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# Deep Viewing

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Teachers are always looking for a means to create a powerful connection between classroom material and students' lives. *Deep Viewing*, a research and instructional method, uses practical, textual analysis to act as a bridge between content area knowledge and educational practice. Combining oral, written, and visual literacy, *Deep Viewing* is based on common literacy principles of content and processes. This method offers a way to read and analyze print, electronic, artistic, and situational texts. It can be used to explore artwork, video, television, computer programs, print representations, advertisements, and field observations of human behavior. Any visual text can be examined by this method. Researchers can include educators, artists, students, and general audiences.

*Deep Viewing* involves reading, writing, speaking, listening, thinking, and viewing. Its method can be adapted for a wide variety of contemporary texts. It encourages active participation, critical analysis, and awareness of participants' assumptions.

## Theoretical Origins

Ann Watts Pailliotet developed *Deep Viewing* and introduced it at the Annual Conference of the International Visual Literacy Association in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in October 1993. Her research studies at Syracuse University have been extensive (1993, 1995).

The theoretical origins of *Deep Viewing* are based on principles and practices in several areas. Its name refers to an educational process called Deep Talk. Margaret Himley's book *Shared Territory* (1991) explains Deep Talk as a process used to describe students' written text. Deep Talk is based on these three principles of meaning:

- 1) Meaning is created through the interaction of participants and text.
- 2) Meaning is easily available.
- 3) Meaning becomes accessible through structured discussion.

Employing a collaborative format, *Deep Viewing* identifies with the interactive nature of all modern literacy (Atwell, 1985; Calkins, 1983; Collins, 1985; Dyson, 1984; Sinatra, 1986). It is based on the definition that a "text" is not limited to written artifacts, but can be any cultural or communicative event (Barthes, 1957). Saint-Martin's 1990 work in the establishment of codes or categories for textual meaning, plays a vital part in the methodology involved in *Deep Viewing*, as does contemporary reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1976).

*Deep Viewing* finds roots in whole language (Goodman, 1982; Goodman, Hood & Goodman, 1991), critical thinking (Marzano, 1991), metacognition (Sternberg, 1983), process writing (Hairston, 1982), symbolic (Jung 1956 & 1959), and metaphoric analysis (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).



Its process of the examination of visual and verbal symbols relates to the Symbolic Interactionists (Blumer, 1969; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Manis & Meltzer, 1972). Their belief that one may gather thoughts and beliefs through the observation of human symbols and behaviors is a key component of *Deep Viewing*.

## Deep Viewing: An Explanation

### Overview

*Deep Viewing* consists of a three-level process:

- 1) Literal Observation
- 2) Interpretation
- 3) Evaluation and Observation

*Deep Viewing* is best exercised in a cooperative learning situation. (However, it is possible for an individual to use this procedure alone.) First, groups are formed with an awareness of the different coded categories. Members of these groups are encouraged to take notes or draw diagrams as they view the text. After engaging in different levels of discussion, groups share observations with the entire collective. Pailliotet suggests various extension activities such as prewriting, postwriting, artistic response, and reading enrichment that can be practiced throughout the process.

### Guidelines

The following are guidelines that are useful in setting up a *Deep Viewing* session:

- 1) Follow the stated progression to build layers of understanding.
- 2) Use notes, pictures, diagrams, and discussion to build understanding.
- 3) Designate a facilitator, recorder, or reporter in each group.
- 4) For clarity, use "in the text" statements to describe the text. Use "I" statements to express perceptions, ideas, observations, etc.
- 5) Teachers/Instructors may provide prompts and may stop at points for analysis and discussion.

### Code Categories

Six groups are formed to correspond with these different code categories:

#### *Action/Sequence/Structure*

This group notes events, relationships of time, the sequence of visual material, and, in the case of print text, its structure. It answers questions such as: What happened? In what order is the information presented? When and how long do events take place? How does the sequence and structure of the presentation/text influence the meaning?

#### *Semes/Forms*

Semes, or units of visual meaning that create symbols, are noted here. Objects, people, color, textures, shapes, and icons are addressed. They answer questions such as: What objects are seen and what are their traits? What are the dress and physical traits of the people seen? What are the repeated, emphasized, and contrasted objects seen? What objects are paired with other objects? What meanings can we gather from these people and objects?

#### *Sound/Language/Discourse*

This group is concerned with what is said and heard. It is focused on words and phrases that can reflect main ideas or themes. It relates to repeated language, seemingly out-of-place or unfamiliar language. It pinpoints the sounds in the setting. The tone, rate, and pitch of voices are examined. Even song lyrics may be noted. It answers questions such as: Who talks the most and least? What sounds can we hear? What language is used? What does this language mean?

#### *Proximity/Spacing/Movement*

This code deals with the use of space and the relation of objects in the text. When examining print, it takes the use of empty space, the dimensions, relative sizes, and numbers of objects on each page into consideration. When viewing a video or live performance, gestures and movement are carefully observed and interpreted. It answers questions such as: What or who moves where? How do people or objects move? How is space used? How does this space influence meaning?



### *Culture/Context*

This group notes references to cultural knowledge. Perspectives or biases in relation to science, art, educational practice, and popular culture are located. Historical and social contexts can also reveal clues to meaning. It answers questions such as: What social knowledge is referred to? What is implied? What is assumed? What is missing?

### *Effects/Process/Production*

The devices and elements used in the text are explored within this code. Camera or observation angles, artistic devices used to interest audiences, and techniques or effects used to enhance the text influence the understanding of the viewer. This group answers questions such as: What production devices and elements are used? How does the angle of perception affect meaning? Who created this text? What elements help or prevent understanding?

### **Process Levels**

After the six groups have observed identical text, the notes, drawings, or diagrams taken during the observation are correlated within the individual groups.

#### *Level One: Literal Observation*

Gathering as much information as possible is the purpose of each group during the first level. Only literal descriptions are allowed. Interpretation or evaluation is avoided in this level. This first literal process tends to sharpen observation and recording abilities.

In each coded group, the members read their notes aloud. After all members of the group have delivered their descriptions, each member provides a summary by stating the most important point of his or her observations. The recorder notes these summarizing comments. When the recorder has all these findings, the recorder, through oral, pictorial, or written form, reports these summaries to the entire collective (the six groups).

#### *Level Two: Interpretation.*

This level is to explore and devise a range of understandings about the text, the reader, and the situation. Personal experiences and

prior knowledge are encouraged. Since there are no "right answers" there are many possible interpretations. Responses drawn from codes may begin to overlap at this level as various relationships between elements are discovered.

Back in their individual coded groups, each viewer proceeds to make observations noting what is present in the text and what is missing. These interpretations are later summarized (as in Level One) and the recorder reports these summarized interpretations to all the other groups.

#### *Level Three: Evaluation and Application*

The purpose of this level is to synthesize, evaluate, and apply the earlier information and interpretations. Strategies and ideas are discussed as to their code focus, and then a discussion including the other codes can begin.

Again in individual groups, participants can indicate their likes and dislikes about what they have seen and heard. Members are free to pose questions and discuss solutions regarding the text. All are free to discuss what they may have discovered and how they may apply that information to other situations and texts. Inferences are drawn and discussed in depth. Speculations are made based upon collective perceptions. Reflective pauses are encouraged throughout this level. After a lengthy discussion, each group identifies questions and general themes. As in the other levels, the recorder reports these questions and general themes back to the whole gathering.

### **Implications for Instruction**

Within the elementary setting, *Deep Viewing* can be applied with the addition of some modifications. Steps can be adjusted to fit the comprehension and attention span of the elementary student. The length of time involved can be broken up into smaller segments and fewer questions can be addressed.

The practice of showing videos to students is commonplace in the educational system.



Almost every classroom and subject area lends itself in this manner. If children are involved in a *Deep Viewing* session, they are focusing on specific codes. They are questioning, writing, reading, deliberating. They are thinking. After a *Deep Viewing* video session, a teacher can conduct a session using some popular advertisements. After children develop a consciousness of the many messages intrinsic in most advertising, they can begin writing or drawing their own text. *Deep Viewing* promotes critical awareness of content, structures and metacognitive strategies. These activities generate literate children.

### Conclusion

It has been pointed out that contemporary individuals are bombarded with visual information but have few ways to understand or act on what they see (Postman, 1985). *Deep Viewing* provides the structured framework and guidelines to decode underlying meaning of visual and print text. *Deep Viewing*—with its layered levels and emphasis on reading, viewing, writing, and speaking—is the method by which students can gain insight into the text and themselves. With its accentuation on prior knowledge and cooperative learning, *Deep Viewing* takes reader response to a higher degree.

### Commentary

Pailliotet has practiced *Deep Viewing* methodology with middle school, high school, and university students. It has been used in analyzing videotapes (1995) and in examining textbooks, advertisements, and artwork (1997). Throughout many examples, Pailliotet shows a way to promote higher level thinking skills within a cooperative learning environment to translate modern text (computer visuals, graphics, television, videos, etc.).

William Glasser, MD, in his book *Control Theory in the Classroom* (1986), relates the ongoing problems teachers have with unmotivated students and the accompanying discipline problems inherent in the classroom.

He strongly promotes the cooperative learning team model. In this book, he stresses the benefits students gain from this team approach (i.e., a sense of belonging, motivation to work harder for the success of the team, power, friendship, a sense that each contribution helps the whole group, more independence and self reliance, less dependence on the teacher, freedom to think creatively). *Deep Viewing* fits into this model and augments it with the experience of decoding current technology. Add Pailliotet's accent on the application of prior knowledge, and instructors have the means of creating ideal conditions for learning within the classroom.

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