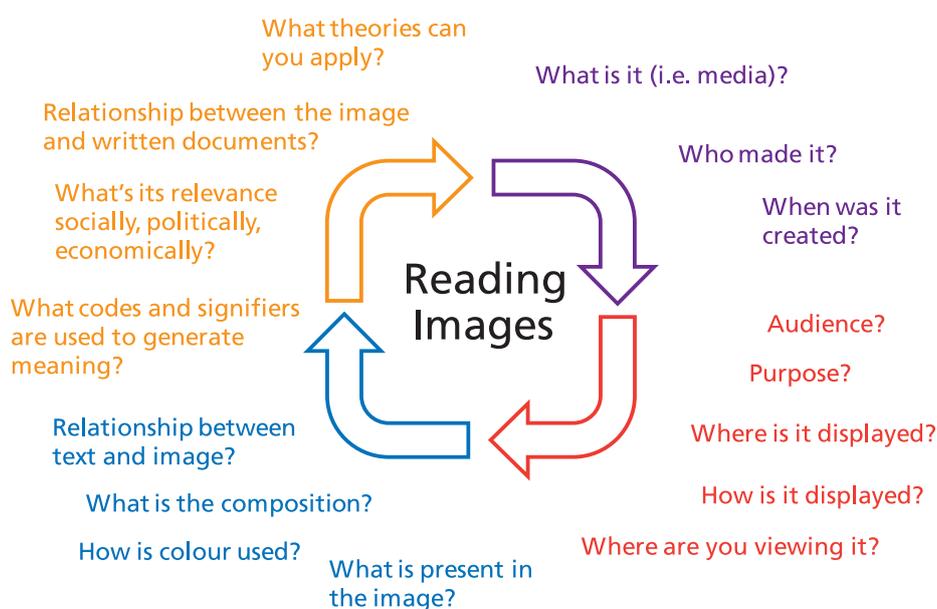


Is a Picture Worth A Thousand Words? Engaging with Visual Culture

Activity 2: Codes & Signifiers



When 'reading' images you ask similar questions to those you would apply to a written text. Use the Reading Images wheel and its four segments to help you to analyse images in any given context.

- The **PURPLE** section covers the basic three questions of 'what, who and when': What it is? Who made it? And when was it created?
- The **RED** section covers questions regarding audience and viewer, and the context of your 'reading'. For example, what is the target audience? What is the purpose of the image? Where is it displayed? For example is it displayed on a public billboard, it is in a magazine, and so forth. How is the image displayed? And where are you viewing it? For example, has the image been taken out of its original context; are you in the street or in a gallery? Is the image part of an archive?
- Questions in the **BLUE** section concern the content of the image, so what people, objects, or places are actually present in the image? How is colour used? How is the composition structured? And what is the relationship between text and image? For example how do words and images effect our interpretation of the image as a whole?
- The **ORANGE** section: considers how we interpret imagery. These harder questions relate to how images generate meanings. Codes and signifiers are references we recognise and associate with certain meanings. Images may play upon our subconscious (or conscious) knowledge of these codes and signifiers. Colours, objects, people, buildings and words can all be considered codes or signifiers; these can be culturally specific. You should always consider how the image is socially, politically or economically relevant; analyse the context of an image and its deeper meanings. There are a great many different 'theories' we can apply when analysing imagery, for example such as feminist theory or post-colonial theory. For a better understanding of theory, please see the bibliography of further reading at the end of the workshop.

Activity 2: Codes & Signifiers

- In pairs discuss the symbolism or associations of the colour 'red'
- This is a basic example. The meanings generated by this colour would also depend on the other content of the image, and the country or culture it refers to
- Do you know of any images, films, posters etc where red has been used effectively?