

Online Resources

Below is a full list of the **digital resources** available in **Topic 7**. When you see these icons throughout the topic, access your **learnON** format to find resources that will support your learning and deepen your understanding.

Topic PDF

- [7.1 Viewing for inference \(tpdf-2495\)](#)

eWorkbooks

- [7.2 Level 1 worksheets \(ewbk-7364\)](#)
- [7.2 Level 2 worksheets \(ewbk-7365\)](#)
- [7.2 Level 3 worksheets \(ewbk-7366\)](#)
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Sample responses

- [7.9 Topic 7 sample responses \(sar-0127\)](#)

Digital documents

- [7.7 Storyboard template \(doc-35115\)](#)
- [7.9 Self-reporting template \(doc-35521\)](#)

Video eLessons

- [7.1 Viewing for inference \(eles-4301\)](#)
- [7.3 Reading visual texts \(eles-4326\)](#)
- [7.4 Satire cartoon \(eles-4327\)](#)
- [7.5 Camera shots \(eles-5105\)](#)
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Interactivities

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- [7.9 Key terms crossword \(int-8265\)](#)

PAGE PROOFS

To access these online resources and receive immediate, **corrective feedback** and **sample responses** to every question, plus a pre-test, select your learnON format at www.jacplus.com.au.

7 Viewing for inference

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 What is viewing for inference?

We've said it before, and we'll say it again — visual texts are still texts! It's been a long time since the first moving pictures hit the screens, and over the decades film and television have been recognised as just as worthy of study as written literature is.

- Just like with written texts, you can use the skills of **observation** and **inference** to understand and analyse a visual text. Through this process you are, applying your personal **context**.



Resources

- Video Lesson** Viewing for inference (eles-4301)

Watch this video to learn about the way we infer from visual texts.



STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Discuss whether you think it is true that visual texts are just as worthy as written ones (to enjoy and to learn from).
2. You've read about **observation** in other topics. How do you think **observation** applies to visual texts?
3. You've also read about **inference** in other topics. How do you think **inference** applies to visual texts?
4. When we say visual texts, we are referring to still images and moving images. In this topic, we'll mainly talk about film. What are some of your favourite films, and why?

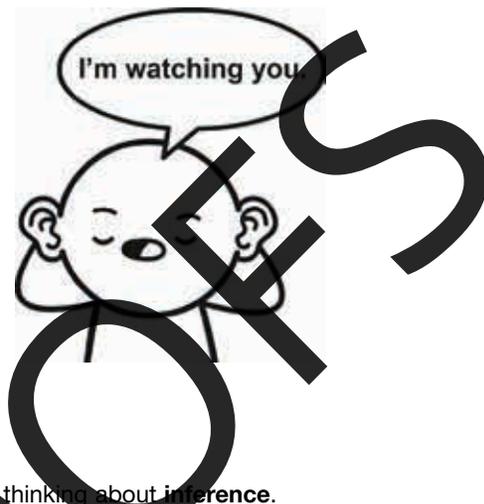
7.2 Inference versus observation

7.2.1 Observation in visual texts

Observing means looking closely at details, including how something is described and defined. Applied to a visual text, there are specific details which are not present in a text that only has words. For example, film contains:

- music
- sound effects
- visual effects, including use of colour
- editing.

We'll cover these, and more, later in this topic. For now, think about how you *observe* some of these aspects of text. Can you even observe with your ears?



7.2.2 Inference in visual texts

Once you've decided whether you can observe details with your ears, it's time to start thinking about **inference**. When we introduced inference in Topic 3, we called it **reading between the lines**. If you're being a stickler for dictionary definitions, reading is something you do with print texts; however, it's perfectly acceptable to say you can 'read' a visual text too.

Given that you can read (or view) a visual text, you can definitely read between the lines. If you are not convinced, consider these examples:

- An **actor** on screen is saying one thing, but the **music** is suggesting something else: sound is being used to create hidden meaning.
- A scene in a movie has had **colour grading** (more on this later) to make it seem washed-out and dull: the **editing** adds a layer of meaning to an otherwise ordinary scene.
- The **pace** of the edits between **shots** is incredibly fast, making the scene very dramatic: even if it is just a conversation between two people, the director can produce extra tension through specific techniques.
- An **actor** in a play stands aside from the main characters — the audience can see her, but the others cannot: this technique creates tension because the audience knows something that some characters don't.

In fact, you could argue that visual texts have even more ways of creating layers of meaning than print texts do.

- Directors, editors, and producers of visual texts have a large **arsenal** of sensory and technical methods which can make their texts rich and packed with meaning.

7.2.3 Observation versus inference

Compare the two skills of observation and inference when applied to visual texts:

| Observation | Inference |
|--|---|
| The music is slow and sad. | The main character is upset because of what happened in the previous scene. |
| The camera is switching quickly between shots of people walking down the street. | We are seeing the world through the character's perspective, and they are paranoid and jumpy. |
| A low, single note is sounding throughout the scene. | When you hear this note repeated throughout the film, you'll associate it with the mood or meaning it symbolises . |

- Note how the **observations** merely record the details of what is happening — visually and **aurally** — in the scene. It is the **inference** which reads meaning into the observation.

7.2 Level 2

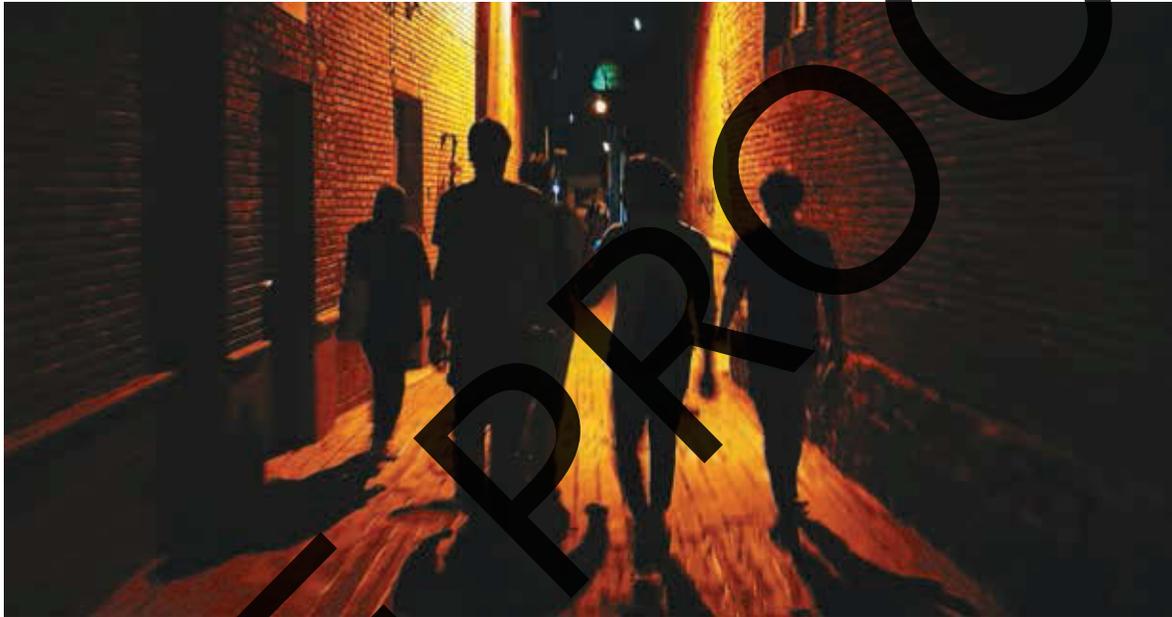
4. When you are watching visual texts, it is often for entertainment. Why would you want to be able to **infer** from visual texts: how does this **amplify** (extend; make larger) your enjoyment?

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5. Use the following still image from a film to complete the following activities.



a. Make three **observations** of what you see in the still image. Use these observations to build **inferences** about what is happening.

| Observation | Inference |
|----------------|----------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

7. Think of a scene from a movie you know well (you could use a scene from a videogame with a film-style narrative). Draw the scene below (or include a screenshot), and label it to show the ways (film techniques) in which the director could have created **hidden meaning** for you to infer.



7.2 Hungry for more?

Design a scene from a film with layers of hidden meaning, encouraging viewers to infer multiple understandings. Use as many techniques as you can think of to build these layers.

 You can present your scene as a storyboard or a script. Alternatively, you can **annotate** a still shot. If you are struggling to think of techniques for creating meaning, read ahead in this topic and then come back to this activity.

 Resources

 **eWorkbook** 7.2 Level 1 worksheets (ewbk-7364), 7.2 Level 2 worksheets (ewbk-7365), 7.2 Level 3 worksheets (ewbk-7366)

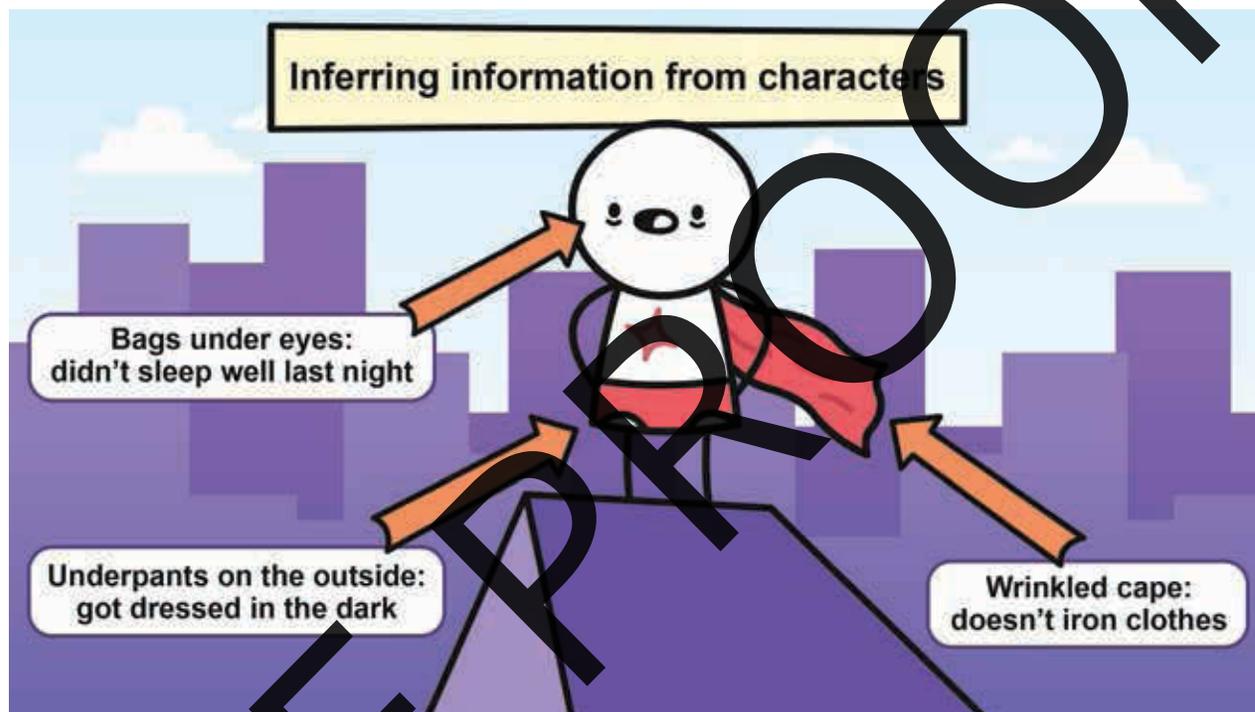
7.3 Reading visual texts

7.3.1 Reading into character

As detailed in subtopic 7.2, visual texts can be *read* just like books can be. That means that the same storytelling elements appear, such as **characterisation**, **narrative**, and technique. Visual texts have a broader range of tools available than print texts do, to get all of that information across.

Reading into character means being able to look at characters in the film, television series, or whatever it is you are viewing, to see how they are **established** and **developed**. It involves inference — identifying what the creators of the film want you to assume, know or feel about a character. Character establishment and development is detailed in subtopic 7.5, but here are some **fundamental** (important baseline) techniques used in characterisation.

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Acting

Obviously, characters in films are played by actors. But what about non-fiction visual texts, such as documentaries and the news? They're real people, but are they 'acting' too? In a way, yes. Visual texts are constructed, just like written texts. This means that somebody — or a team of somebodies — has made choices about how to present the people in the text.

- A director might ask a person to pose or stand a certain way or in a certain place because it conveys a particular meaning.
- The editing process might take a person's natural facial expressions and zoom in to make that slight smile look like the most meaningful thing in the world.
- Dialogue can be edited so that the meaning of what a person said is changed, even reversing somebody's original intention.

In scripted texts — films, television, plays and so on — the director, screenwriter, and even the actors themselves will all have input into how the actors move and portray characters.



Here are some of the ways in which acting can influence meaning:

- **Facial expression.** Either deliberately or through clever editing, a character's facial expressions can reveal a lot. External presentation can also hide a lot: imagine that the audience knows a character is doing something deceptive, but that character wears a perfect smile all the time.
- **Gesture.** For some people, their hands speak louder than their mouths. We all know someone who gestures wildly while they're speaking, swinging their arms around so much that you have to step back or get whacked. Gestures can also be subtle and are often subconscious; however, directors often give specific guidance about gestures and reactions they want an actor to show in their character.
- **Body language.** This is gesture that is written all over the body, from head to toe. Body language includes posture — how people stand: crossed arms, leaning against a wall, hunched over...
- **Movement.** Characters might have specific ways of moving which reveal something about their personality. Maybe they are quick and jumpy, maybe their movements are slow and deliberate.



Screen time

This has nothing to do with how much time you spend playing computer games. Another important part of understanding characters in visual texts is noticing how much screen time is dedicated to them: how often do you see them in a scene? It sounds obvious that in a narrative movie the main character would get the most screen time, but what about in other forms of visual text?

Clever editing of screen time can do a lot to portray characters, for example, in reality TV shows. Next time you're watching *Australia's Most Amazing Celebrity Cooking Person on an Island*, keep an eye out for how much screen time is devoted to certain people over others — in any given episode and over the series. Allocations of screen time often indicate one of two things:

- The people who get the most screen time are the most likely to be heading into the finals (remember, these aren't live shows — they were often filmed months ago).
- The person who gets the most screen time is about to get the chop.



Mise-en-scène

Q **Mise-en-scène** is a fancy sounding French term for ‘everything in the scene’. It refers to things such as props, the arrangement of objects in the scenery, the framing and – importantly for characterisation – costume.

Costume can be realistic, designed to create a feeling that the film or television show is **authentic** (genuine and true). It can be particularly styled for **setting** (such as period costume) or **genre** (such as fantasy and science fiction costumes). Characters can also wear outfits which identify them as individuals or as members of a group, such as capes for superheroes, hats for wizards, uniforms for military personnel and school students, and much more. Finally, costumes can have symbolic elements, such as specific colours, designs or features.



7.3.2 Reading into style

Q The **style** of a visual text is influenced by its genre, the skills and preferences of the director, and the editing. The style of a text can also be a great way for directors to insert more hidden meaning.

- Q **Genre.** In Topic 3 there was a lot of information on genre. Film and television often use the same generic **conventions** as written text, but with the added impact of sound and visuals. This means that the science fiction novel you loved reading can come to life in a computer-generated alien world, or that the metre-thick pile of fantasy books by your bed can be reproduced as a hundred-hour long television series for you to enjoy.
- **Director.** Like authors, directors often have a particular style. Style might be indicated by:
 - a director's choice of actors
 - the way a director frames their shots
 - the type of music a director regularly uses
 - the camera movement and shots (framing).
- **Editing.** After all of the scenes have been filmed, the team of editors work with the director to pull all of the strands together. In the editing process, multiple shots of the same scene will be combined to create just the right meaning. Sound and music can be added, as well as visual effects. The pace of the shots can be sped up or slowed down, and even the order of events can be changed if the director thinks it will create more meaning. Entire scenes are often cut out to shape the meaning more intentionally.

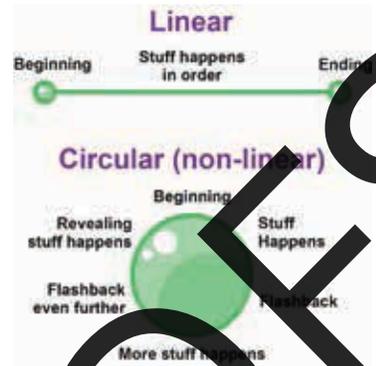
Basically, every aspect of film mentioned in this topic is controlled by the director, and the unique combination of those aspects is like a director's fingerprint on the text.



7.3.3 Reading into plot and narrative

One more time with feeling: **visual texts are just like written texts.**

They generally have a plot — storyline — and some sort of narrative structure to follow.



There may be a **linear** structure, which moves forward **chronologically** in a straight line from beginning to end.

Or it may have a circular structure, moving from beginning to middle to end and then back again, like a round-trip journey.

Flashbacks and **flashforwards** might also break a linear structure, showing characters' stories at different periods of their lives, and sometimes literally sending characters back or forward in time.

The **plot** (story) and the **structure** (the way the story is presented) often differ within a film. Events don't always happen sequentially (in chronological order). Through the use of **narrative techniques**, plot and structure can be studied as two separate aspects of a film. Just for fun, we have a couple of complicated sounding Russian words for this.

Fabula

Fabula is the **chronological** order of events. In real-life, things follow a chain of cause and effect. Fabula is the order of events in a text, mapped from the actual first event that happened to the very last. This is the plot or the storyline. It is the logical sequence of events we piece together in our minds, despite the order it is shown in.

Sujet (syuzhet)

Sujet (pronounced see-YOU-sh-ET) is the order in which events occur in the text. This is the narrative structure we referred to earlier: linear, circular, flashback and flashforwards. We might be shown the ending first, and then be shown the events that led to it. Or it might jump around constantly.

Why bother? Well, in some films (and texts) part of the meaning of the film comes from piecing together the chronological order of events (fabula) in order to work out what is happening. This is particularly common in the detective, crime and mystery genres. Acknowledging that plot and structure are not the same thing is very important for inferring meaning from a visual text.

Fabula (chronological order of events)

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Younger Leon does a stint in prison</p> <p>Leon enters new town</p> <p>Noisy neighbour sees Leon in the paint store</p> <p>Local monument is graffitied</p> <p>Leon is accused and arrested</p> <p>Leon shows his receipt and is released</p> | | | |
| | | | |

Sujet (order of events presented in story)

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Monument is found graffitied</p> <p>Police find out younger Leon did a stint in prison (flashback)</p> <p>Leon is accused and arrested</p> <p>Leon enters new town (flashback)</p> <p>Nosy neighbour recalls seeing Leon at the paint store (flashback)</p> <p>Leon shows his receipt and is released</p> |  |  |  |
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7.3 Activities

7.3 Level 1

1. Do you have a favourite **actor**? Or perhaps a real-life person who you see in a lot of non-fiction shows or movies? What do you like about them?

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2. Draw actors showing the following **emotions** either through their facial expressions, gestures or body language (even all three). You're not being marked on your artistic abilities here — just convey the emotions.

| Angry | Extremely excited | Secretly annoyed |
|-------|-------------------|------------------|
| | | |

3. An actor has to play the part of a character who has a terrifying secret. The actor must enter a room filled with people who they suspect know the secret. You are the director: what **instructions** would you give **to the actor**, to help them convey the situation (including their emotions) to the audience?

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4. Thinking back to a time when you have seen a TV show (reality or anything else), how was **editing** used to give more **screen time** to a specific character or person?

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7.3 Level 2

5. Draw a **costume** for one (or more) of the following characters:

- a. a police officer in a modern Australian crime drama
- b. a knight in a fantasy movie
- c. a space explorer in a science fiction TV show.



6. What is the difference between **fabula** and **sujet**?

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7. Describe how you would **edit** a scene from an action movie to make it more dramatic and tense.

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7.3 Level 3

8. You are the director of a film in which the two main characters are at war, and they have been forced into a room together to try to end the violence. Write some director's notes **for the actors**, giving them **instructions** on how to play their characters in this scene. Refer to facial expression, gesture, body language and movement.

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9. You are the director of a zombie horror movie and have to provide instructions **to the editors** to make sure the film is as horrible and terrifying as possible. What **advice** would you give about editing the final scene, in which the main character (a living person) escapes from a city filled with the undead?

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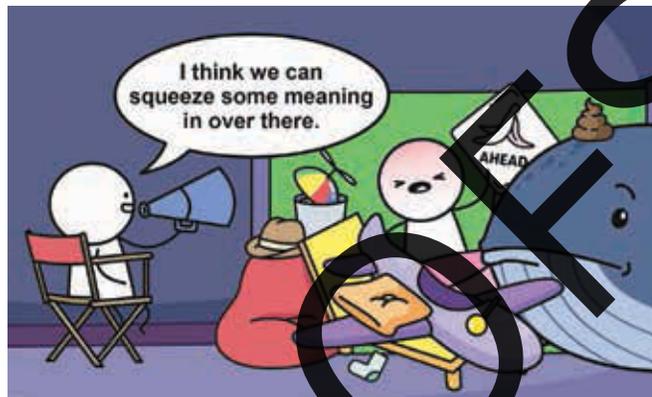
7.4 Inferring from short films and cartoons

7.4.1 Inferring from short films

Short films are great for building your inference skills. Whether they're short animations at the start of a Disney/Pixar film, an entry for a short film competition, or even something made by your fellow students, short films can convey a lot of meaning by using the same kinds of techniques and **production elements** as any other visual text.



Short films generally run anywhere from two to forty minutes long. With so little time to establish and develop characters and themes, directors have to work hard. Short films often offer a 'slice of life' rather than a fully-developed storyline. These **vignettes** (pronounced vin-YETS) are a brief, **evocative** depiction of a person or event: a snapshot of one moment in their life.



7.4.2 Inferring from cartoons and animations

Cartoons aren't just for kids. There are plenty of animated TV shows and films aimed at an older audience of teenagers and adults. Animations offer a great way of breaking some of the rules of traditional visual texts. For example, characters can be totally imaginary, from talking animals to mythical creatures. The settings can be as simple or elaborate as the animators like.



When inferring from cartoons and animations, it is often necessary to look for subtle humour like **satire**. Satire is the use of humour to make fun of people — particularly politicians or people with power. Some cartoon series, such as



eles-4327

The Simpsons, have built their brand on satire. Streaming services like Netflix are full of satirical cartoons aimed at an older audience. Watch the cartoon (eles-4327) for an example of satire.

7.4.3 Inferring from anime

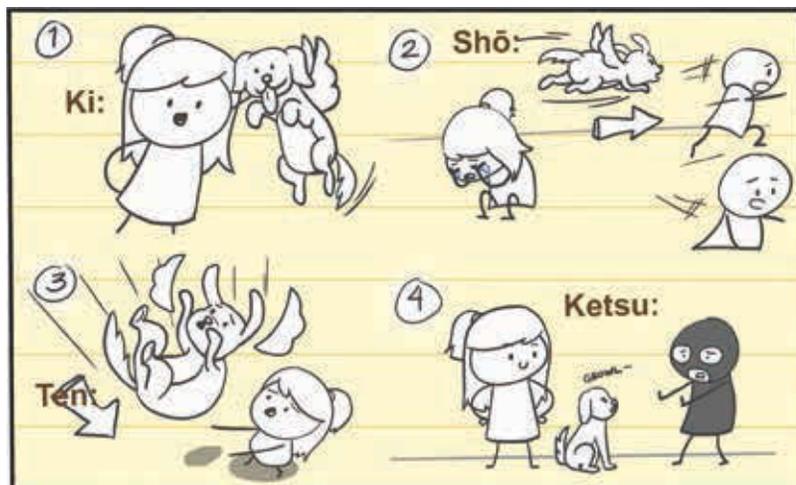


Anime is a popular form of Japanese animation. Over the last couple of decades, it has also become hugely popular outside of Japan. Often, anime blends reality and fantasy, especially with elements of mythology and the supernatural.

Unlike western narrative structure, anime often follows a traditional Japanese narrative structure called *Kishōtenketsu* (pronounced kee-shu-ten-ket-su). While western narratives typically follow the three-act structure (beginning, middle, end), the Japanese structure is in four parts:

- **Ki.** Introduction
- **Shō.** Development
- **Ten.** Twist (complication)
- **Ketsu.** Conclusion (reconciliation).

Japanese narrative structure is also unlike western narratives in that *Kishōtenketsu* stories are not driven so much by conflict. In a three-act structure, the action is pushed along by the rising tension of conflict which leads to the climax. In the *Kishōtenketsu* structure there does not need to be a conflict, even in the complication stage.



7.4 Activities

7.4 Level 1

1. Select a short film, such as a Disney/Pixar short or something you studied at school. Write down its title and briefly describe the **plot** (the main events that happen in the film).

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2. Have you ever watched **anime**? How is it different to non-Japanese animation? If you haven't seen any anime, describe what you think the differences might be.

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3. Do you enjoy **cartoons** and **animations**? If so, what is your favourite and why?

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7.4 Level 2

4. Do you believe that cartoons and animations are as important and worth studying as other forms of texts? Why or why not?

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5. Often, cartoons for younger audiences have a **moral** — a lesson that's meant to be learned from watching. Why do you think creators include these?

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6. Do you think that creating cartoons and animations for **adults** is a strange idea? Explain your response.

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7.4 Level 3

7. What characteristics of animation make it a good format to share **satirical views** of current events?

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8. Plan your own short film **vignette**. Its focus is limited to a single character and event. Use a notebook to draft your vignette in writing, or draw out a storyboard.

7.4 Hungry for more?

Conduct some more research into the Kishōtenketsu narrative structure. Find some examples of films which follow this structure, then record their titles and publication details. Write some notes about how and why the structure is relevant to Japanese culture.



Resources



eWorkbook

7.4 Level 1 worksheets (ewbk-7370), 7.4 Level 2 worksheets (ewbk-7371),
7.4 Level 3 worksheets (ewbk-7372)



Video eLesson

Satire cartoon (eles-4327)

7.5 Watching characters grow

7.5.1 Character establishment

Q A lot of what the audience thinks about a character is **established** in the first few scenes. The moment the character enters (on to the stage, in a play; into a frame, in a film) you start to infer and build your understanding of them.

Q This doesn't happen by chance: a lot of work goes into those first few moments. Like the first pages of a book, and any **backstory**, initial scenes can set the tone and the expectations for what is to come. Directors can use the full range of techniques at their disposal to make sure that the audience's opinions of that character are just right.



Camera shots

Extreme close-up. A very detailed, extremely close shot of a particular object, such as an eye. The scene might start on a detail of the character's face such as a twitching mouth, or another detail such as a tapping finger. Or perhaps an element of costume.

Close-up. Most of the frame is filled with the object, such as a face. This depth of field may be used to establish a character's emotions as the camera can make them clearly visible (through filling the screen with the face's expressions).

Mid-shot. A shot which shows about half of an actor, for example from the waist up. These shots are often used during conversation scenes, and may be used to introduce one character in relation to another.

Full-shot. Showing the full body of an actor or actors, an example of a full-shot is of actors walking.

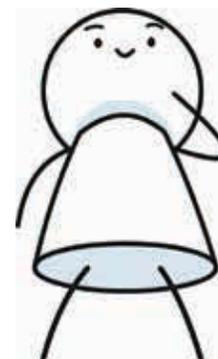
Long-shot. The camera pulls back to show more detail of the setting. For example, the view of the outside of a house gives a sense of place and scale. Long-shots may be used to establish a character in their normal location, such as at home.

Extreme long-shot. Often used as an establishing shot at the start of a scene, this shot takes in a great deal of setting, for example, an aerial shot of an entire city. The character possibly won't be visible, but in some films (such as superhero movies) the character might literally fly through the city.

High angle. The camera is high, pointing down. This can have the effect of making the subject look small, threatened, or insignificant.

Low angle. The camera is low, pointing up. This can have the effect of making the subject look tall, powerful, or like they are about to head off on a great adventure. The use of angles shape the power relationship between the audience and the characters.

Bird's-eye view. The camera is directly above the actor. Often used to show the actor moving through a crowd, or in an action shot.



Camera movement

Panning. Swivelling a camera horizontally (from side to side) from a fixed position. It's like turning your head to follow something with your eyes. This can be used to tell the story from a character's perspective, or to show a broad landscape in a short time.

Tilting. Rotating a camera up and down from a fixed position, this movement shows vertical (up and down) features.

Zooming. Moving towards or away from the subject (closer or farther away). The camera might zoom through a crowd to focus on one person, indicating they are the main character.

Tracking. Following the movements of an actor, vehicle or other moving object. The camera may be on an actual track.



Sound design, lighting and editing

Music. The music in the opening scene can enhance (add to) the character establishment. If the character is showing a visible emotion (in a close-up) the music might match this emotion with a mournful orchestral score. In contrast, the superhero swinging through the city (in an extreme long-shot) might be accompanied by an action-packed rock tune.

Voiceover. The voiceover in a film or TV show might be the main character revealing their thoughts and feelings. Or it might be someone else (an independent narrator). Either way, it orientates the audience to specific elements of the story.

High key lighting. This is where there is a lot of light and very few shadows. A character in the light looks happier and often more confident. It is also more realistic if the scene is in daytime.

Low key lighting. The opposite of high key lighting, low key lighting features darkness and shadows. A character in the shadows might look mysterious, lonely, or sinister.

Expressionistic lighting. The opposite of realistic lighting, expressionistic lighting is 'artful' and deliberately stylised. An example is full shadow, with a stripe of light over just the character's eyes. It often contributes to a sinister feeling. It also focuses the audience onto specific details.

Colour grading. Ever seen a sci-fi movie where everything looks kind of green? Or a romantic scene where everything is rosy? That's because the scene has been colour graded. The scene might be colour graded to match a character's mood: washed out grey tones for sadness, bright and happy for joy. Sepia tones are commonly used to indicate 'older times'.



Another important aspect of character establishment is **framing**. This is where the subjects of the shot are placed within the frame, and how they are placed relative to each other. Framing includes everything in the frame, what is outside of the frame and what it means when a character is 'framed' by a doorway, or when just their face is seen in a window pane. The director's choice of framing can reveal a great deal about the character and situation, through single shots.

7.5.2 Character development

Once a character is established, they will continue to develop over the course of the text. All of the techniques mentioned above can be used throughout the film. In addition, as the film progresses the director can also use the traditional elements of storytelling to develop the character. Storytelling and production elements work seamlessly together.

Plot

Over the course of the text, events will occur which force the character to act in certain ways. The storyline will follow a chain of cause and effect, meaning that in the establishing scenes (or *before the main action* of the movie) there will be an event which triggers the character's journey. This is most obvious in stories which follow the classic **hero's journey**. Think *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*: in all these films, there is an event which sets the character off on their adventure, and how they respond from then on shapes and changes them.



Relationships

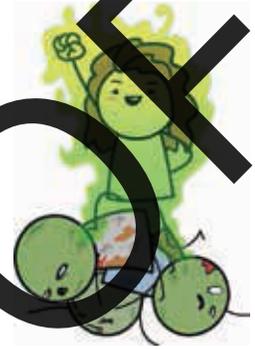
How a character gets along with others in the text will say a lot about them as a person. Directors want characters to be believable, and part of this is having them build a web of connections. They may have a sibling rivalry, or a best friend or worst enemy. The audience **infers** the details of a relationship by paying close attention to the acting, camera work, sound and everything else. Does the music shift to a romantic tune every time a love interest comes into the scene? Maybe the colour grading and lighting takes a step towards darkness when the arch nemesis makes an appearance. Often, it is possible to **infer** how the main characters will relate to one another before they've even met.

The climax



int-8307

The climax of a story is when all of the action builds to a head, and something — a conflict or tension — is finally resolved one way or another. For the main character, this might mean that an enemy is finally defeated (or seems to be), or that the problem that has been dominating their life is finally solved. In a romantic comedy, it will be the scene where the couple finally gets together. In a horror, the character may finally escape from whatever threat they have faced. How a character responds to the climax will also develop them further.



7.5.3 Characters in a franchise

- Nowadays many films are designed as part of a **franchise**. This means that they form part of a bigger 'world' of films in which characters cross paths on more than one occasion. The Marvel and DC superhero films are prime examples. There may be a movie about Iron Man, followed by an Avengers movie set in the same universe in which Iron Man teams up with all his fellow superheroes to defeat a bigger enemy. Later, there may be more movies, or even TV series, with just the single characters again.
- Characters continue to develop over these franchises (in **prequels** as much as in **sequels**). In their own movie they may be headstrong and proud, and they gain knowledge about themselves as they overcome their obstacles. By the time they are grouped together with the team, their arrogance is probably a bigger issue. They just don't play nicely! But learning to work with others is how they develop within the franchise. By the time they return to their own movie they may be more humble and ready to face the *really big* problem that has been haunting them their entire life.



7.5 Activities

7.5 Level 1

1. Who is your favourite movie or television **character** and why?

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2. Think back to the first movie or episode you saw your favourite character in, especially their first scene. List some of the details of how the character was established. What were some of the **production elements** used by the director?

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3. Think of an 'enemy' (or villain) in a film. It could be the nemesis (a recurring enemy who is very difficult to defeat) of the character you mentioned in questions 1 and 2. How was the enemy **introduced**? In what ways was the enemy's introduction different from that of your favourite character/another character?

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PAGE PROOFS

7.5 Level 2

4. How might the following **production elements** be used to establish a character as a **warm, friendly person who has lots of friends**:

a. Camera movement:

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b. Music:

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c. Lighting:

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5. Draw a scene for the **establishing shot** of a character who will be the **main villain** in a movie. Annotate (label) the scene, describing important details.



PAGE PROOFS

6. Describe a character from a film **franchise** you are familiar with, and how they have developed and changed over the course of the franchise.

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7.5 Level 3

7. Provide director's notes on how to establish a character who is **suspicious, mysterious and a little bit scary**. Refer to as many **production elements** (listed in this subtopic) as possible.

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8. Provide director's notes on how to **establish** a character who is **lonely and awkward around people**. Refer to as many **production elements** (listed in this subtopic) as possible.

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7.6 Inferring from non-fiction

7.6.1 Inferring from reality TV

We'll start with the most serious and important form of non-fiction. Only joking! Let's start with reality TV instead. Reality TV — with shows which present a 'slice of life', or shows which follow a person or group around in their day-to-day lives — has become increasingly popular since the early 2000s, when the first series of *Big Brother* aired. Since then we've seen cooking, romance, house renovation, and even marriages between people who've never met. Somebody has made a reality TV show about almost every theme.

The thing about reality TV, though, is that it often isn't actually *real*. Many early reality TV shows came under fire for using scripts, hiring actors, or even staging the entire series. But after happening again and again, it now seems as though that's almost *expected* as part of the format: It's not the reality that counts, it's the entertainment.

Therefore, you should probably approach reality TV with the understanding that it might not actually be real. There are certain things to be on the lookout for as you **suspend your disbelief** (pretend that things are real when they're clearly not).



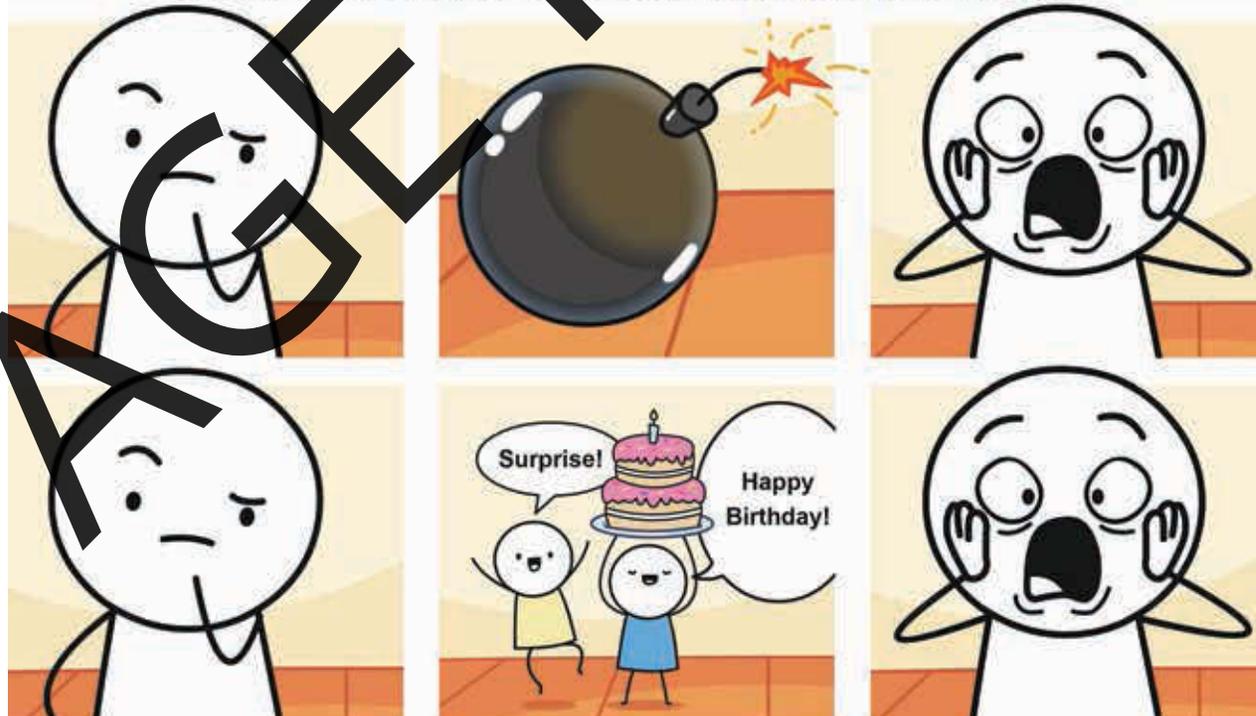
Clever editing

Here's a recap of what was covered in Topic 5 New and traditional media:

Scenes can be edited together to show whatever the director wants: a character can appear to react in a way that they never actually did in real life.

- Q This is actually a very old cinematic trick called the **Kuleshov Effect**, named after a pioneering Russian filmmaker. Famous director Alfred Hitchcock used it a lot in his films. Here's how it works.

The meaning of a single shot can change depending on the shots with it.



The character's face is the same in both sequences, but what emotion do you think they're feeling in each one?

Sound and music

Just like in fiction TV and films, reality TV shows can use music and sound to trigger particular emotions. The tense music that leads up to an eviction, the romantic orchestral piece as a new potential lover comes onto the scene: it all has an effect on the audience. **Diegetic sounds** are those that the characters are aware of, or know the source of (such as radio music, footsteps or a dog barking). **Non-diegetic sounds** are those that the characters can't hear and have no source for (such as narration, background music and inner monologues).

Characterisation

You've probably noticed that even 'real' shows have a good guy and a bad guy (often, more than one). Reality TV shows promote the same character **archetypes** presented in other forms of entertainment. You might see characters like:

- **The hero.** Characterised as charming, successful and kind, the hero has all the good qualities.
- **The villain.** Always plotting and scheming, the villain constantly tries to undermine others, and maybe also cheats.
- **The joker.** Clowning around, the joker provides comic relief for the audience.
- **The friend or sidekick.** There in times of need to support the hero, the friend or sidekick travels most or all of the story alongside the main character(s).
- **The mentor.** Wise and more experienced than the other characters in the show, the mentor provides advice and guidance, especially to the main character(s).

Remember, even in 'reality' TV these roles have been cast. This means participants had to audition in front of a panel of people including the director: successful candidates were chosen to fit a particular archetype.

Scripting

Scripting for reality TV is the bit that nobody in the business likes to talk about. Just because it wears the label of 'reality' doesn't mean that the characters are not following a pre-written script. The script might be basic, with instructions on how to act (and react) which allow the people to **improvise**. Or, they may be following a detailed script with strict instructions to create entertaining moments such as dramatic arguments between characters or emotionally-moving monologues.

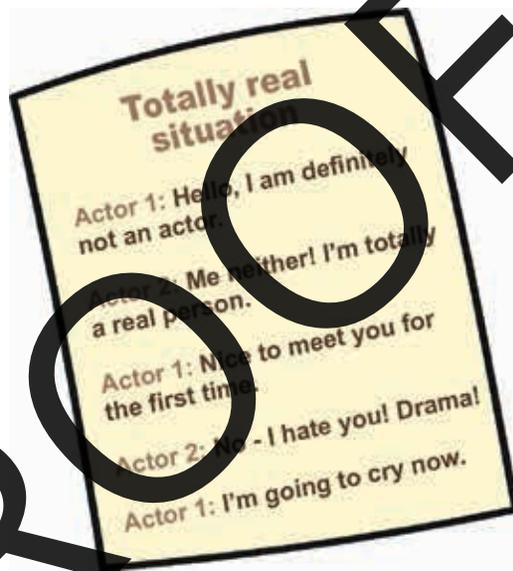
7.6.2 Inferring from the news

Topic 5 provides information on traditional and new media: the media has evolved from print to television to digital. Whatever form the news comes in, **consumers** can infer details with a few key understandings. Just like reality TV, the way the news is presented isn't always entirely real.

Agenda-setting function theory

If you ever study Media you'll come across this theory, which in a nutshell means **the news can't tell us what to think, but it can tell us what to think about**. There are a few ways the news can tell us what to think about, and if you're looking out for them, you're less likely to be misled:

- **Front page news.** Whatever appears on the front page of a paper is the most important: at least, it's what this newspaper wants you to *think* is most important.
- **Dominant news stories.** As with the front page, double-page spreads, full colour articles, magazine inserts and feature articles with lots of pictures or bigger headlines appear more important.
- **Ongoing coverage.** Articles which reoccur over time reinforce the importance of that news story. If it's on the front page once, it's important; if it's there three days in a row, then you *know* you should be paying close attention.



Passive versus active consumption

To consume means to eat. Now, you don't literally eat the news (hopefully), but audiences can be considered **passive** or

Q **active** consumers (in this subtopic, of news). **Agenda-setting function theory** is a *passive* theory, meaning that it assumes the audience will blindly accept whatever is put in front of them.

To be an *active* consumer, you need to be critically aware of how you might be being manipulated. All of the tips in this resource, here and in Topic 5, are great for increasing your critical thinking, so you're in luck!

7.6.3 Inferring from advertisements

It goes without saying that advertisements want you to buy something. Maybe that something is a physical product — a new phone or a new car. Or maybe it's a lifestyle choice like a holiday, support for a political party, or adoption of an entire belief system. Whatever is being advertised, as a **consumer** you need to be able to read between the lines to make sure you're not signing up for something you don't actually want.

Targeted advertising

Q This is now one of the most common forms of advertising. **Targeted advertising** refers to the process of showing 'tailor-made' advertisements to individual people. So how does it work? It starts off with **big data**. You've possibly heard of this: it's a term which is used to encompass all of the details about individuals which are available online. Whenever you sign up for something — a social media platform, an online shop, an app — you put in (as a minimum) details like your name, age, email address, and phone number. This **metadata** is stored online and you can easily lose track of which companies hold your personal information, and where in cyberspace it ends up.

The pool of data about you can be hacked or stolen, or even willingly sold. It then often ends up in the hands of companies responsible for advertising. Even with the data in one place — such as on a social media site — that site can use the information to generate targeted advertisements.

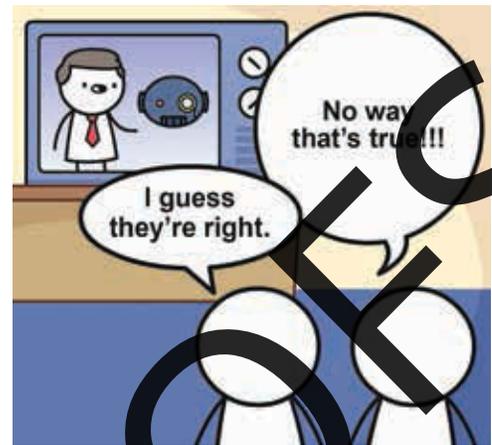
Here's a scenario:

You sign up to a social media platform. You give your name, age, and email address, and you turn on location tracking because you want to be able to tag your posts. Your friend on the same platform posts a picture of their new bike, and you *like* it. Within hours, you get an advert that looks like this:

Spooky, right? These companies pay millions of dollars to use your data. They have powerful artificial intelligence to process the millions of bits of data about you that exist online. Sometimes they sell it, sometimes they steal it. And when you click the advert for that shiny bike just like your friend's, somebody is making money from your data.

There are many things to infer from in advertisements. Refer to

Q Topic 4 Visual literature for more on the **rhetorical appeals** and how advertisers use them to persuade you.



7.6 Activities

7.6 Level 1

1. Have you ever clicked on or bought anything from a **targeted advertisement**? How did it target you: what personal information of yours do you think it **exploited** (took advantage of)? *Hint: Think of social media.*

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2. What was the last **reality TV show** you saw (or saw an advertisement for)? Describe your thoughts about what you saw.

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3. Do you enjoy **reality TV shows**? Why or why not?

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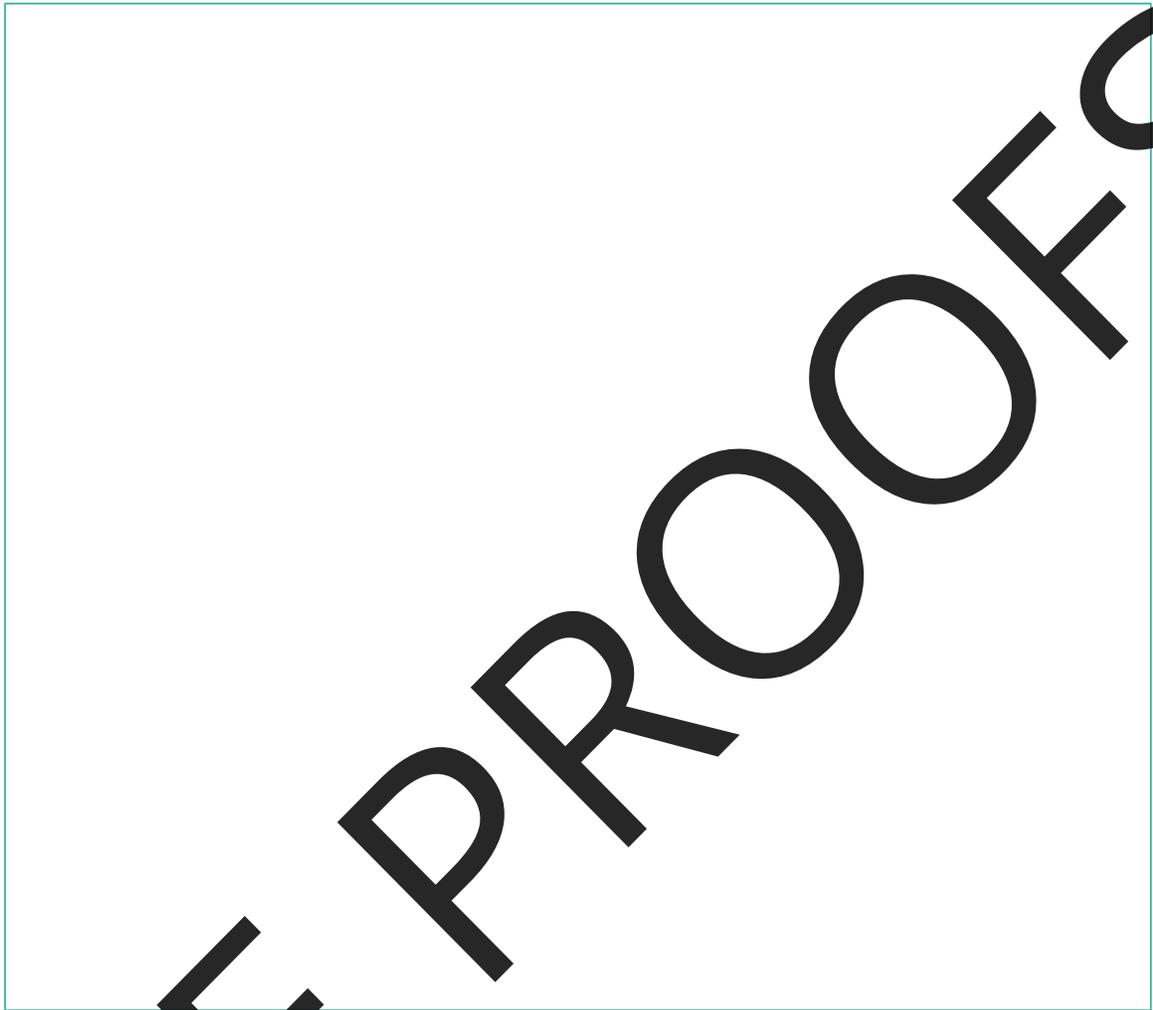
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PAGE PROOFS

4. a. Based on your knowledge of a family member or close friend, draw a **targeted advertisement** that might be attractive to them.



- b. Explain why you created your advertisement as you did: what **knowledge** of the person did you take into account, and what **elements** did you include in your targeted advertisement?

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7.6 Level 2

5. a. In your own words, what is **agenda-setting function theory**?

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b. **Agenda-setting** works online as well as in print. How might a news company set an agenda through their website?

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6. a. In your own words, what is **targeted advertising** and how does it work?

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b. Do you think it is a successful form of **advertising**? Explain.

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7. Do you think **targeted advertising** is **morally** acceptable (based on good principles)? Why or why not?

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PAGE PROOFS

7.6 Level 3

8. On A3 or A4 paper, design the front cover of a newspaper which wishes to make people think about an event important to your local area (such as a school fete or an art show). Think about how you will lay out the front page to **set the agenda** for that local event.
9. a. Imagine you are the director of a reality TV show. You want a few of the ‘cast’ to have an argument, but you don’t want to be accused of **scripting** the show. What kinds of **instructions** might you give to the participants instead of providing them with a script? *Hint.* Decide on the reason for the argument first.

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- b. Using the same argument from part a, what **instructions** will you give to your producer and editors (your **crew**) about how the argument/fight scene should look in the final episode of the reality show?

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7.6 Hungry for more?

Imagine you are the director of a brand-new reality TV show and have the task of **pitching** the show to investors to raise money for its production. Answer the following questions:

- What will your show be about?
- What types of people (or **archetypes**) will you cast?
- How will you make the show dramatic and entertaining?
- Will you script any of the show? Why or why not?

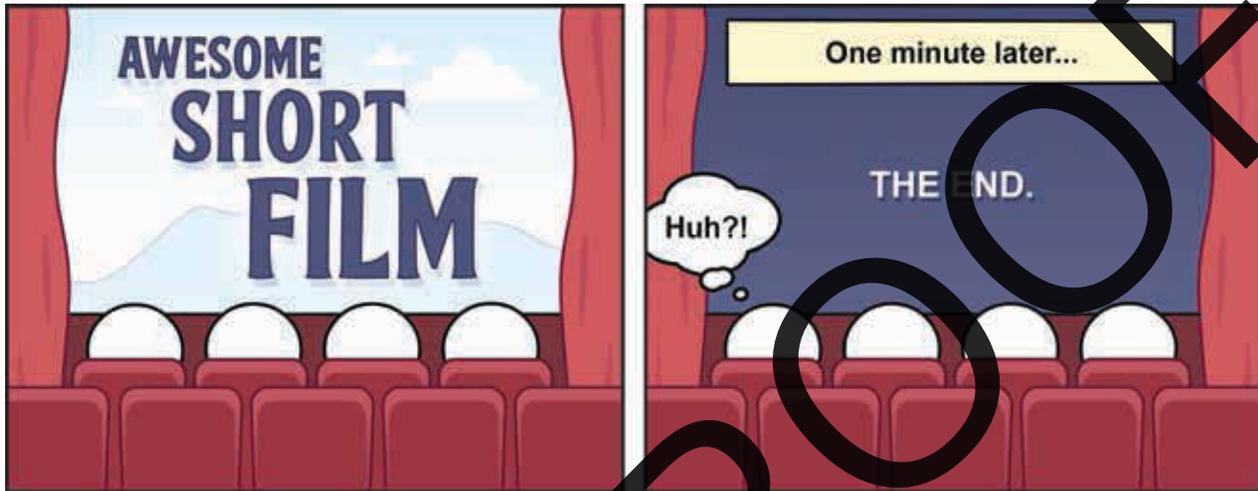
on Resources

 **eWorkbook** 7.6 Level 1 worksheets (ewbk-7376), 7.6 Level 2 worksheets (ewbk-7377), 7.6 Level 3 worksheets (ewbk-7378)

7.7 Topic project: One-minute film

Scenario

Short films are very popular at film festivals and online. Sometimes they run for as long as twenty minutes, and at other times they are as short as five. The Australian Very Short Film Festival has set their conditions even tighter this year and are looking for **one-minute films**. You have decided to enter as a way of demonstrating your astounding knowledge of film technique.



Task

Create a film of no longer than one minute (sixty seconds) which demonstrates your knowledge of film technique, as well as your ability to establish and develop character. If you're stuck for inspiration, try using an online film ideas generator, or search in the online **Writer's Library** for stories to inspire you.

Process

Step 1

Decide on your idea. Sample ideas include:

- missing the bus and having to get to school on time
- realising that you forgot to take dinner out of the freezer like you were asked to do this morning, as you hear the car pull up in the driveway
- looking for a missing friend
- discovering that your teacher has become a potato.

Write your idea at the centre of a mind map. Branching out from the centre, identify your key film elements, such as the main character, the setting, and technical aspects like music or particular camera angles.

Step 2

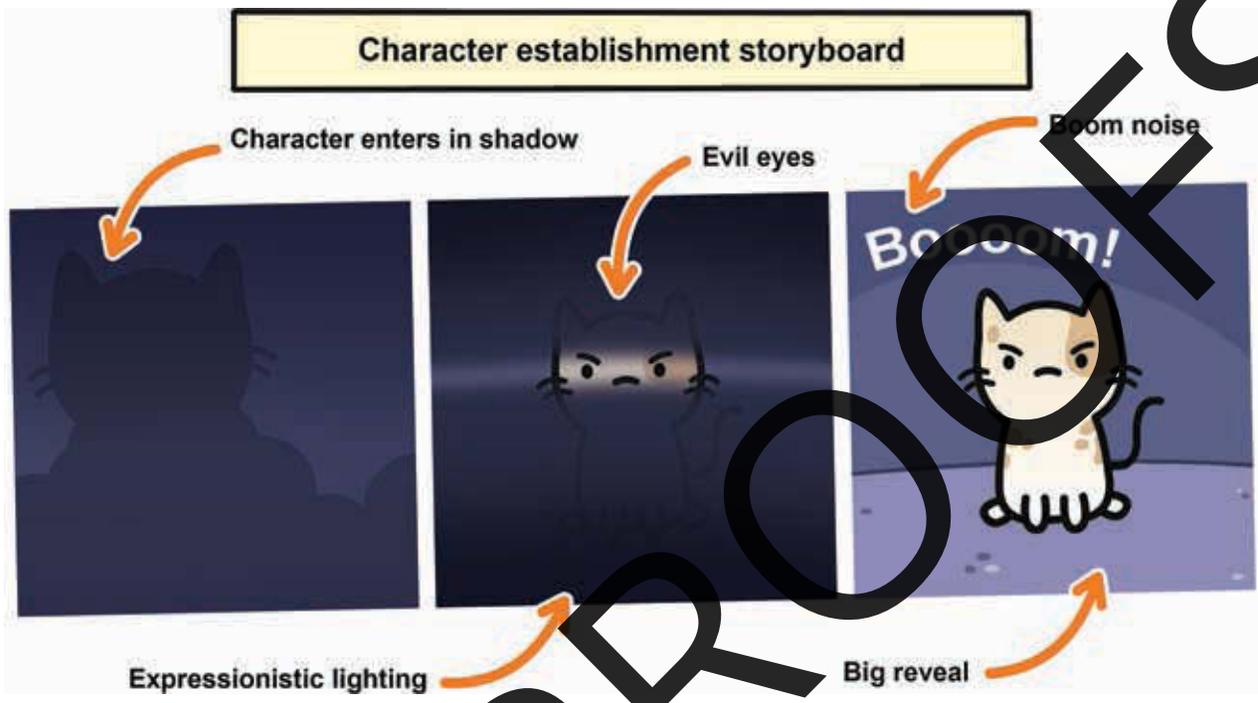
Consider how to **establish** your main character. Draw a detailed storyboard of your opening scene: it will only last for a few seconds, so make sure it very clearly shows the viewers what you want them to infer about your main character.

Step 3

Draw a brief storyboard for the remainder of the film. It doesn't have to be as detailed as the opening scene storyboard. What is the plot? Are the events shown in chronological order? How does the character develop? What is the climax of the film?

Step 4

If you are able to, record the actual film. You could use yourself as the main actor, or you could work as part of a group. *Tip:* It often takes at least an hour to edit one minute of footage, so even though this is a very short film, it still requires time to complete it.



Resources

Digital document Storyboard template (doc 35115)

7.8 SkillBuilder: Analysing mise-en-scène

online only

Why analyse mise-en-scène?

Mise-en-scène is a broad term that encompasses many elements on the screen or stage. Being able to confidently write about mise-en-scène will add an extra dimension to your film or play analysis.

Select your learnON format to access:

- an explanation of the skill (Tell me)
- a video and step-by-step process to develop the skill (Show me)
- an activity and interactivity for you to practise the skill (Let me do it)

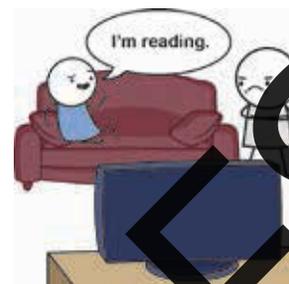


7.9 Review

7.9.1 Key points to remember

7.2 Inference versus observation

- Observing visual texts differs from reading written texts, so different skills are required.
- Observation involves noticing the details of what is happening, whereas inference involves finding meaning in those details.
- Inferences from visual texts can be built on elements like sound and editing.
- It's perfectly acceptable to say you can *read* a visual text.



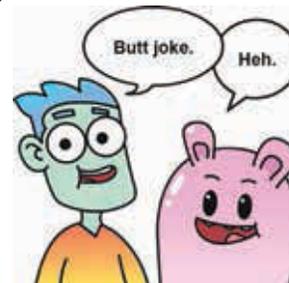
7.3 Reading visual texts

- Inferences can be read into details of characters through acting, screen time and mise-en-scène.
- Style includes editing, genre, and directorial choices.
- Narrative structures in visual texts can be linear or circular, and can involve flashbacks and flashforwards.
- Fabula is the chronological order of events, while sujet is the order in which events occur throughout the text.



7.4 Inferring from short films and cartoons

- Short films usually run for forty minutes or less, so they need to pack in a lot of meaning in a short time.
- Cartoons are often satirical: used to make fun of people.
- Anime follows a different narrative structure to western narratives.



7.5 Watching characters grow

- Characters are established through various production elements such as camera shots and movements; and sound design, lighting and editing.
- Characters develop through changing relationships throughout the narrative.
- Characters also develop within a franchise.



7.6 Inferring from non-fiction

- Reality TV shows aren't always real. They use scripting, editing, and sound and music to build characters.
- The news often has a bias which can be critically analysed through inferring skills.
- Audiences can be considered passive or active consumers depending on how readily they accept the information presented to them, and how much they apply critical analysis.
- Advertisements are increasingly targeted at individuals.



7.9 Activities

online only

7.9 Review

Go to www.jacplus.com.au and access your learnON format to complete the review questions. A post-test is also available to determine how your knowledge and skills have improved since starting this topic.

7.9.2 Reflection

Now that you know more about viewing for inference, take a moment to think about what this topic has taught you.

1. What did you learn that surprised you?

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2. How do you think the ability to infer when viewing will help you in your everyday life?

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3. Which visual element or technique will you pay close attention to, next time you view something?

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Resources

-  **Sample responses** Topic 7 sample responses (sar-0127)
-  **Digital document** Self-reporting template (doc-35521)
-  **Interactivity** Key terms crossword (int-8265)

Glossary

- active** characterised by action, rather than by contemplation or speculation
- agenda-setting function theory** the creation of public awareness and concern of important and topical issues by the news media (credited to Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, this term was first used in 1972)
- anime** a style of Japanese film and television animation, typically aimed at adults as well as children
- annotate** to add labels to something
- archetype** a very typical example of a character (in narrative fiction), for example the *hero* or *villain*
- arsenal** an array of resources available for a certain purpose

aurally of, relating to, or perceived by the ear

backstory the personal history of a character, exposed after the audience has already met them

big data extremely large data sets that may be analysed by computers to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions

characterisation how characters are established and developed, and how they are generally portrayed

chronologically following the time-order in which something occurred

colour grading deliberately changing the colour of scenes in a visual text: used to represent a certain mood, theme or time

consumer someone who purchases or uses something

context background information on a topic that provides more information (to assist the reader's understanding), what you already know based on your experience

convention a way in which something is usually done

diegetic sounds sounds that have a source (for the characters) on-screen, such as dialogue or footsteps

editing the process of taking all of the filmed material and putting it together in the chosen order, including adding special effects and sound

establish to set up or cause someone to be familiar with something

evocative creates a strong feeling or emotional response

fabula a Russian term for the chronological order of events in a text (linked to **sujet**)

flashback a scene in a narrative (film, novel etc.) set in a time earlier than the main story

flashforward a device in a narrative (film novel etc.) by which a future event or scene is inserted into the story's current events

franchise a series of films set in the same 'world' with the same characters

genre a style or category of entertainment (for example, art, music, or literature) such as action, romance etc.

hero's journey a set narrative structure with established stages; the term was coined by academic Joseph Campbell in 1949

inference reading between the lines and using evidence in a text to make meaning

improvise to make something up on the spot with no planning or rehearsal

Kuleshov Effect a technique that allows viewers to derive more meaning from the interaction of two sequential shots than from a single shot in isolation

linear progressing from one part to another in a single series of steps, sequential

metadata basic pieces of information which can be grouped together (this term is especially used to refer to the hacking and use of personal data stored online)

mise-en-scène the arrangement of the scenery, props and other visual elements on the stage of a theatrical production or on the set of a film, within any one frame

narrative the story or plot

narrative techniques tools, skills and ability which create a narrative; includes plot development, character establishment and development, and narrative structure

non-diegetic sounds sounds that don't have a source (for the characters) such as narration, background music or inner monologues

observation looking at the details and descriptions in a text, including visual elements and sound

pace in film editing, the speed at which the text moves through shots

passive not active; lacking urgency or action

prequel a story set (in time) before an existing story, featuring the same character or situation and explaining the backstory. For example, a film about the childhood of the character who first appeared on screen five years ago.

production elements the technical elements of film production such as camera, acting, sound, lighting etc.

rhetorical appeal a technique used to appeal to an audience (examples include ethos, pathos, logos, kairos)

satire the use of humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and criticise people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues

setting the time and place where the action of a story happens

sequel a story set (in time) after an existing story, featuring the same character or situation and continuing the story. For example, a film where the teenager who first appeared on screen five years ago is now an adult.

style the visual, auditory and genre-based feel of a film or TV show. Often directors have a distinctive style.

sujet a Russian term for the presentation order of events in a text (linked to **fabula**)

symbolise to represent something (for example, slow music to represent sadness; bright colouring to represent happiness)

targeted advertising a form of advertising that focuses on the specific traits, interests, and preferences of a consumer (commonly used in online advertising)

vignette a 'slice of life' or moment in time: short films commonly create narratives around vignettes

7.8 SkillBuilder: Analysing mise-en-scène

7.8.1 Tell me

Mise-en-scène is a French term which refers to 'setting the stage'. It comes from the world of theatre but can also be applied to film. Mise-en-scène is a broad term which covers many of the elements we see on screen, such as:

- **Costume** - what the characters wear
- **Lighting** - what the lighting emphasises or hides
- **Props** - what the characters hold or have around them
- **Framing and composition** - the placement of everything
- **Blocking** - where the characters stand, move to, enter and exit
- **Colour** - in costumes, backdrops, lighting, editing, etc

Being able to write about mise-en-scène will give your film or play analysis a whole extra dimension – not many students can confidently talk about this extremely important element of visual texts. Mise-en-scène helps to define a film's style and some directors use these techniques to create powerful and emotional scenes.

7.8.2 Show me

on Resources

▶ **Video eLessons** Analysing mise-en-scène (eles-4316)

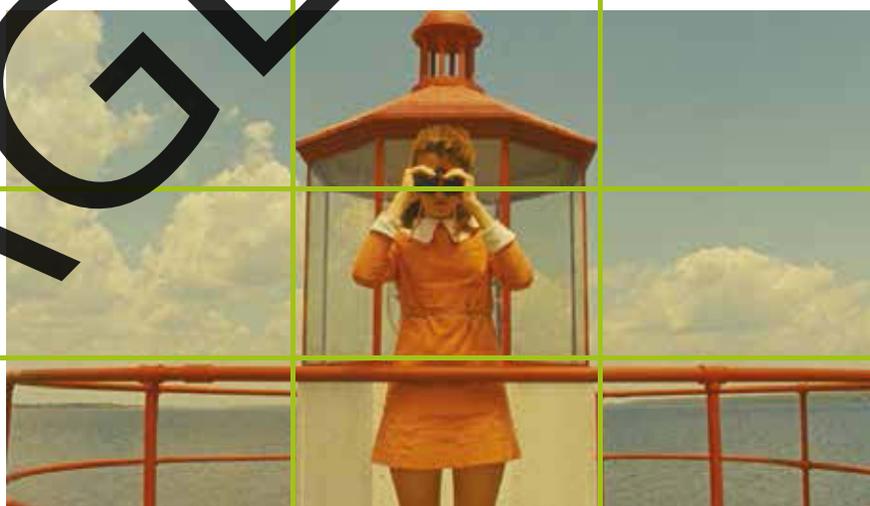
Wes Anderson is a director famous for his control of mise-en-scène and his unique visual style. Chances are, you've never seen one of his films – they're marketed at an older audience. But once you see one of his films, you'll notice that *all* of his films have a trademark style. We'll look at the mise-en-scène of a couple of shots to identify some of the important points.

Let's dissect this image from Anderson's film *Moonlight Kingdom*.

Composition: The 'rule of thirds' is used to its fullest – important features such as the binoculars or the railing are placed on imaginary lines which divide the frame into thirds.

Props: The lighthouse and railing frame the character and also further emphasise the colours in the scene.

Blocking: Blocking includes actor movement and body language. This actor is standing still, but her body language (and even the cut of her dress) mirrors the angles of the lighthouse behind her.



Colour: Orange and blue are complementary colours which means they have very high contrast and are very pleasing to the eye.

Costume: The clothing is vintage in colour and style, matching the era of the film perfectly.

7.8.3 Let me do it

Complete the following activities to practise this skill.

on Resources

👉 **Interactivity** Analysing mise-en-scène (int-8297)

7.8 Activities

1. Which elements of mise-en-scène can you identify from this shot, taken from another Wes Anderson film *Hotel Chevalier*? What is similar or different to the *Moonlight Kingdom* scene?



2. a. Find your own image from a movie or play scene and analyse the elements of mise-en-scène, making notes on what you find.
b. Write a brief description of the scene and how the different elements help to send a message.