

VISUAL RHETORIC FOR STUDENT WRITERS

Overview

Main Points:

- Definition(s) of visual rhetoric
- Why visual rhetoric is important today
- Visual rhetoric and
 - Text
 - Color
 - Graphics
 - Overall design

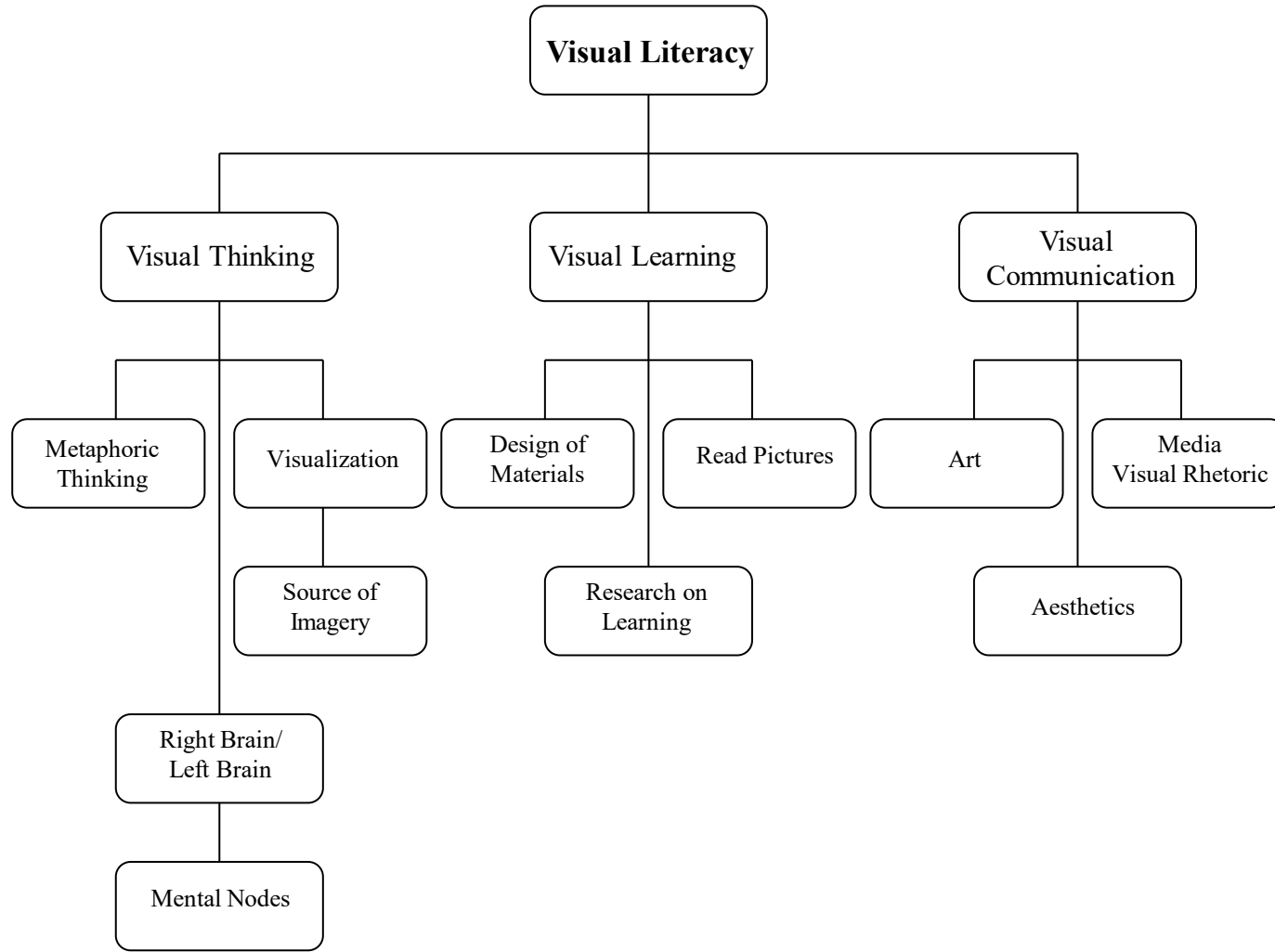
What is Visual Rhetoric?

Visual Rhetoric includes:

- The use of images as an argument;
- The arrangement of elements on a page;
- The use of typography (fonts, etc.); and
- The analysis of existing images and visuals.



What is Visual Literacy?



Why is Visual Rhetoric Important?

Visual Rhetoric matters because...

- We use **visual thinking** as a major part of our cognition (thinking process).
- We live in a **visually dominated world**, so...
- We must be able to **read, dissect, and produce effective visuals**.



Visual Rhetoric and...

Text elements

- How type functions and choosing appropriate fonts
- Headline versus body text
- Text and the Web

Color

Visuals and graphics

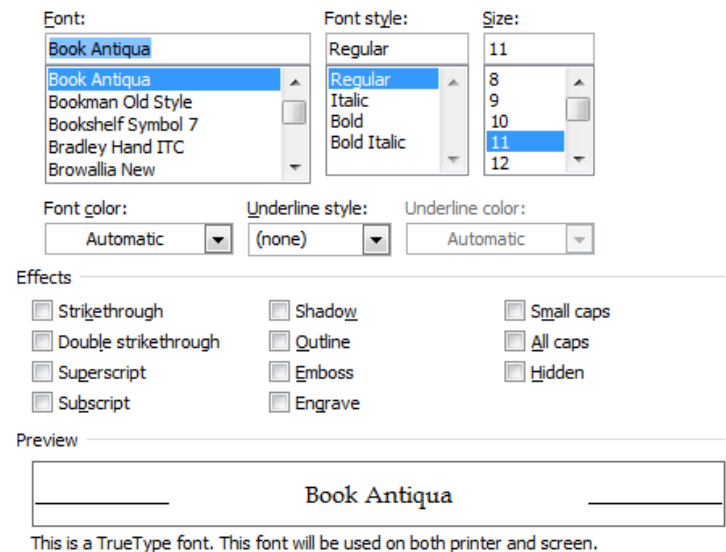
- Clip art
- Illustrations and diagrams
- Graphs
- Photographs and manipulated images

Overall design

How Type Functions

Type has different “Personalities”:

- There are formal and informal fonts
- The consequences of font choices:
 - Consider the effect of each font
 - What is the selected font’s personality and appropriateness?



Font Personalities

1

Lorem ipsum

2

Lorem ipsum

3

Lorem ipsum

4

Lorem ipsum

Choosing Appropriate Fonts

Your font choice can either build or harm your **ethos (credibility)** as an author.

The **context and purpose** of the document is important.

The **cultural and visual associations** of the fonts should fit the purpose of the document.



Font Choice: Example 1

Operating Instructions

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Medieval History

Bigfoot Captured!

Font Choice: Example 2

In deepest sympathy
Lafayette Teen Center
Chemistry Lab Report
Museum of Natural History

Headline versus Body Text



How text functions:

- Type of text dictates font choice:
 - **Emphasis** and **attention**
 - **Information**
- Sustained **readability**

Headline and Body Text Example

Lunch Menu

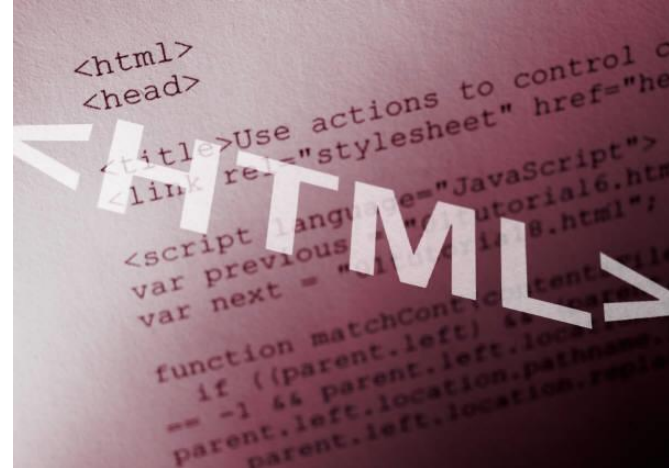
Again, the first two examples may not jump out at you. But if “In deepest sympathy” were on the front of a sympathy card, it would seem cold, callous, and impersonal. With the “Lafayette Teen Center,” that font face may be appropriate in, say, a fundraising drive, but probably not for promotional materials to get teens to come there off of the streets (for that, we’d want a font that was exciting, more youthful in appearance).

Text and the Web

There are text and type differences between print and the Web.

When choosing type for the Web, consider:

- Accommodating users and browsers;
- HTML standard fonts; and
- Screen readability.



Color and Contrast

Color is the **most basic** and **most critical** choice you, as an author, can make:

- Black text on white background shows high contrast and is the most common choice.
- White text on a black background , however, is not ideal.



Font Contrast: Example

Run black text over a neutral beige

Computer Screens and Color

Deep blue text on a bright red background

vs.

Desaturated blue on darker red background

More Color Examples



- Pixels and colors are different **on screen** than in print
 - RGB values
 - Color saturation
- **Cultural associations** of color

Using packaged clip art:

- **Avoid** the “**cartoony**” effect.
- Choose clip art that truly **fits the purpose** of the document.
- **Match design** schemes

Consider creating images instead!

Clip Art Examples



Illustrations and Diagrams

Visuals to inform:

- Convey specific information
- Relate to content in the document
- Are more than an accent

Striving for visual clarity:

- Avoid clutter
- Choose selective pictures of reality
- Break up large amounts of information

Graphs

Choosing how to represent quantitative information:

- **Pie charts** – showing parts of a whole
- **Bar graphs** – numeric comparisons
- **Line graphs** – plotting changes



Photographs

Found images vs. captured photographs

Considerations:

- Copyright
- Composition and quality
- Achieving effects with photos



Photo Examples



Design Considerations:

1. Creating **paths for the eye**:
 - Striking, eye-catching elements.
 - Finding information easily.
2. Design as **rhetorical organization**
3. **Consistency** in design:
 - Avoid “kitchen-sink syndrome.”
 - Pitfalls of pre-fab templates.

Stepping Back

To evaluate your design, ask yourself:

- Is your design clarifying your information?
- Is your design unique enough to make it stand out?
- Is your design readable from its intended distance?
- Have you checked for typos and errors?
- When designing for the Web, have you checked your design on different computers and in different browsers?



Additional Resources

The Non-Designer's Design Book and *The Non-Designer's Web Book* by Robin Williams

Color Index and *Idea Index* by Jim Krause

What is Graphic Design? by Quentin Newark

THANK YOU

Purdue University On-Campus Writing Lab
Krach Leadership Center (2nd Floor)

Web: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Phone: (765) 494-3723

Email: owl@owl.english.purdue.edu