusual image can create a focal point.
* **Foreground –** part of a scene, landscape, etc., which is near the viewer .
* **Line -** Line can be considered in two ways. The linear marks made with a pen or brush or the edge created when two shapes meet. **Line also communicates emotion and states of mind through its character and direction.**
* **Horizontal** line suggests a feeling of rest or repose
* **Vertical** lines communicate a feeling of loftiness and spirituality. Erect lines seem to extend upwards beyond human reach, toward the sky.
* **Horizontal and vertical lines in combination** communicate stability and solidity.
* **Diagonal lines** suggest a feeling of movement or direction. Thus if a feeling of movement or speed is desired, or a feeling of activity, diagonal lines can be used.
* **Curved lines** do vary in meaning, however. **Soft, shallow curves** suggest comfort, safety, familiarity, relaxation. **Deep, acute curves**, on the other hand, suggest confusion, turbulence, even frenzy, as in the violence of waves in a storm, the chaos of a tangled thread, or the turmoil of lines suggested by the forms of a crowd.
* **Juxtaposition**—the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side
* **Mood**: Be aware of the overall feeling suggested by all of these elements.
* **Symbol**: often symbols are used to convey complex ideas quickly. A skull may mean death, a heart love etc.
* **Words**: words should be analyzed for *font* (i.e. is it in a childish form of writing, or is it more sophisticated?) and also for *connotation* (extra meanings a word comes to have.)
* **Proportion -** the size relationship of parts to a whole and to one another.
* **Scale –** the size or apparent size of an object seen in relation to other objects, people, or its environment or *format*
* **Purpose**: what message is the artist trying to get across?
* **Audience**: whom is the artist aiming the message at?
* **Context** – the situation in which an image appears. This situation can affect its meaning. A McDonald’s logo conveys a different message when viewed on a food wrapper (advertising) than when it is viewed in a CBC documentary (criticism).

**How to Deconstruct a Media Advertisement**

**Deconstruct –** Part of being media literate involves being able to deconstruct media text. When you deconstruct a text, you break it down into its components to see what messages and assumptions it carries. This is the careful and close analysis of a piece of media, looking beneath the surface – the characters, plot, language, etc. – to understand its deeper meanings. Any piece of media – a magazine ad, a sitcom, a conversation, a feature film, a TV commercial, or whatever – can be analyzed in this way.

You can use the following questions to quickly deconstruct a media example:

· Who paid for the media? Why?

· Who is being targeted?

· What text, images or sounds lead you to this conclusion?

· What is the text (literal meaning) of the message?

· What is the subtext (unstated or underlying message)?

· What kind of lifestyle is presented? Is it glamorized? How?

· What values are expressed?

· What tools or techniques of persuasion are used?

· What story is not being told?

· In what ways is this a healthy and/or unhealthy media message?

**Media Deconstruction Terms**

**Advertisement** – A communication form that employs sophisticated, often subtle methods of persuasion to not only get you to part with your money or win your support, but to play on your desires, emotions, and biases to change the way you think. Propaganda is a part of this. Not all forms of advertising are bad

**Agenda –** plan, goals to be achieved through advertising

**Bias -** is a mental leaning or inclination; partiality; prejudice; bent

**Commercial –** type of advertisement

**Icon -** A person or thing regarded as a representative symbol of something: "icon of manhood".

**Image -** A representation of the external form of a person or thing in sculpture, painting, etc.

**Intent** – purpose

**Logo -** an identifying symbol used to advertise and promote an organization, event, product or service. Usually, such symbols combine pictorial and textual elements in a distinctive manner. When consisting solely of stylized textual elements, such symbols are referred to as logotypes or wordmarks.

**Mass Media - –** when media methods are used to communicate to thousands of people at the same time

**Media –** forms of public communication (such as newspaper, radio, television, information network, poster, or brochure) that are designed to reach large numbers of people.

**Medium –** singular of media

**Message -** any thought, idea, or information, whether expressed in plain or in secret language, prepared in a form suitable for transmission by any means of communication.

**Motive –** reason for doing something eg, make money, change opinion

**Poster –** form of communication that has varied purposes such as promoting events, presenting social commentary, persuading the viewer to purchase etc. The design of the poster must ensure that message is consistent with purpose.

**Product –** Item to be sold, serviced etc.

**Product Placement -** An advertising strategy in which commercial products or brands are placed within a play, film, broadcast program, video game or print medium for financial gain. **Example:** If Heinz Ketchup is being used by a character in a movie, it is most likely product placement.

**Sub-text-** hidden messages revealed through images, signs, symbols, text; works on the sub-conscience level

**Dialogue bubble/speech balloons**

**Target Audience -** consumer group most likely to buy a specific product and identified by region, age, demographics, or economic status. Effective ads are created and placed in media with the target audience clearly in mind.

**Strategies in Advertising/Media**

* **Bandwagon** – The suggestion that everyone is using or doing something: “Gatorade: Canada’s #1 bestseller”
* **Cartoon Cute Characters** – creates sensitivity, emotional appeal
* **Celebrity Endorsement** – Also referred to as testimonial. Using well known person or organization to promote a product.
* **Emotional Appeal**
* **Facts and Figures –** The implication that figures and statistics prove a point beyond dispute.
* **Gender/Sex Appeal**
* **Plain Folks -** Talking down to the viewers in order to appear just like them: “Use Tide. It makes your clothes as white as Mom used to wash them” The plain folks device is an attempt by the propagandist to convince the public that his views reflect those of the common person and that they are also working for the benefit of the common person.
* **Shock Appeal** - Shock advertising, or, “shockvertising” is a method of advertising that purposely offends and startles its viewers in an attempt to “gain attention. Containing disgusting images, sexual references, profanity and obscenity, religious taboos, vulgarity, impropriety (violations of societal “norms”), or moral offensiveness are considered to be “shocking” (Dahl, 2003).
* **Snob Appeal** – The association of a product with a desirable lifestyle: “She lives in Prince Royal. She spends her winters in the Swiss Alps. She drives a Luxuriant. Her perfume – Tusk.”
* **Testimonials -** quotations or endorsements, in or out of context, which attempt to connect a famous or respectable person with a product or item. Testimonials are very closely connected to the transfer technique, in that an attempt is made to connect an agreeable person to another item.

***Types of Questions you could be asked about advertisements:***

1. What is the purpose of the ad? What is the intent of the Advertisement?
2. What message is being conveyed in the ad?
3. What social values are evident in the ad?
4. Who is the target audience?
5. Identify the mood of the visual. Justify your response using visual elements to support.
6. Effectiveness of Visual elements
7. What Strategies are being used in Advertising/Media. How are they effective?
8. Identify a title for the visual. Justify you response using specific visual elements.