

English III

American Literature

Teacher: Mr. Smith

contact information

e: smithd@hempsteadisd.org

w: davidglensmith.com/Hempstead

t: [@prufrocksblues](https://twitter.com/prufrocksblues)

Visual Communications

Some people go to great lengths to express their interpretation of the word “love.”



1 of 5 ▶

Message to Self

Photograph by Jodi Cobb

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0602/feature2/gallery1.html>

Visual Communications

In this image, from a 2006 February issue of *National Geographic*, aside from the obvious interpretation of the young man's devotion to the positive ramifications of the emotion, the photograph's message takes on newer insight once one begins a slight analytical approach.

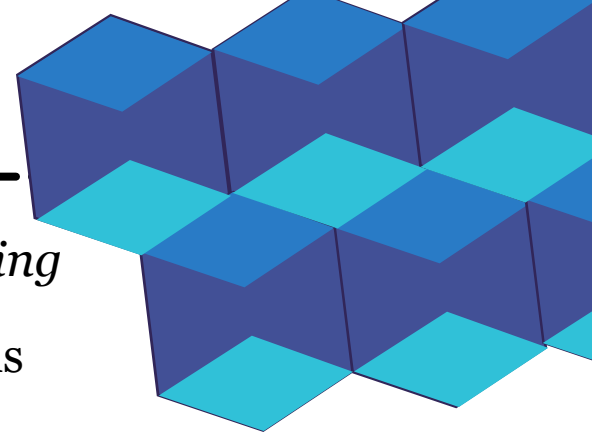
Items to Consider: (How is love like a tattoo?)

- the process of getting a tattoo is painful, yet exists as a source of pride
- love is confirmed as a painful and pleasurable process
- the size and typographical representation of the letters express the young man's enthusiasm for love
- he chose to display the lettering his upper back as a sign of carrying a burden, a weight of devotion: *love is a burden*
- the amulet dangling across his shoulders is a religious icon of the Virgin Mary: *religious love is as important as personal love*
- the descending hand shown mirrors the theme of the Sistine Chapel with the scene of God reaching out to Adam

Likewise: How does the title change your interpretation of the photo?

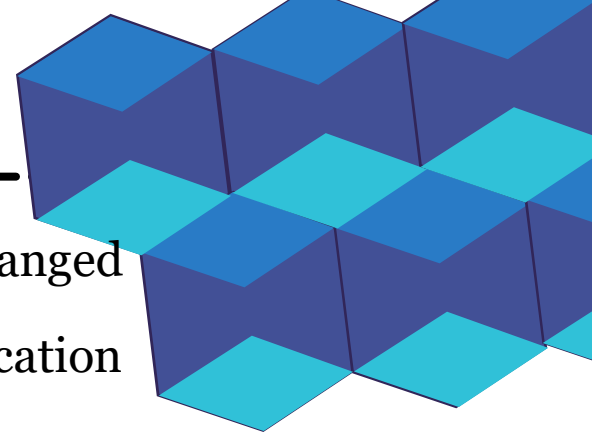
Visual Communications

By closely examining the photo, the viewer begins *redefining* the image to suit the word 'love,' and likewise, the viewer begins examining his/her own personal definition of the word.



Visual Communications

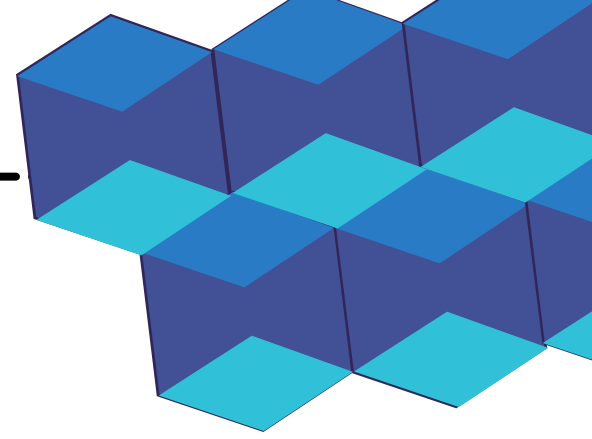
We are a visual society. Consider how the telephone has changed in the last few decades from solely a means of verbal communication (non-visual) to a hand-held computer with multiple applications for a wider variety of (visual) results.



Visual Communications

Three Steps for Effective Close Reading of Images

1. Surface Meaning of Image
2. Listing the Descriptions and Explanations of Elements within an Image
3. Interpretation of the Elements and How They are Used within an Image



Visual Communications

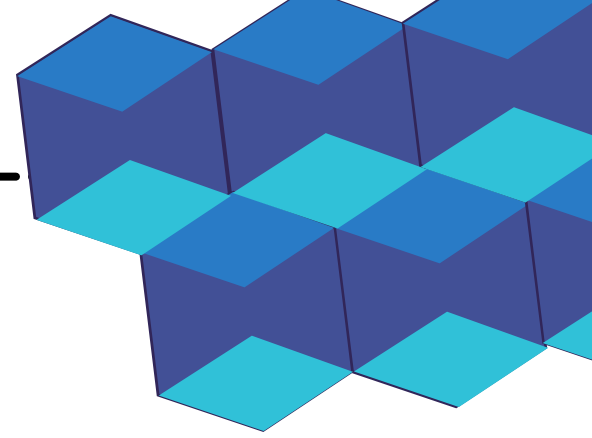
Step one: Surface Meaning of Image

(What is the overall image provided to you?)

- What is the main idea of the overall image?
- What is the purpose? (*Advertisement? Editorial? Hard News?*)
- Who is the primary audience? (*general or specific?*)

Also consider, if provided:

- Who is the artist/photographer?
- Where was it published? Who funded the publication?
- What is the title of the image?



Visual Communications

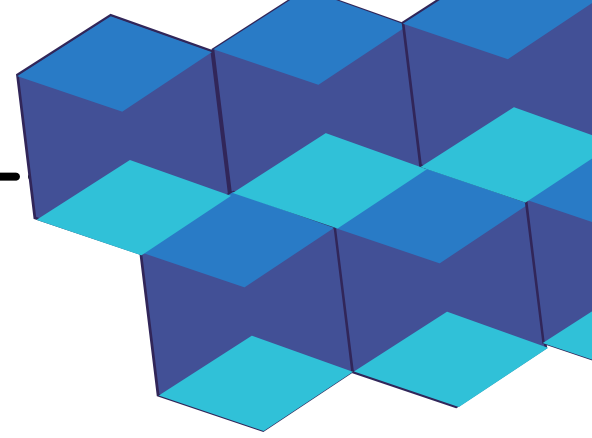
Step two: Visual Elements

(provide specific, detailed information for each category)

- What *major* elements exist? (What is the focal point that captures your attention?)
- What *minor* elements exist?
- Is a *story* provided within the photograph?

Also consider:

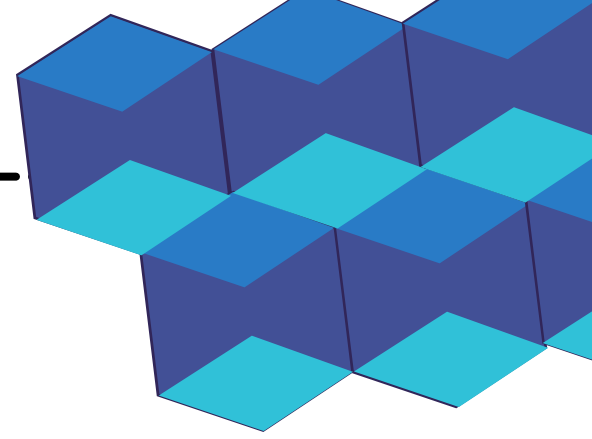
- What is the style of the picture?
 - > realistic, photographic
 - > abstract, not based on realism
 - > fantastic, yet real, but impossible as in a dream
 - > expressive, less realistic yet with lots of feeling



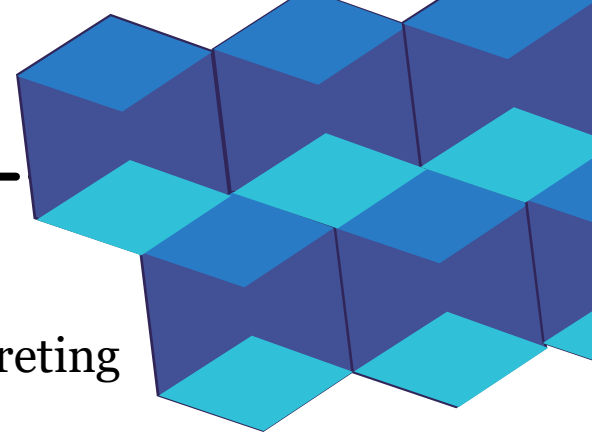
Visual Communications

Step three: Interpretation of the Elements

- What *moods* do you first experience?
- Are there possible *symbols*, logos, or wordings which stand out?
- What potential *themes* do you see?

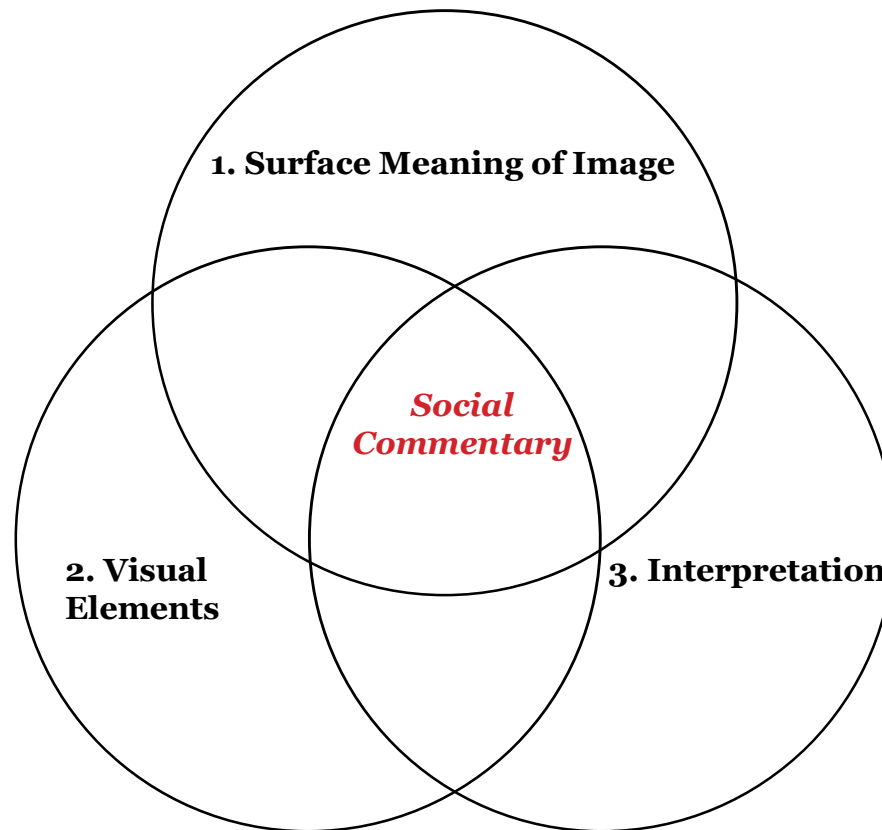


Visual Communications



The End Results

Adding the three steps together allows a viewer to begin interpreting whether or not a social commentary exists within an image.



Visual Communications

As can be expected, people react differently to the supplied material— this is only natural.

- Just like a popular song on the radio causes diverse reactions from listeners,
- your personal history & relevant memories affect your waking life, day-to-day;
- you see images with unique perspectives formulated by your own cultural background and personal, family histories.

