

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

GRADE 12 PAPER 1: VISUAL LITERACY – CARTOONS

RESOURCES: English Handbook and study guide and X-KIT Achieve

VISUAL LITERACY: the ability to recognise or understand ideas conveyed through visible actions or images (as pictures) – it simply means *understanding what you see*.

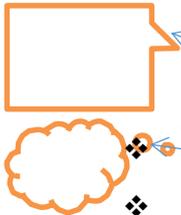
CARTOONS



- ❖ A cartoon is a humorous drawn picture;
- ❖ Cartoons can be light-hearted fun / reflect social trends / highlight serious issues;

WHEN STUDYING CARTOONS LOOK AT:

- ❖ **Body language:** provides non-verbal clues/communication about their mood and attitude; this is seen through elements such as: body pose, gestures, facial expression, and eye movements.
- ❖ **Caricature:** features or actions of a person are exaggerated e.g. Barack Obama may be drawn with big ears, long chin and big teeth.
- ❖ **Intention:** Is the cartoon meant to amuse, make a political statement, or ridicule someone (satire)?



- ❖ **Speech bubble:** Or a line between the speaker and the words to indicate who is speaking.
- ❖ **Thought bubble:** looks like clouds – indicates unspoken thoughts.

Caption: title, brief explanation or comment accompanying an illustration.



- ❖ **Comic strip:** sequences of drawings telling a humorous or adventurous story



- ❖ **Frame:** one drawing in a comic strip.
- ❖ **Movement:** indicated by means of vertical, curved and diagonal lines. Speedy action is indicated by streaky lines, or by the action going out of the frame.
- ❖ **Punctuation:** clever use is made of punctuation to create meaning.
- ❖ **Stereotypes:** An exaggerated preconceived generalisation about the typical behaviour, attitudes, dress, etc. of various types of people.
- ❖ **Verbal clues:** some parts of the drawing may be used to help the

reader establish what the cartoon is about.

- ❖ **Visual metaphor:** in a metaphor two things are compared. In a visual metaphor, a picture stands for or represents something else.
- ❖ **Irony:** When one thing is said, but something else is meant.
- ❖ **Parody:** An imitation of a piece of writing used to ridicule the original or create a satirical point.
- ❖ **Satire:** Uses humour to make a serious point. It involves using wit, irony or sarcasm to highlight human vices or follies.

WHEN ANALYSING A CARTOON, LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS:

ACTIONS:

- ❖ What is happening in the cartoon?
- ❖ How is the action portrayed?

CHARACTERS:

- ❖ What emotions are communicated through facial expressions?
- ❖ What actions and emotions are communicated through body language?
- ❖ What does the body language suggest about the relationships between characters?

LANGUAGE:

- ❖ What words have been used?
- ❖ How has punctuation been used to suggest emotion?

SETTING:

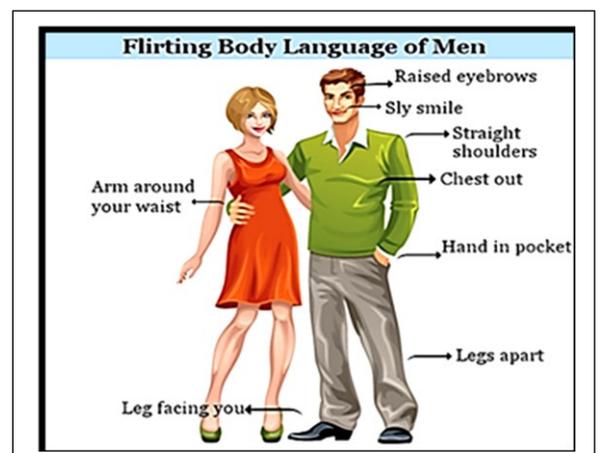
- ❖ Where and when is the cartoon set?
- ❖ What is the particular social context?

STEREOTYPES / SYMBOLS:

- ❖ Has the cartoonist made use of stereotypes – an over-generalized belief about a particular category of people e.g. all teenagers are rebels?
- ❖ Has the cartoonist used any symbols to represent something else?

When **ANALYSING** cartoons and referring to the **TECHNIQUES** used by a cartoonist, look at these five elements:

- Speech bubbles
- Thought bubbles
- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Movement lines
- Onomatopoeia



FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:

Be careful they are not the same a body language.

Facial expression examples and what they could possibly

INDICATE:

- **Raised eyebrows:** shock, enthusiasm, interest
- **Furrowed eyebrows:** skepticism, concentration, focus, frustration
- **Frown:** sadness, confusion
- **Smile:** joy, pleased, satisfaction
- **Enlarged eyes:** shock, admiration, energetic
- **Rolled eyes:** annoyance, frustration
- **Wide open mouth:** excitement, shock, enthusiasm
- **Smirk:** satisfaction, conceited, smug, self-satisfied, playful
- **Grimace:** pain, disgust, disapproval

Refer to facial expressions and what they indicate **IN CONTEXT** of the cartoon.

BODY LANGUAGE:

Remember to **point out the obvious!** It does not matter how clear an expression through body language (or facial expression) may seem.

Example of body language and what may be INDICATED:

- **Outstretched arms:** *exaggeration, emphasis*
- **Slumped posture:** *uninterested, bored, tired*
- **Head buried hands:** *overwhelmed, frustrated, tired, crying* (basically every matric right now)
- **Head placed on one hand:** (usually paired with an eye-roll)
annoyance, impatience, frustration
- **Head/body turned away:** *disinterest, ignoring someone/something*

SPEECH BUBBLES:

These are very easily identifiable they are bubbles...with spoken words. When asked to refer to diction, text, language or words in the cartoon this is where to look!

WHEN USED AS A TECHNIQUE:

A lack of speech bubbles, especially in a comic strip where people are interacting or having a conversation can be used to convey a message or a cartoon character's attitude/reaction to something or someone.

Examples:

- Indicating shock/surprise
- Emphasising anger
- Creating tension (as we wait for a spoken response)
- Confusion

THOUGHT BUBBLES:

The introverted cousin of speech bubbles.

These are usually in the shape of a *cloud* and contain words that are NOT spoken (thoughts).

WHEN USED AS A TECHNIQUE:

The **presence of thought bubbles** can indicate or show the following:

- A character is very deep in thought/concentrating hard and is thus not speaking
- Someone has a thought but does not want to say it **aloud**; they do not want others to know what they are thinking:
- This could be an exclamation, or a 'secret' comment. e.g.: A character is annoyed with their classmate but will not voice their irritation (it stays in their thought bubble) as it will lead to more, unnecessary conflict.
- It could also show the thought **process** behind what has been said, for example: the thoughts of a child before asking their parent for money.

MOVEMENT LINES:

These lines or squiggles indicate movement or a specific action.

WHEN USED AS A TECHNIQUE:

Movement lines are effective in showing the reader how the characters move and can highlight their movements and motives.

Examples:

- A powerful punch can be indicated by sharp movement lines around a hand and the person who is hit this will then show aggression, anger etc.
- A hand that is waving desperately to get someone's attention in a crowd would possibly be surrounded by lots of movement lines to show their frantic gesture.

ONOMATOPOEIA:

Words that mimic a SOUND of an object or action e.g. 'pow', 'clink', 'slurp', 'boing,' 'crash.'

They are usually outside speech bubbles and are accompanied by movement lines.

WHEN USED AS A TECHNIQUE:

- They can add to humour
- They can indicate an action without anything having to be said ('crash' indicating items falling in another room, 'pow' indicating a punch)
- Growing tensions (a character slurping their milkshake, while another character grows visibly annoyed)
- Onomatopoeia words written in large, bold fonts can indicate louder sounds, whilst smaller fonts can indicate softer sounds

These elements of a cartoon can also help when commenting on and identifying the message of a cartoon.

EXAMPLES OF CARTOONIST MESSAGES:

- Criticism of human nature
- To highlight the unfairness of something
- To make people question something
- Showing how it is ironic that...
- To criticise systems or leaders (usually with satire)

HUMOUR

HUMOUR is usually created in cartoons is usually created in cartoons
These are types of humour to look for:

1. Irony
2. Satire
3. Pun
4. Stereotype
5. Ambiguity
6. Anti-climax
7. Incongruity
8. Caricature

The cartoon strip consists of four panels. Panel 1: Calvin is hammering nails into a table, smiling. Panel 2: Mom is shouting at Calvin. Panel 3: Calvin has a blank expression. Panel 4: Mom has her hands on her head in despair.

Annotations:

- Words in bold = loud
- Jagged speech bubble, bold print and question /exclamation marks indicate shouting.
- The asterisk indicates confusion or a thought process.
- Smile = happy
- Mom is hysterical: wide open eyes and mouth.
- Blank expression emphasises confusion.
- Hands on head = despair!

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Compiled By Mrs H.H. Steyn