

Portfolio of Writing

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Tasks in order I received them:

Task One: Semiotic Analysis = 504

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Task one: Observational Writing - Semiotic Analysis



Figure 1 “We can do it” poster

According to Daniel Chandler a basic definition of semiotics would be “the study of signs” (2007, p1) but he admits that this is not particularly helpful in understanding semiotics. This would lead the reader to a mistaken belief as to the type of signs referred to and you need to realise it is far wider than signs you see around you. It includes “words, sounds and body language” (2007, p2). It is difficult to come up with a complete definition as thinkers (experts in semiotics) have different ways of describing the meaning, possibly because they come from a variety of time periods, eg Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Roland Barthes (1915-1980).

One thinker, Barthes, developed the work of Saussure in creating a link between the signifier being the physical thing and the signified being the meaning that is intended from a sign. He put forward the idea of a symbol leading the viewer to think of a sign and an index. The symbol stays the same but the viewer may interpret the sign differently. The index can change over time for example tree being associated now with carbon emissions and global warming.

Figure 1 is the advertisement used by the American government to encourage women to do traditional men’s jobs while the men were away during World War II. Figure 1 shows a woman but by including overalls, showing her muscles and the quote ‘We can do it’ the connotation is that women are able and should be encouraged to do jobs, which are stereotypically men’s in that time period. It encourages the idea that women are capable of doing more than being a housewife, wearing dresses and makeup. While the advertisement relates specifically to World War II, it could be equally relevant today with the feminist campaign encouraging the idea that women can do traditional men’s jobs and visa versa. “Sex stereotyping has negative and damaging consequences because the underlying assumption is that an individual’s sex is a form of limitation and definition of their future experiences.” (2009, p127)

The denotation of figure 1 are the colours that the advertisement had used. The three primary colours have been used (red, blue and yellow) as a trio creating a powerful visual effect. The white

text on the blue background stands out while the statement is short and memorable to the viewer. The connotations of the colour red in my opinion are powerful, courage and bold. Psychologically red “has the appearance of being nearer than it is.” (2019, p.72) The colour has been placed in the centre of the image drawing your eye in. I see blue as a colour of freedom, trust and loyalty. The colour blue has been thought out with the overalls and the speech bubble background as “in the wrong context we can become wary of it” (2019, p. 84). The colour yellow makes us feel “more confident, positive and optimistic” (2019, p. 78). This is why the background of the image has been chosen so carefully.

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Task Two: Manifesto Writing

- 1) Everyone should be encouraged to use sustainable materials.
- 2) Environmentally friendly dyes, other materials and processes should be used wherever available.
- 3) Shops and designers with environmentally friendly policies should be supported.
- 4) Global warming and other risks to the planet must be given priority to support our future.
- 5) Fast fashion and the throw away society need to be discouraged.
- 6) Recycling and reducing waste are important.
- 7) There should not need to be a difference between quality and mass production.
- 8) We all need to learn from the mistakes of history and fashion trends.

Key points and images:

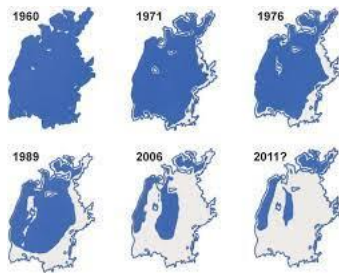


Figure 1, sustainability word collage

3, Many designers, such as Stella McCartney and Eileen Fisher are committed to sustainable designs in their work. Stella McCartney strives to be “responsible, honest and accountable”. There are retailers with commitments to sell sustainable clothes in their shops. For example, Zara, Forever 21 and TopShop. From the article (2019) all Zara’s “cotton, linen and polyester will be organic, sustainable or recycled”. These businesses and designers need to be publicised to create more support. This would encourage other designers and retailers to adopt sustainable policies rather than ignoring their environmental impact. It should be possible to protect the environment without damaging profitability.

Shopping habits are changing with less high street outlets and more purchases online. With this and social media growing it should be possible for the sustainability message to reach more people. This in turn should encourage more designers and retailers to adopt environmentally friendly policies.

Figure 2, The lost sea, The Aral Sea



5, Fast fashion is the term to describe the process where clothes move quickly from design into the shops providing cheap clothing responding to the latest trends. This results in environmental damage, water pollution, use of toxic chemicals and increased waste. The throw away society describes keeping things for a short amount of time and then disposing of them creating a series of problems. Nothing seems to be designed to last. The textile industry is the second worst polluter in the world after oil. An example of the large amount of water being used in the manufacturing business is the environmental disaster of the Aral Sea basin (2014). The Aral Sea has gone from the fourth largest lake in the world to a tenth of its original size as water is diverted for cotton production. This became a major ecological disaster but now action is being taken to try to reverse the damage.

Figure 3, William Morris, and John Ruskin's work



7, Too often today cheap mass production is in demand as it results in lower prices for the consumer. An artist and poet who disagreed with this is William Morris a founder of the arts and crafts movement. He worried that mass production destroyed craft skills and creativity. Of mass production he once said "we do not reject the machine. We welcome it. We would desire to see it mastered". (source of quote unknown but referred to in many articles). While he was right at the time, over the last one hundred- and fifty-years production techniques have improved and it should be possible to have quality and mass production at affordable prices for everyone.

The things, which William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement believed in, are still relevant today. Craft skills are being lost with mass production and it is difficult to see how they can be saved except on a very small scale. Some people are trying to save these old skills but it is difficult to see how this can ever be on a large scale. What is important is that design does not have to suffer simply because of mass production techniques.

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Source of quote unknown but referred in many articles

Books I have used to give me more background information:

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Figure 1: Sustainability word cloud. <https://www.alamy.com/sustainability-word-cloud-collage-environmental-sustainability-text-concepts-image367679817.html> (accessed 30th October 2022)

Figure 2: *The lost sea, The Aral Sea basin*. Tansy Hoskins (2014), "cotton production linked to images of the dried up Aral Sea Basin", the Guardian.

Figure 3: William Morris and John Ruskin. <https://blog.fabrics-store.com/2019/04/19/ruskin-and-morris-the-arts-and-crafts-idealists/> (accessed 30th October 2022)

Task Three: Practice-based Writing

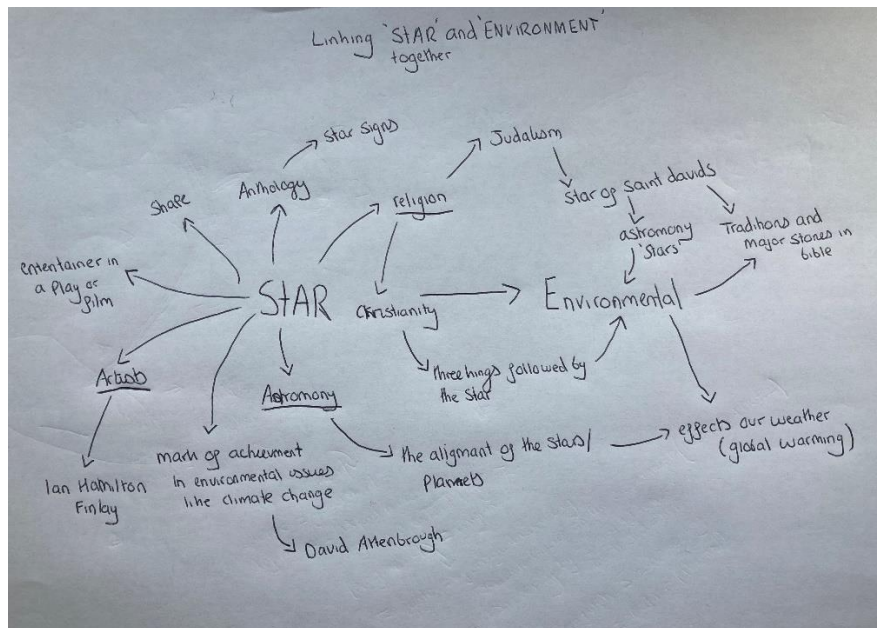


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Star and Environment

The word 'Star' is used as a noun and sometimes a verb. It can have many different meanings including; a five or six sided shape, the main character in a play or film, a symbol used as a mark or achievement and a symbol in various religions. The definition used by the author is from astronomy as 'a fixed luminous point in the night sky which is a large, remote incandescent body like the sun' (2007). The universe is full of different objects including planets and many thousands of stars, which are particularly visible at night.

The word 'environmental' is an adjective used to describe anything to do with the environment ('surroundings as they affect people and other living things') (2007). Environmental issues are of particular importance to us at the present time because of the effects on our lives of CO₂ emissions, global warming, and changes in weather patterns. These effects are becoming increasingly serious and will cause permanent damage to the planet, wildlife and future generations.

Although these two words are not commonly used together they do have some connections.

Many religions use the star symbol. Christianity uses the star in the sky to guide the three kings to the birth of Jesus. Judaism has 'the star of David' as an emblem to distinguish the religion from Christianity, which uses the cross as its main emblem. Judaism has two main links with environmental issues. Firstly, the star of David shape is derived from astronomy relating to the alignments of the planets Saturn, Jupiter and Venus. In turn, the alignment of the stars and planets affects the weather on earth and, therefore, there is an environmental link between the two words. Secondly, the Jewish religion's main teaching is 'to care for our planet in order to preserve that which God has created'. This means that Judaism encourages followers not to destroy the environment and in particular to protect water supplies. Water is the basis of many of the major stories in the bible.

Astronomy links the words 'star' and environmental'. The alignment of stars and planets in relation to the earth affects our weather, which is one of the most important influences on environmental issues and the lives of this and, particularly, future generations. For centuries theorists have tried to explain how the universe works and affects our lives. Ages ago people believed the earth was flat and the sun revolved around it. Both theories have been proved to be wrong. Galileo (1564-1642) is widely known for defending the theory that the earth revolves around the sun and ended up in prison because of it.

Links between star and environmental in the art world are difficult to find, however one artist, Ian Hamilton Finley (1925-2006), does have links. He is known for being a poet, writer, visual artist and gardener but also did a series of screen prints in 1966 with the word star.

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Figure 2: Star in the night sky [A guide to star Altair | BBC Sky at Night Magazine](#) (accessed: 20th December 2022).

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