**English 3201 Analysis of Visuals**

**Visual/Artistic Terms**

* **Balance**: the degree to which elements of a picture are in proportion. If the elements are balanced, there is *harmony*. If they are weighted to one side, there is *tension*.
* **Blank space** (white space): unused space in an illustration. It helps to create *contrast* with shapes and colours in the illustration, helps to define a *focal point* (what the eye is drawn to), and makes the viewer question what is missing.
* **Line**: lines frame pictures, draw the eye to the focal points and create contrasts. *Curved lines* suggests softness; *angular lines* suggest hardness; *jagged lines* suggest energy.
* **Colour**: creates contrast and *emphasis* (i.e. a bright colour on a drab background), can have symbolic meaning (green = nature), and can suggest a mood (black = depressing, scary).
* **Contrast** – created by two elements of the visual that are different (black-white, large-small, etc.). Creates *emphasis*.
* **Background –** distance part of a landscape; surroundings, especially those behind something, and providing harmony and contrast
* **Pose**: a living thing’s body position can suggest a lot about its state of mind. Pay close attention to facial expression and body language.
* **Focal Point** – where the eye is drawn in a visual – contrast or an unusual image can create a focal point.
* **Foreground –** part of a scene, landscape, etc., which is near the viewer .
* **Line -** Line can be considered in two ways. The linear marks made with a pen or brush or the edge created when two shapes meet. **Line also communicates emotion and states of mind through its character and direction.**
* **Horizontal** line suggests a feeling of rest or repose
* **Vertical** lines communicate a feeling of loftiness and spirituality. Erect lines seem to extend upwards beyond human reach, toward the sky.
* **Horizontal and vertical lines in combination** communicate stability and solidity.
* **Diagonal lines** suggest a feeling of movement or direction. Thus if a feeling of movement or speed is desired, or a feeling of activity, diagonal lines can be used.
* **Curved lines** do vary in meaning, however. **Soft, shallow curves** suggest comfort, safety, familiarity, relaxation. **Deep, acute curves**, on the other hand, suggest confusion, turbulence, even frenzy, as in the violence of waves in a storm, the chaos of a tangled thread, or the turmoil of lines suggested by the forms of a crowd.
* **Juxtaposition**—the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side
* **Mood**: Be aware of the overall feeling suggested by all of these elements.
* **Symbol**: often symbols are used to convey complex ideas quickly. A skull may mean death, a heart love etc.
* **Words**: words should be analyzed for *font* (i.e. is it in a childish form of writing, or is it more sophisticated?) and also for *connotation* (extra meanings a word comes to have.)
* **Proportion -** the size relationship of parts to a whole and to one another.
* **Scale –** the size or apparent size of an object seen in relation to other objects, people, or its environment or *format*
* **Purpose**: what message is the artist trying to get across?
* **Audience**: whom is the artist aiming the message at?
* **Context** – the situation in which an image appears. This situation can affect its meaning. A McDonald’s logo conveys a different message when viewed on a food wrapper (advertising) than when it is viewed in a CBC documentary (criticism).