

**Visual Literacy**  
**Reading like an illustrator**  
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Artists use illustrations as supplementary, complimentary and as contrasting information to the text.

**Consider:**

**Elements of art**

1. Why did the artist make the choices s/he did?
2. What media is used? Why do you think the illustrator made this choice? How does the media choice contribute to (or detract from) the reader's understanding? How does it contribute to the mood or tone of the text?
3. How are the illustrations arranged on the page? How is the text arranged? Why?
4. What font is used? How does this add or detract?
5. What is the size of the illustrations? One picture per page? Two page spread? More than one picture on a page? What does this convey?
6. What kinds of lines are used? Thick and heavy? Light? No lines? How does this contribute to the story, information, mood?
7. What color palette is used? Why? How does the choice of color contribute to the story? To the mood?
8. What is the perspective of the illustration? Do we see the scene from the point of view of someone in the text? Which character? You the reader?
9. Does the perspective change as we move through the text? How? Why?

**Information in the illustrations**

1. What additional information do the illustrations add to the text? What do we learn in the illustrations that we don't know from the text?
2. Are there details in the illustration that are not mentioned in the text? What are they? Are there details in the text left out of the illustration?
3. Do the illustrations provide any conflicting information? What? Why?
4. Do the illustrations depict more than visual? Do they help us smell or touch or taste or hear some part of the text? How?

**Characters**

1. What details do we learn about the characters that were not in the text?
2. Who is in the foreground? Who is in the background? Why?
3. What do the positions of the characters convey about the relative importance of the characters (main, secondary, tertiary?) Does the writer/illustrator want us to identify with a particular character and his or her story?
4. Who is in the illustration? Everyone mentioned in the text? Who's in and who's out? Who is looking at who? Why?
5. How are the relationships of the characters depicted? Who is standing close? Who is far away? What do the expressions on their faces convey?

6. Where are the characters looking? At the action? At each other? What?
7. What do we the reader see that the characters do not? What do we know that they do not? Why?
8. What do the characters know that we (the reader) do not know?

### **Setting**

1. What do we learn about the setting from the illustration? Are we looking straight on? Airplane view? Why?
2. Is the reader intended to be part of the scene or looking on as an observer?
3. Did the illustrator zoom in or zoom out? Why? Was the illustrator drawing our attention to something in particular? Why a close up or wide angle for this particular part of the text?
4. If the pictures are of the outside is it hot, warm, cold or bitterly cold? How can you tell?

### **Plot**

1. How is action depicted? Is the action fast or slow? How do you know?
2. How is stillness depicted? What kinds of lines are used?
3. What does the size of the illustration relative to the page indicate about the action?
4. How is movement portrayed on this two dimensional surface?