UNIT 2

INTERTEXTUALITY

The BIG question
How does intertextuality create richer reading and viewing experiences?

Key learning ideas
- Intertextuality allows us to draw on existing ideas to create interesting new works.
- Intertextuality is strongly influenced by society and culture.
- Intertextuality brings the unique, individual perspectives of creators together.

Knowledge, understanding and skills
Students will:
- explore how ideas, storylines, characters and themes can be shared among texts
- learn about the techniques of appropriation, allusion, imagery, parody and quotation
- identify how the meaning of a text varies with form, context and interpretation.
'The writer is a reader of texts... before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind.'
— M. Worton and J. Stills

‘No text, much as it might like to appear so, is original and unique-in-itself; rather it is a tissue of inevitable, and to an extent unwitting, references to and quotations from other texts.’
— Graham Allen
What is intertextuality?

*Intertextuality* is the term we use to describe the ways that texts and their meanings are shaped by other texts. In literature and other creative artworks, writers and artists are influenced by numerous factors that link together. For example, a writer who has viewed a certain film may be influenced by some of the ideas in that film. This influence may become apparent in their writing as they work on a novel, poem or play.

Intertextuality enables us to understand texts more fully. Writers can make a text seem more realistic by referring to ideas, people or events that exist in the real world — our world. By making reference to things we can relate to, writers help us to feel a sense of familiarity with the world they are creating for us.

Intertextuality may be deliberate or unintentional. Sometimes writers may not be aware of the influence that other texts have on their work. In contrast, other writers seek to transform an inspiring idea from another text into a fresh concept that carries additional meanings. Writers and artists frequently borrow or reinvent storylines, themes and characters. It is fun to explore the new ways in which they are presented.

Studying intertextuality goes beyond just identifying similarities between creative works. In this unit, we will also look at some intertextual crafting techniques that can be used to link texts together. These include **appropriation**, **allusion**, **parody**, imagery and quotation. Let's begin by exploring the richness that intertextual links can bring to our experience of reading and creating.

Tuning in

1 **Think**: Look at the word *intertextuality*. Break it into smaller words and think about their meanings.
   - **inter** (a prefix meaning ‘to cross boundaries’)
   - **text** (a piece of writing or other visible communication)
   - **uality** (a suffix to describe a state of being)

2 **Reflect and share**: Intertextuality involves looking at the sources and influences of texts to identify the origin of certain features. Most texts would simply not be the same if certain works had not been written before them.
   - **a** Can you think of a text you have read or viewed that could not have existed without a particular text that came before it?
   - **b** Look at the images in the opening pages of this chapter. Which texts or people are being referred to in each one? List them and compare your list with a partner’s.

3 **Write**: Write your own definition of the term *intertextuality*. Make a list of some types of creative works that could be considered examples of intertextuality.

**LANGUAGE link**

**Context**

Context is like the background of a text — the writer’s background and the reader’s background. It includes who the writer is; when he or she lived and wrote; what country it was written in; what was occurring in society at the time; what else was being written at the time; and when it is being read and by whom.

All texts are affected by context, whether it is social, political, cultural or historical. The personal background and experiences of the creator are part of its context, and they help us in working out the meaning of a text.

To show your understanding of the ways in which context can vary, write a paragraph in which you describe three different aspects of your life: your family context, your social context and your historical context.

**NEED TO KNOW**

*appropriation* borrowing in the form of adaptation, reuse or reinterpretation of something from an existing text to produce a new text

*allusion* a reference in a text to a person, place, event or other work, which the writer assumes to be part of the shared cultural experience of the readers

*parody* a humorous or satirical imitation of a serious piece of literature, writing, art or music
How do writers draw on previous ideas to create new works?

One type of intertextuality involves borrowing or reinterpreting ideas explored by others in order to create new meanings.

The material presented in a text is called its content. Textual content includes plots, settings, characters, themes, ideas and images. When this content is deliberately recycled, reused or reinterpreted (appropriated) by a writer in a different era, setting and society, new meanings can emerge. These meanings will be influenced by the later society: its culture and history; the type of audience, and their technologies and lifestyles.

In the following collection of texts, specific images and ideas have been borrowed from a famous painting by the Impressionist artist Vincent van Gogh. When he painted the work *Starry Night*, perhaps van Gogh was thinking of the traditional Christmas story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Since van Gogh’s time, many writers, poets, artists, designers and lyricists have borrowed the ideas depicted in his painting and reinterpreted them.

Before you read the poem on the next page that reinterprets van Gogh’s painting above, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.
The title contains the name of the painting. (1)
The first line reveals an interesting truth: Van Gogh was in a sanatorium when he painted this scene, inspired partially by a remembered scene and his imagination. (3)
Reference to the dominant object in the painting (4)
Repetition of these phrases emphasises the powerful effect of the painting on the poet. (7–8, 13–14)
Reference to the movement conveyed by the artist’s brush strokes (9)
A metaphorical reference to death as a beast (12, 15, 16)
No warning or sign (17)
No physical presence (18)
No emotion or sense of sadness (19)
Two-word phrases at the end symbolise both a sudden slipping away of the poem, and the poet’s life. (17–19)
Activities …

UNDERSTANDING the texts

Getting started
1 What painting is being described in the poem?
2 List things you can see in the painting and things you can find mentioned in the poem. You could show these in a table.

Working through
3 Which colours are used in the painting Starry Night? List all of them. How many of these colours are used in the poem?
4 Describe the rhyming pattern of the poem.
5 What is the key thought expressed in Anne Sexton’s poem?

ANALYSING and EVALUATING the texts

Getting started
6 How would you describe the mood of the poem ‘The Starry Night’? Is it sad, happy, gloomy, angry or some other mood?
7 With which of the texts — painting or poem — do you feel the strongest emotional connection? Explain your response.

Working through
8 Do you believe Anne Sexton appreciates the painting? Explain your response, making reference to specific words and phrases.
9 Consider van Gogh’s battles with mental illness. Does Anne Sexton appear to be sympathetic toward the artist’s struggles? How do you know?
10 Why does Anne Sexton use the line ‘The town does not exist’? Where was van Gogh when he painted Starry Night?
11 What particular elements contribute to the sense of movement in the painting?
12 What does Anne Sexton suggest that the free-flowing, chaotic movement might represent?

Going further
13 Can words simulate the effect of a painting? Explain.

CREATING responses to the texts

Getting started
14 Choose one element of the painting and write your own description of it in two or three sentences.

Working through
15 Write a paragraph commenting on the emotive language present in the poem. What effect does it have?
16 Write a paragraph explaining how Anne Sexton has used strong verbs to convey the idea of turmoil in the artist’s mind.

Going further
17 If you were to appropriate the poem ‘The Starry Night’ in a medium other than poetry, song or painting, what medium would you choose? Why?
18 Lyricist Don McLean wrote a popular song called ‘Vincent’. Its title is sometimes misquoted as ‘Starry, Starry Night’, which is actually the song’s first line. Conduct some research to find the song in its entirety, and then annotate the lyrics to show examples of intertextuality.
Intertextuality through film and painting

In the texts we've studied so far, intertextuality appears in the form of appropriation (borrowing ideas from other creators), using similar imagery and quoting aspects of another’s work (such as the title phrase, *Starry Night*). In other texts, the new creators have been influenced not merely by the style or ideas in someone's artistic work, but also their actual history — their life experiences — which have been recorded in letters and testimonies from family members.

**LITERATURE link**

**Imagery**

Imagery consists of the mental pictures and sensations in a work of art or literature. Visual imagery is the aspects of an artwork that we can see (in visual art) or that we can picture in our mind if it is described in written language. Imagery in visual art involves use of colour, shape, themes, ideas and mood. In writing, imagery is developed through the use of creative techniques that engage our physical senses and our emotions. Description, metaphors, similes, personification all help to create imagery in a text.

**What is the most powerful imagery for you in the poem 'The Starry Night'? Why does it appeal to you?**

The life story of Vincent van Gogh has been the source of inspiration for numerous creative works. A number of feature films have been made about the artist, most recently one called *Starry Night*. The text on page 42 is a review of the film.

Before you read the film review, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

**READY TO READ …**

- Look at the promotional poster for the film and look for any obvious references to Van Gogh's original painting.
- What do you think the film might be about?
- Scan the review and notice all the words that begin with capital letters. These words are proper nouns and will be factual details of people, places and titles.

**NEED TO KNOW**

Vincent van Gogh (pronounced van goch, like the Scottish word loch) The artist did not achieve fame as an artist in his lifetime. His life was marked by depression and possibly mental illness that led to much misery and sadness. He found relief through painting, which he used to express his emotions. After his death by suicide in 1890, members of his family promoted his works until they achieved the world recognition they deserved. During his lifetime, van Gogh didn't always receive the help he needed, and died feeling misunderstood. He is remembered as a tragic figure, an artistic genius whose work and ideas did not fit into the society and culture of his time.
‘Vincent in LA’
by Allan Lee

Picture this… Dutch Impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh time-travels to present-day Los Angeles. Could you suspend your disbelief long enough to appreciate a film based on this premise?

Paul Davids has favoured us with just such a flick, *Starry Night*, released on DVD by Universal Studios Home Video. Davids has the tortured painter, Vincent van Gogh landing in LA, stretching the premise that *anything can happen in LA*, Davids presents his romantic conception of the artist as he struggles to come to terms with the fact that his work is now highly prized and worth a fortune. The plot certainly satisfies the longing some of us have had for old Vincent to enjoy the success that was denied him in his lifetime. The dramatically ironic reality is that he sold only a single painting before taking his own life at 37 years of age. The artist takes the opportunity to wreak revenge on his unfortunate past by swiping all his works from various wealthy collectors. But no one actually believes that he is the real Vincent van Gogh, not even in the City of Angels. Whoever said that Los Angelinos will believe anything?

Davids, *Starry Night’s* writer/director, says he was inspired by the multi-million dollar price tags on van Gogh’s paintings at prestigious art auctions during the 1990s. Davids and his wife, Hollace Davids, saw the project as a labour of love. The Davids have compelled viewers to imagine the conflicting emotions van Gogh would experience were he aware of his stature as one of the most celebrated artists of his time. This warm, romantic flick has charmed quite a few reviewers including this one. It is an imaginative and whimsical exploration of art and authenticity in an increasingly artificial and materialistic world. In a truly satisfying touch, Davids can’t resist having Vincent fall in love. And finally, of course, Don McLean’s iconic recording ‘Vincent’, features as the theme. *Starry Night* is a refreshing take on romantic comedy that is sure to please.

Review begins by presenting a scenario and a rhetorical question to draw the reader in. (1–4)

The title has been appropriated from the famous painting. (5–6)

Information about where to purchase the film is featured early in the review. (6)

The intertextuality here involves placing a real person from the past into a modern, but fictional, setting (7–8)

An allusion to a popular cultural myth about the city, shown in italics to identify it as an often-spoken phrase (8)

A true historical fact (14)

A reference to the meaning of the Spanish name, Los Angeles (19)

The specific origins of the idea for the film (21–23)

Interpretation made based on the details we know about van Gogh’s mental state when he was alive (25–26)

Positive adjectives convey the reviewer’s feelings about the film. (27–28)

The director’s fictional addition to make this newly invented van Gogh a happier figure (31–32)

A key word used to signal that we are near the end of the review (32)

Intertextual reference (32–33)

The film’s theme and final views of the reviewer are summarised for emphasis near the end of the review (33–34)

Specific name of this review (35)

The magazine’s title, reference details for the exact edition of the magazine credit, and for the writer of the review (36–37)
Intertextuality in an artwork

The artwork below shares intertextual links with Vincent van Gogh’s original painting of *Starry Night*. However, it adds elements that create new meaning.

![Starry Night over Bethlehem by Suzanne Bort Gray](image)

**Activities ...**

**UNDERSTANDING the texts**

*Getting started*

1. How does Paul Davids use the character of Vincent van Gogh in his film?
2. What other text is referenced in the artwork *Starry Night over Bethlehem*?

*Working through*

3. What is the premise of Paul Davids’ film *Starry Night*?
4. What inspired Davids to create the storyline of the film?
5. Can you recognise the figures featured in the artwork *Starry Night over Bethlehem*? If so, who are they and what meaning do they represent?

*Going further*

6. Does the writer give the film a favourable review? Use evidence from the text to support your response.
7. Who do you think is the audience for the artwork? Explain.

**RESPONDING to the texts**

*Getting started*

8. In a short paragraph, say why you think the film and the artwork could be seen as paying tribute to van Gogh’s life and art.

*Working through*

9. Write a letter to Vincent van Gogh explaining the impact that his painting *Starry Night* has had on our society. Give specific examples of intertextuality in your writing.

*Going further*

10. Do you feel that van Gogh’s influence might have been less dramatic on later creative endeavours had he not suffered from a mental illness and died tragically young? Explain your response.

**LANGUAGE link**

Use of symbols to add meaning

Colours can be used symbolically in creative works. To van Gogh, for example, the colour yellow symbolised happiness. It can be seen particularly in his *Sunflowers* painting, but also in the stars in *Starry Night*.

Writers also use colour to create mood and emotion. For example, in this sentence, the writer is clearly using yellow to symbolise joy and new beginnings. ‘It was a golden day, a day when yellow light danced and played in every corner of the world, banishing the dark shadows of despair that had lately taken up residence there.’

**What colour would you use to symbolise fear or anger?** Write a few sentences showing how you would incorporate symbolic use of colour in description or narrative.
Intertextuality is about the connections between texts, creators and their works. There are many ways in which texts can be connected. Texts are often created in response to an event, idea, experience or thought that may have been shared among many people. We’ve seen how ideas for written texts can be drawn from a visual text, such as a painting. Other visual texts can be inspired by images that were created by artists from other times and places. Music is another excellent source of stimulation for the imagination of a writer.

The content of texts can provide points of connection, such as:
- storylines — what happens
- settings — place and time
- themes — ideas and morals
- characters — people
- techniques, structures, language and style — how the creator works.

Each of these aspects of texts has the potential to be used to create intertextual links. When we consider how creators create texts (their style), it is useful to identify some key techniques for making connections between texts. Three techniques in written works in which the content is intertextual are appropriation, allusion and quotation.

Appropriation

Characters are sometimes reused or reinvented in order for a writer to say something new about a particular issue, or just to entertain. This type of appropriation is common in comedy writing. Writers who criticise or mock a particular aspect of our society often appropriate, or borrow, certain ideas, characters, themes or content from other source material. For example, a recent political cartoon used, as a background, a famous historical painting of Captain Cook’s landing in Australia. The only change to the painting was that a sailor was hoisting an Aboriginal flag and Captain Cook was telling him off. By alluding to another artwork, the creator is able to capture attention and deliver new perspectives on an issue.

Allusion

Certain forms of writing rely on allusion in order to be effective. Allusion involves making a direct or indirect reference that is understood to carry a specific meaning. In ordinary conversation, we allude to other texts and situations all the time. For example, allusions sometimes form the basis of similes and metaphors. You might hear someone say ‘People have been avoiding me all day, as if I have the plague.’ This simile contains an allusion to the bubonic plague, which killed almost a third of Europeans between 1340 and the early 1500s. However, this is simply a historical allusion.

An example of a literary allusion is when a person says ‘It’s a catch-22 situation.’ This is a direct allusion to Catch-22, the title of a book by Joseph Heller. (A catch-22 now refers to any paradoxical situation; for example, if you try to cross the river, you will drown, but if you don’t, you will be eaten by a bear.)

An indirect allusion you might have heard is Achilles’ heel, as in ‘She’s a great netballer but her Achilles’ heel is that she has a shocking temper.’ This is an allusion to Homer’s Iliad, in which the Greek hero Achilles is killed by an arrow in his only weak, mortal spot: his heel.
Quotation

Another form that intertextuality takes in written texts is quotation: the use of another writer’s exact words in a new text. Quoting one text within another is a very simple means of linkage, and is most often done deliberately and explicitly, with credit given to the original source. This is typical in essays and other non-fiction texts. It is very important to provide a complete reference to the source of the quote so as to correctly acknowledge its creator.

Sometimes, though, writers will use direct quotes from other texts for specific effects, without giving credit to the source, often because it is so well known. This is often the case when writers quote Shakespeare. If a fiction writer has one of his or her characters speak some lines from a Shakespeare play, the writer often does not reference it.

One famous example of an intertextual quotation is the classic line, useful when being confronted by a bad guy who is about to shoot: ‘Go ahead, make my day.’

1. Do some internet research to find out the name of the film series that first gave us this line. Who was the character who spoke the line?

2. Appropriations, allusions and quotations enable us to create some specific forms of literature. Some of these are listed below. Use a print or online dictionary to look up the meaning of each of these forms of writing, and then write definitions for them.

- satire
- caricature
- parody
- spoof or send-up
- lampooning

OVER TO YOU …

Conduct an online search to find some of Shakespeare’s most famous quotations either from his poetry or his plays. Choose one quotation that appeals to you and write a brief monologue by a character in which he or she uses the quotation in an intertextual way.

Or

Think about your favourite book or song and choose a line from it that you can use as a literary allusion in a brief dialogue between two friends.

Or

Choose a fairytale or nursery rhyme character and write a brief synopsis for a new story that uses the character in a new form.

My view ...

Why do you think some writers borrow the ideas of others? Would you enjoy the challenge of creating something fresh and new from an existing text? What topics or themes would you be interested in expressing? Which art forms would you be most likely to use to express your ideas?
2.2 INTERTEXTUALITY AND CONTEXT

How does society and culture affect intertextuality?

In studying texts in relation to one another, it is important to view the content of a work within its context: the social, cultural, historical and technological world in which it was created. Texts that are similar in content, whether accidentally or intentionally, carry different meanings according to their specific context. The world of the creator and the world of the reader both have significant influence on the ways that a text is interpreted, appreciated and evaluated. Texts that share the same content can seem to be worlds apart when compared side by side. Some texts share the same storyline or character, yet the responder’s cultural context makes them entirely different. Contextual differences affect both the creator and the responder, creating opportunities for endless variety and creativity.

Reinventing Wonderland

A classic tale such as *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* can be drawn on to explore similar themes within very different contexts. This children’s story, written by Lewis Carroll in 1865, has inspired numerous intertextual references in many creative mediums in contemporary times. The table below presents just a small selection of the intertextual use of Lewis Carroll’s original conception of Alice and her adventures.

| Intertextual links to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in popular culture |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Film and television</strong></th>
<th><strong>Music</strong></th>
<th><strong>Computer games</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The television series, <em>Lost</em>: Two episodes are called ‘White Rabbit’ and ‘Through the Looking Glass, Part 1’. White rabbits represent mysteries that need investigating. A copy of the book, <em>Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland</em> is used as an item to be traded with other crash survivors.</td>
<td>‘Alice’ by Avril Lavigne</td>
<td><em>Super Mario Brothers</em>: Eating a mushroom makes you grow bigger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Resident Evil</em>: The main character is named Alice, and there’s a supercomputer called the Red Queen with a little girl as its avatar.</td>
<td>‘Mad Hatter’ by Lynyrd Skynryd</td>
<td><em>Bloody Roar series</em>: The character, Alice, can turn into a white rabbit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen</em>: Alice is a deceptively human robot.</td>
<td>‘Goodbye Alice in Wonderland’ by Jewel</td>
<td><em>Rage of the Dragons</em>: The character Alice Carrol looks like traditional illustrations of Alice, although she is more menacing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A Nightmare on Elm Street 4</em>: Alice Johnson supernaturally controls her dreams and defeats Freddie Kruger by showing him a shard from her looking glass.</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Super Robot Wars L</em>: A character called Robot Maid AL-3 Alice is able to travel to a different dimension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the same way, the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon below is an example of appropriation of the story of Alice. It presents a reference to a scene from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in which Alice drinks a magic potion and suddenly grows to an enormous size.

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The popular culture film *The Matrix* also appropriates ideas from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but uses a science-fiction context. The extract from the review of the film below refers to the intertextual links between the children's story and the film.

**Neo in Wonderland**

*Have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world? (The Matrix by Andy and Larry Wachowksi, 1999)*

The 1999 science fiction film *The Matrix* borrows many ideas from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In the film, we follow the adventures of Neo, a young computer programmer who learns that his daily reality is not in fact the real world. Rather, it is a highly advanced computer simulation created by artificially intelligent machines who have enslaved human beings on a global scale. When Neo is unplugged from the simulated world that he has believed in for his whole life, he learns that he has been chosen to lead a rebellion against the machines who control the real world.

From the very beginning of the film, we see the intertextual allusions to Lewis Carroll’s tale for children. In *The Matrix*, a message on his computer advises Neo to ‘follow the white rabbit’ which turns out to be a girl with a white rabbit tattoo. This begins his journey out of the Matrix and into the real world. In the children’s story, Alice decides to follow a white rabbit down a hole, which leads her out of the real world and into Wonderland. When Neo awakes from his dream world, Morpheus remarks that he must be ‘feeling a bit like Alice, tumbling down a rabbit hole’.

The film presents some interesting ideas about the way humans perceive reality: whether reality is actually more than mere sensory perception, and the role that free will has in determining our destiny. The storyline of *The Matrix* has many features in common with the plot of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Most significantly, both texts present similar themes that challenge our ideas about whether we can trust our perceptions to reveal the true state of things in our world.
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING intertextuality

Getting started
1 Use the table of intertextual links to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to find a text that you are familiar with. How has this text used the earlier text? Did you realise this before now?

Working through
2 What event from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is referred to in the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon?
3 Which character in the film The Matrix is an appropriation of the character of Alice?
4 The idea of dreams is common to both The Matrix and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Is this an intertextual link to theme or to character? Explain.

Going further
5 Some of the transformed versions of the character of Alice are not good little girls, but rather evil characters. In small groups, discuss how an audience who knows the original character might respond to this recasting of Alice. Is there a particular medium; for example, film or computer games, in which this recasting might be more readily accepted by the audience? Why or why not?

RESPONDING to intertextuality

Getting started
6 Would people interested in reading the story Alice's Adventures in Wonderland be likely to enjoy scary films and computer games? Do a quick survey of the class and draw a pie graph to present the Yes/No percentages.
7 Is a text creator just being lazy when he or she appropriates an existing story or character for a new text? State your view and give at least two reasons to support your viewpoint.

Working through
8 The original story of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was written in a time when computers were non-existent. How might computer technology have changed the way Lewis Carroll constructed his story had it been available to him? Think of at least three ways he may have changed his story.
9 Do you feel that the original story of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland could mean different things to people from our time than the author intended? In what ways could unintended meanings be taken from the text?
10 In pairs, discuss what Lewis Carroll would have thought of having his ideas borrowed and reinterpreted in a film like The Matrix. Is ‘imitation the sincerest form of flattery’ or might he have been annoyed? How do you think you would react in that situation?
11 If you were asked to make the decision Neo had to make, would you swallow the red pill or the blue pill? Explain your response.

Going further
12 Discuss some of the ways in which the target audience of The Matrix differs from Lewis Carroll's target audience. Think about their age, their historical eras, the nature of their society, their technologies and their culture.
13 Create a cartoon that parodies one aspect of the Alice's Adventures in Wonderland story. Illustrate your cartoon and add captions.
WAYS IN WHICH TEXTS CAN CONNECT: CONTEXTS

When we consider a text’s context, we are talking about the world in which the text currently exists, as well as the world from which it came. The text’s ‘world’ includes the historical period, the society and cultural setting, and even the creator’s specific lifestyle. These aspects of context have a huge influence on the style of the text as well as its meaning. The diagram below illustrates how this works.

The writer’s unique context influences the text he or she creates, his/her specific style and intended meaning.

The text brings new ideas to you, and at the same time, you bring a range of influences to the text which has effects on the meaning.

1 Complete the cloze sentences below by inserting the missing words from the following box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>understanding</th>
<th>writer</th>
<th>reader</th>
<th>background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>interpretations</td>
<td>context</td>
<td>inspired</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A text’s meaning is partly determined by the ____________, partly by the responder and partly by its surrounding ____________. Meaning always varies a little because of differences in our personal ____________ and experiences. When analysing texts, it’s important that we consider the writer, the ____________ and the wider context so that we can arrive at a good ____________ of a particular text. Context is the general ____________ in which a work was created. Literary influence is all the other texts and artworks a creator has been affected by or ____________ by without necessarily alluding to or borrowing from them.

2 Would you be able to work out whether a particular text was written by one of your parents or by a convict from the year 1790? How would you know?

3 Could you tell whether a text set in the distant future was written recently or in the 1800s? Explain your answer.
Technological context in film-making

Historical context also affects the conventions we adopt or break. Conventions are the accepted ‘rules’ and formats of writing (and other creative pursuits). These are the usual practices that writers and other text creators adopt in their work. The film series The Matrix, for example, gave us a camera technique called ‘bullet time’ that enables directors to capture the movement of bullets in a frame-by-frame sequence. This creates a slow-motion visual effect that appears both slow and rapid simultaneously when seen as part of an action sequence. The directors of the film, the Wachowski brothers, were not the inventors of this technique, but they did popularise it. It has been said they were inspired by the late 1960s Speed Racer cartoons. Another new convention that has become increasingly common since the Wachowksi’s films is ‘wire work’, in which the actor is assisted in making high jumps and aerial manoeuvres in fight scenes by being suspended from wires on the set. These techniques can only be invented when certain other technology is available. Once a new film technique has been introduced, it tends to become widely used in other films, before eventually becoming clichéd and falling out of fashion.

4 Is the use of a particular camera technique in more than one film a form of ‘intertextuality’? Justify your opinion.

The appearance of these film-making conventions in the past few decades has given rise to numerous films that have copied or adapted them to make new works. In this way, these films are dependent on their particular historical and technological context. Films made in times when cinematographic technology was less advanced must be judged according to their context. For example, we would be ignoring context if we were to compare the special effects in The Blob, made in 1958, with those featured in Spiderman 3, made in 2007.

5 Think of a film you have seen that was made more than 20 years ago. Describe the visual effects in the film to a partner. Discuss the differences between those effects and special effects presented in recent films you have seen. Are there some clear areas in which technological advances have affected the quality? Give specific examples.

OVER TO YOU …

Texts other than films are also affected by the technology available in their historical context.

List four other types of texts that are now created differently from how they were created a hundred years ago. After some research, describe in detail to a partner the modern creation process of one of these text types. Can you see how the technological context of a text alters the finished product?

My view …

Can a modern ‘take’ on an old text reach whole new audiences? Does the creation in a new context of a text that has strong intertextual links to another, earlier text also affect the way audiences regard the earlier text? Do you believe that intertextuality enriches or impoverishes our cultural heritage?
How does intertextuality allow creators to bring their perspectives together?

Intertextual links can exist between texts that were made by creators who were born thousands of years apart. Common themes that have been explored for millennia by creative people include the nature of love, the horror of war, death, human relationships, character flaws, destiny and spirituality. People throughout history share common concerns. These often inspire them to create texts that speak about universal human experiences. A lovesick teenager living in ancient Persia, for example, experiences very similar emotions to a twenty-first-century teenager fretting over a boyfriend or girlfriend. Language, techniques and processes may change over time, but certain human experiences and perceptions are timeless and common to most people across the world.

A rich web of intertextual connections can be seen in ancient myths and folk tales. They provide many opportunities for intertextual linkage. One ancient Greek myth that has inspired many poets, artists, writers and directors is the story of Daedalus and Icarus. This was first written down in book VIII of the narrative poem *Metamorphoses* by the Greek poet Ovid, but the Icarus myth had long been a traditional story passed down the generations in ancient Greece. It tells the story of a boy, Icarus, and his father, Daedalus, who were imprisoned inside a labyrinth (a giant maze with high walls) on the island of Crete. At the centre of the maze lurked a beast called the Minotaur, a creature that was half-man, half-bull. To make their escape, Daedalus made two pairs of wings from feathers and wax. Cautioning his son not to fly too near the sun, Daedalus took off from the island with Icarus by his side. But against his father’s advice, Icarus became ambitious and over-confident. He flew too high and the sun melted the wax, causing his wings to fall apart. Icarus landed in the sea near the shoreline and drowned.

The poem on the following page has been inspired by the myth of Icarus, thousands of years after its creation and by a painting in 1558 also depicting the myth.

Before you read the poem, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.
Landscape with the Fall of Icarus
by William Carlos Williams (1962)

According to Brueghel_1_
when Icarus fell
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry

of the year was
awake tingling
near

the edge of the sea
concerned
with itself

sweating in the sun
that melted
the wings’ wax

unsignificantly
off the coast
there was

a splash quite unnoticed
this was
Icarus drowning

The first verse establishes the idea that the poet is presenting someone else’s interpretation of the Icarus story. (1–3)

Brueghel: The painter who created the work Fall of Icarus. (1)

Icarus is mentioned by name in the first and last phrases only, unifying the poem (2, 21)

The season provides a contrast with the death of a young boy, since spring is associated with new life. (3)

The poem features personification, alliteration and onomatopoeia. (7–8, 13, 15, 19)

Minimal punctuation is used, which removes interruption, makes each statement of equal importance, and has the effect of creating a single, ongoing thought stream, unifying the poem’s structure. (16–21)

Use the Brueghel weblink in your eBookPLUS to see the painting online.
Intertextuality through parody and allusions

In the following poem 'Icarus Allsorts', the subject of nuclear war and the threat it presents to humanity is treated with humour and ridicule. This is done to mock the reckless attitudes thought to be held by those in control of military weapons that threaten all life on Earth. By presenting this theme using childish language, parody and cliché, the poet is able to convey his concerns about the issue in a powerful and dramatic manner. Unlike the poem on page 52, the comparison with Icarus here is a subtle one. It may be asking us to view the boy’s flight as arrogant and reckless, and likening this to the recklessness (in the poet’s eyes) of powerful military people today.

Before you read the poem, your teacher may ask you to complete the following Ready to Read activities.

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**READY TO READ …**

- The poem’s title contains a pun (play on words). Can you work out its meaning? *Hint: Say it aloud and think about lollies!* 
- Read the quotation below the poem’s title. Does this sound like part of the poem? Where do you think it might be from? 
- Read the first stanza of the poem aloud so that you can hear the rhythm and rhyming effects.

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1. *Icarus Allsorts*  
   by Roger McGough

   - ‘A meteorite is reported to have landed in New England. No damage is said.
   - A little bit of heaven fell
     From out the sky one day
     It landed in the ocean
     Not so very far away
   - The general at the radar screen
     Rubbed his hands in glee
     And grinning pressed the button
     That started World War Three
   - From every corner of the earth
     Bombs began to fly
     There were even missile jams
     No traffic lights in the sky
     In the time it takes to blow your nose
     The people fell, the mushrooms rose.
   - ‘House!’ cried the fat lady
   - As the bingo hall moved to various parts of the town
   - ‘Raus!’ cried the German butcher
     as his shop came tumbling down

---

The title alludes to the Icarus myth.  
The first lines imitate a news report.  
A reference to the meteorite and to something in the sky tracked on military radar, mistakenly thought to be a missile.  
At the start, lines are short, and sound like a playground rhyme.  
The structure of the poem is uneven, with stanzas of various lengths.
Phillip was in the counting house
Counting out his money
The Queen was in the parlour
Eating bread and honey
When through the window
Flew a bomb
And made them go all funny
In the time it takes to draw a breath
Or eat a toadstool, instant death

The rich
Huddled outside the doors of their fallout shelters
Like drunken carol singers
The poor
Clutching shattered televisions
And at last week’s editions of TV Times
(but the very last)
Civil defence volunteers
With their tin hats in one hand
And their heads in the other
CND supporters
Their ban the bomb badges beginning to rust
Have scrawled ‘I told you so’ in the dust

A little bit of heaven fell
From out of the sky one day
It landed in Vermont
North-eastern USA
The general at the radar screen
He should have got the sack
But that wouldn’t bring
Three thousand million, seven hundred, and sixty-eight people back,
Would it?
Activities ...

UNDERSTANDING poems inspired by other texts

Getting started  
1. What is the story of Icarus? Write a brief summary in your own words.  
2. Who was Brueghel and why is he mentioned in the poem ‘Landscape with the Fall of Icarus’?  
3. In what ways does ‘Icarus Allsorts’ make intertextual links? (Hint: At least two specific texts are referred or alluded to.)

Working through  
4. The first stanza of ‘Icarus Allsorts’ is structured in a nursery-rhyme style. Describe the rhyming pattern of this stanza.  
5. What poetic device is used in the phrase missile jams (‘Icarus Allsorts’) and the year was awake (‘Landscape with the Fall of Icarus’)?

Going further  
6. Explain the intertextual link of the toadstool and mushrooms mentioned in ‘Icarus Allsorts’.

ANALYSING poems inspired by other texts

Getting started  
7. Draw up a table with two columns: one headed ‘Similarities’ and one headed ‘Differences’. In the relevant column, list at least three things the poems on pages 52–4 have in common and three things that are different.

Working through  
8. Which of the poems presents (a) the most serious tone (b) the most emotional tone? Use quotes from the poems in your answer.

Going further  
9. ‘Icarus Allsorts’ contains many allusions that are references to specific aspects of history or culture. Find four and write explanations for these allusions.

RESPONDING to poems inspired by other texts

Getting started  
10. Which nursery rhyme is parodied in ‘Icarus Allsorts’? Do some internet research to find the words of the original rhyme and copy it out. How effective is the poet’s use of this rhyme in his poem?  
11. Write your own nursery rhyme that tells the story of Icarus. Make sure it has a simple rhyme and rhythm.

Working through  
12. Imagine you have been asked to flag certain words and phrases in ‘Icarus Allsorts’ to be made into hyperlinks for a web page. Choose five words or phrases that could be hyperlinked to Wikipedia, so that readers could find out more about certain allusions in the poem. List your choices and then write a sentence to describe the contents of the site to which you would link each one.

Going further  
13. Write a 300-word response to the following statement, using examples from both poems presented here and any other intertextual use of the Icarus legend you can find on the internet.  
‘The Greek myth of Icarus, the wax-winged wacko who flew too close to the sun, has made a far bigger splash in modern Western culture than he did in the Aegean Sea on that fateful day.’

LITERATURE link

Parody and caricature

Parody is any writing that imitates a serious creative work in order to ridicule it. It is usually used to create humour that may be somewhat critical but is not intended to offend in a harsh manner. The main aim is to use clever imitation of a particular style in order to poke fun at a creator, a work or a topic.

Caricature involves deliberately depicting characters in a dramatically exaggerated and unrealistic manner in order to create specific effects, including humour and symbolic meaning. Caricatures can also be visual representations of people, such as we find in cartoons.

Look at some political cartoons in newspapers. How often do they rely on caricatures of people in the news?
**Ways in Which Texts Can Connect: Creators**

We’ve seen how intertextuality can manifest itself in the content and contexts of texts. A third way in which texts can be linked is through their creators. Texts that have been created by the same person will have certain similarities based on the creator’s experiences, background, personal preferences, level of skill and peculiarities of style. The artist’s beliefs and ideas about their art form, and its purpose, will strongly influence their approach and the techniques they use. For example, the poets, writers and artists who appropriated or alluded to the Greek myth of Icarus realised that the story was fictitious, and approached it from that perspective. There is no real attempt in any of the works about Icarus to create a sense of realism. We can see then that the beliefs certain creators may have about a work’s nature and purpose help to determine the ways in which they elect to create their own text in response to the original work.

**How Creators Influence Each Other**

Our study of van Gogh’s *Starry Night* and the influence it has exerted on other creators demonstrates how powerfully a creator can influence other creators, even those separated from them by time and distance. Texts written by different writers from the same period of history may also share links because of shared experiences, ideologies and technologies with others of their time. As you become more familiar with specific texts, writers, artists and their styles, you will notice that the individual approach of each creator is unique, since there are endless intertextual combinations and variations to be utilised.

1. Look at this painting by Henri Matisse entitled *Icarus*. It shows a very simple stylised form floating across a night sky. Compare this with Brueghel’s painting shown on page 52. It is unlikely that these paintings would ever be mistaken for being painted by the same artist. Yet their creations were inspired by the same idea.

2. If you examine two pieces of writing you have done, can you see similarities in the style of writing? Describe any similarities you discover to a partner.

3. Would you prefer to read a sequel to your favourite book if it was written by the same author, or by a new author? Why?
OVER TO YOU ...

The following poem, written in 2012, draws on the Icarus myth. Read it and then answer the questions that follow.

Icarus ascending
by Alan Smith

I heard the crash that shook the earth,
an evil, sickly, sound.
We rushed to give what aid we could
to the man, there, on the ground.
‘Look at those feathers. See the wax?’
There came the frantic shout.
‘This man-bird, he fell from the sky,
How could there be a doubt?’
The rivulets of melted wax,
the feathers strewn, they told,
‘This man, he tried to be a god,
and now, he won’t grow old.’
And, as the one who questions things,
It fell to me, the task
to ask of this poor, fallen god
what no-one else dared ask.

Tomorrow, I won’t hear the rain,
the lapping of the sea,
don’t cry for all this pain I feel,
but, rather, envy me.
There are some men that live their lives
in shades of brown and grey,
while others look towards the blue
and long to fly away.
I reached the height, I touched the sun,
I sailed through the sky.
You hugged the ground, and you survived,
but did you ever fly?
So as I pass, I leave, my friend,
my epitaph to you.
Just say this, when you speak of me.
‘He was the one who flew.’

1 What lines in the poem show that the poet is familiar with the myth of Icarus?
2 What is the significance of the title in relation to the myth?
3 Is the poet just describing what happened to Icarus or does he have a message beyond only description? If so, what is it?
4 Why might a twenty-first century creator find something to be inspired by in the Icarus myth?
5 If you were inspired by the Icarus myth to create something, what would it be?
6 Write a short poem or draw a sketch that contains an intertextual reference to another text. Show it to a partner and see if they can understand the intertextuality.

My view ...

Is it made more difficult for a reader or viewer to understand a text that is full of intertextual references? Why do you think some creators take inspiration from creators who have gone before them? Is it a good way to show links with our cultural heritage or does it just exclude some readers or viewers?
COMPOSE AND CREATE

Productive focus: writing and creating

1

Either

Write an analysis of intertextuality in a cartoon

Write an analysis in which you describe the ways in which different texts and worlds come together in the following cartoon. In your response, identify and explain the effects of the language and visual features present in the cartoon. Aim to write three paragraphs.

Or

Write an analysis of the effect of cameo appearances

In films and television shows, actors who are well known for playing a particular character may make a special appearance — often to create humour. Other non-actor celebrities also do this sometimes. These special onscreen appearances are called ‘cameo appearances’. They often have surprising effects because they create links between texts that may be very different from one another.

Do an internet search to find out which famous people have made cameo appearances in the following films:

- The Muppets (2011)
- Iron Man (2008)
- Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)
- Apollo 13 (1995)
- Rear Window (1954).

Choose one of these appearances and write an analysis to explain the effect of the cameo appearance on you as a viewer. Aim to write three paragraphs.

Use the assessment criteria rubric to guide you through your chosen task.
Write an explanation of twenty-first century technology

Try to imagine a time 1000 years in the future. Think about what life is like. The people of the future have access to many of the texts that exist in the world. They have been carefully preserved since 2020. They include novels, non-fiction works, films, poetry, songs, paintings, plays, advertisements and many other forms of expression. The world in the third millennium is very different from our world today. To learn about their past (our present world), the people of the future rely on texts from our time.

Your task is to pretend that you are a person from that future era. You are telling the true story of the way that technology changed people’s lives in the twenty-first century. Write your article assuming that our time period and way of life is very different from the one in which you are writing.

Step 1: Think about whether you will write as yourself or as another character. If you write as yourself, how will the ‘you’ of the future differ from the way you are now? If you write as another person, is there a real person or a fictional character on whom you could base your character? If so, make a note of their characteristics before you start writing your account.

Step 2: Think about how the language and understanding of people in the future may differ from ours. How will you convey this in your writing?

Step 3: Consider how you could use texts to overcome the many problems of describing things that people of the future have never seen nor experienced.

Step 4: Decide the types of texts that would help the people understand the concepts you are presenting.

Step 5: Think about which specific aspects of those texts would be most useful to illustrate the topic.

Some key points to remember

- Have a clear understanding of the background knowledge of the audience before beginning.
- Make sure you clearly understand the purpose of your writing: to inform.
- Think about how you will refer to texts in your work.
- Follow the steps outlined for each task.
- Aim for originality. Don’t simply copy an existing story or film plot.
- Complete a draft of each stage and edit and refine your work before proceeding to the next stage.
Design a bookmark that displays creative influences

Create a top ten list of text creators (writers, artists, musicians and so on) who have influenced you creatively. Who will be on it? List the person by name and write the names of the specific work/s they created that caused you to put them on your list.

For example:

Top Ten List

#1 Vincent Van Gogh
   Starry Night
   Sunflowers

#2 Hans Christian Andersen
   The Little Mermaid

If we start at number 1 as the most influential, in which order would you put the list?

Using a separate sheet of paper, design a folding brochure that could be used as a bookmark on which you can present your list. Include colourful graphics to ensure that the bookmark is visually attractive.

If you have no idea where to begin, try thinking of films or television shows you have seen that had a powerful impact on you. Think about songs, favourite bands and what values they convey; artworks and how they make you feel; stories or poems that inspire you to create texts; and any other new ideas.

Some key points to remember

- This is not simply about your favourite texts. Rather, it is about the degree to which a text has influenced you.
- Think about the definition of a ‘text’. What types of texts are you most influenced by?
- You may list more than one work by the same creator, but each creator should appear only once on the list.
- Search the internet for the names of texts and creators if you are not sure about that information.

Self-evaluation …

1. Do you have a better understanding of how all texts have inherent value because of the contribution they make to our culture?
2. What other new perspectives about texts have you discovered through this unit?
3. Do you feel you have learned techniques that will enhance your understanding of how to link texts together in your own writing?
4. If so, how will you implement these new skills?

INDIVIDUAL PATHWAYS

Worksheet 2.1
   doc-10106

Worksheet 2.2
   doc-10107

Worksheet 2.3
   doc-10108