Decoding and Analyzing Visual Arguments

ENC 1102
Lemon Bay High School
Mr. Mark Hertz
Goals of These Lessons

• Learn to see images, publications, advertisements, and other visual media as a text.

• Understand the basic components and rhetorical structure of a publication, advertisement, or visual argument.

• Understand how to and complete your own visual argument analysis and create your own argument in response.

• Help you to compose a 1000 word visual argument essay in correct MLA format. Your argument must be thesis driven and have correctly cited examples to support your thesis.

• Participate in peer response groups to help you revise and strengthen your essay.

• Use technology and internet applications to help you conduct research, compose your essay, and properly format and cite your paper.
Lesson 1: Understanding Visual Arguments

• Please take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Please write your name, the date, and title at the top of the paper:

  “Lesson 1: Understanding and Analyzing Visual Arguments”

• Please take a moment to think about and answer the prompts on the following slide. Answer the prompts using complete sentences and specific examples. Be sure to answer each question as thoroughly as possible, as you may use the information to help you generate ideas for your own visual argument essay. After, we will share responses and take notes.
Introductory Writing Prompts:

1. Please take a moment to think about your favorite commercials, or the best advertisements you have ever seen. They need not be for a product, as they could support a certain organization. Choose two and describe them to the best of your ability. What were they selling or what was the message(s)? Lastly, were they effective and why? Please use specific examples to answer your question.

2. What organizations or causes do you feel most passionate about? If you had ultimate power and money, what organization or group would you choose to help first. Please explain why using specific examples and reasons?

3. What organizations or causes do you dislike or have strong feelings of contempt? If you had ultimate power and money, what organization or group would you choose to weaken or stop. Please explain why using specific examples and reasons?
THE ORIGINAL PLAYSTATION.

GET REAL. GET OUTSIDE.

SILENCE the VIOLENCE
What is a Visual Argument?

• Communicates a position, and offers evidence to support that position, largely through images rather than words.

• A visual argument can be a(n):
  • advertisement
  • chart, graph, or table
  • diagram
  • web page
  • picture or photograph
  • cartoon

• Visual Arguments are prevalent in our modern, informational, technologically driven society.
Thinking Critically about Visual Arguments

• Since they are so prevalent in society, it is important to approach every visual argument with a critical eye.

• When one is the subject of a class discussion or chosen topic, the primary goal is to:
  • Understand the point the creator of the visual is trying to make.
  • Understand how the message is conveyed.
  • Evaluate whether the methods used to persuade the audience are both logical and fair.

• When you approach a visual argument, look for clues to its main idea, message, intended audience, and the actual argument it is making (topic).
When Looking at a Visual: Comprehension Clues

• The Individual images that appear (types and amount)
• The relative distance (close together or far apart) between images
• The relationship between the images and background
• The dominate image and the lesser images
• The use of empty space
• The use of color and shading (e.g. contrast between light and dark)
• If people are pictured: their activities, gestures, facial expressions, positions, body language, dress, etc.
How to Conduct a Visual Analysis

• Regardless of the position you take on your visual argument you will need to conduct a visual analysis by answering the following questions:

1. Is the image(s) some kind of argument or were meant to persuade? Or are the images designed solely to present information?
2. What main idea(s) does the visual (image) communicate? Write in one complete sentence.
3. What elements, ideas, or visuals support the main idea? Be specific.
4. If the visual (image) contains words, do they help convey the message? How? Be specific and cite evidence.
5. What is the purpose of the visual argument?
6. Who is the intended audience for this visual argument?
7. Does the visual appeal to Ethos? Pathos? Logos?
8. Does the image(s) contain any logical fallacies, visual or written? Please explain with specific examples and cite evidence.
9. Do you think the visual is effective? Will it have the desired effect on its audience?
Conclusion of Lesson

• Please make sure your name and the title is clearly written at the top of your paper.
• Please underline each section heading.
• Turn your work in or show instructor for credit.

Homework:
• Consider three or four different organizations or causes' you might possibly want to investigate or learn more about. Then find several visual arguments from that organization and print or make copies of them in some way. Remember, these are images you might want to analyze for your essay. (The essay requires you to look at two)
• Bring them to class by _____________________.

Lesson Two: Looking at Stakeholders

• Please take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Please write your name, the date, and title at the top of the paper:

“Lesson 2: Looking at Stakeholders”

• Part I: A visual field trip—looking at a variety of visual arguments.
• Part II: Conducting a critical analysis—four different texts.
• Part III: Interpretation and class discussion
Part I: A Visual Field Trip

• We will look at several visual arguments. For each one, quickly write down its intended audience and its purpose.

#1

OH GOD, DON'T DIE!

I FORGOT MY CHARGER
1963
ALABAMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WHITES ONLY

2011
ALABAMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
NO LATINOS
NEW ANTI-IMMIGRANT LAWS

JIM CROW IS DEAD. LONG LIVE JIM, CROW.
ARGUMENTS AGAINST-

NUCLEAR

OIL

COAL

IT’S IN MY BACKYARD!

Joel Hellerman
GREAT Falls Press Syndicate
YOUR WORDS HAVE POWER
USE THEM WISELY.
Spare parts for humans are not as original as those for cars.

Don't Drink and Drive.
Part II: Conducting a Critical Analysis

For each of the following visual arguments, you will answer a series of questions. These questions are intended to get you thinking about the visual argument.

1. What main ideas does the visual communicate?
2. What elements, ideas, or images support the main idea? This could include words or text.
3. What is the purpose of the visual argument? What issue is it addressing?
4. Who is the intended (target) audience for the visual argument? Is this for a hostile, friendly, or neutral audience?
5. Who (or what organization) created the visual?
6. What position does the visual take on the issue? How can you tell? Do you agree with this position?
7. Is the visual effective? Will it have its desired effect on its audience?
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2. What elements, ideas, or images support the main idea? This could include words or text.

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Lesson Three: Conducting Your Own Visual Argument Analysis

• Please take out a few pieces of paper and a pen or pencil. Please write your name, the date, and title at the top of the paper:

“Lesson 3: Conducting Your Own Visual Argument Analysis”

• Please take out your 10 visual arguments and have them on your desk. We will take some time looking at your options, then you will narrow down your choice to one group or cause and two visual arguments.
Survey Your Arguments

1. Please **take some time and look at your visual arguments**. Things to consider when making a final choice:
   - Your passion for the topic. Your prior knowledge on the topic.
   - Will your chosen visual argument(s) be easy to analyze? Can you gather enough evidence from the argument to write an essay?
   - Are the arguments exciting/controversial/relevant?
   - Do both visual arguments pair well for the purposes of building an argument?

2. If you need to, **discuss your options with a partner**. Ask questions. Receive and be open to feedback and suggestions.

3. Once you have made a final decision on your organization or cause and your two visual arguments, **write a short rationale for your choice**. Include elements of the above considerations when composing your rationale.
Conducting a Critical Analysis—Argument #1

For each visual arguments, **you will answer a series of questions**. These questions are intended to get you thinking about the visual argument.

1. What main ideas does the visual communicate?
2. What elements, ideas, or images support the main idea? This could include words or text.
3. What is the purpose of the visual argument? What issue is it addressing?
4. Who is the intended (target) audience for the visual argument? Is this for a hostile, friendly, or neutral audience?
5. Who (or what organization) created the visual?
6. What position does the visual take on the issue? How can you tell? Do you agree with this position?
7. Is the visual effective? Will it have its desired effect on its audience?
Conducting a Critical Analysis—Argument #2

1. What main ideas does the visual communicate?

2. What elements, ideas, or images support the main idea? This could include words or text.

3. What is the purpose of the visual argument? What issue is it addressing?

4. Who is the intended (target) audience for the visual argument? Is this for a hostile, friendly, or neutral audience?

5. Who (or what organization) created the visual?

6. What position does the visual take on the issue? How can you tell? Do you agree with this position?

7. Is the visual effective? Will it have its desired effect on its audience?
Compose a Working Thesis

Now that you have analyzed both of your Visual Arguments, you will need to **narrow your topic and take some kind of stance**.

1. With a partner, discuss your ideas and possible angles or stances you might take on your visual argument.

2. Once you are ready do the following:
   - Clearly define your topic. Write it on your paper.
   - Write 2-3 possible thesis statements you could use for your essay.

After you have written your thesis statements, make sure all of your work is together and in a safe place. You have completed this part of the lesson.
Review: Structure of an Academic Argument Essay

• Introduction
  • Provides the reader the topic of your paper and your stance (thesis) on the issue.

• Body Paragraphs
  • Provides the reader your reasons and arguments that support your stance; provides evidence, and addresses the counterclaim and provides a rebuttal.

• Conclusion
  • Reviews your argument points and leaves the reader thinking in some way.
1. **Attention Getter / Grabber**
   - Capture the readers interest (make them want to read the essay)
   - Questions, Quote, Statistic, Anecdote

2. **Background Information**
   - Provides critical information to the reader so they understand the topic of your essay

3. **Claim / Thesis**
   - What is your main argument or main purpose in this essay. Write it in one declarative sentence.
Body Paragraph(s)

1. **Topic Sentence**
2. **Evidence**—direct quote or paraphrase from the text or other research.
3. **Explain Evidence**—Where did it come from? Explain how it relates to the topic.
4. **Commentary / Elaboration**—Thoughts and opinions on how the evidence relates to the thesis.
5. **Counterclaim**—The argument of the opposition, as it relates to your evidence.
6. **Rebuttal**—You refute the counterclaim
Conclusion Paragraph

1. **Topic Sentence**
2. **Possible Counterclaim** (optional depending on your own style)
3. **Summarize main points** (brief summary of evidence)
4. **Restate Thesis**
5. **Final thoughts or comments** that leave the reader thinking in some way.
   - (call to action, question, scenario, acknowledge the reader.)
Conclusion of the Lesson:

• Please make sure your name is clearly written at the top of your paper.
• Show your work to your instructor for credit.
• Please make sure your work is placed neatly and safely in your binder. You can put it in the “Assignments” or “Essay” section.
• You will use the content of these lessons to help you write your argument essay.
Lesson: Final Essay Self-Reflection

• Please clear your desk, and then take out your essay and have it on your desk with a separate sheet of paper. Write your name, the date, and the title on your paper:

  “Final Essay Self-Reflection”

• On the next two slides you will complete a series of tasks and then answer questions about your visual argument analysis essay. You will also be asked questions about the writing process and your writing skills in general. Please answer to the best of your ability and use complete sentences.
Part I: Looking at Your Essay

1. Please write your topic at the top of your paper. Keep it concise and use a complete sentence.

2. Please write your stance on the topic at the top of your paper. Keep it concise and use a complete sentence.


4. Please identify all of the textual evidence in your essay. Write a star in the margins next to your evidence.

5. Place brackets around all of your counterclaim statements. Then in the margins next to the counterclaims, write a “CC”.
Part II: Self-Reflection Questions

1. If you had more time to work on this essay, what would you add change or revise. Please be specific.

2. What is the strongest part of your essay? Please explain using specific examples.

3. What is the weakest part of your essay? Please explain why by using specific examples.

4. Did the textual evidence you chose to include help support your stance on the topic? Please explain why or why not using specific examples.

5. Were you able to embed your counterclaims in your body paragraphs? Please assess your overall understanding of CCs and how well you were able to incorporate them in your essay.

6. If you had to grade your own essay, what would be your score and why? Please do your best to convince me by giving specific examples of/about: Your writing process; the textual and other information you included; the overall organization of your paper (format); your grammar, spelling, and punctuation; and the overall quality of your argument.
Conclusion of this Exercise

• **Exit Question:** Did the lessons we completed in class (lessons on visual argument analysis) help prepare you to compose a better essay? Did they help you to better understand the overall writing process in general? Please explain your answers using specific examples.

• Congratulations! You have completed all of the exercises for this series of lessons on writing argumentative essays.

• Please make sure you staple the reflection questions on top of your essay. Please make sure your work ends up in the correct box.

• Thank you very much and good work!