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Inter te⊗t

Second Edition

Working with Texts

A core introduction to language analysis

Ronald Carter, Angela Goddard,
Danuta Reah, Keith Sanger
and Maggie Bowring

Working with Texts

The second edition of *Working with Texts: a core introduction to language analys* is is a fully revised and updated version of a well-established introductory language textbook. Covering a wide range of language areas, the book uses an interactive, activity-based approach to support students' understanding of language structure and variety. The second edition includes:

- new material on differences between spoken and written language; children's language; new technologies and language change;
- an updated range of texts, including literary extracts, advertisements, horoscopes, junk mail, comedy sketches, political speeches, telephone discourse and Internet chat;
- more extension work to support student-directed study;
- a new concluding section, which offers further analyses to help students draw together the different aspects of the book;
- updated Further reading and a list of URLs for students to visit.

Ronald Carter is Professor of Modern English Language in the School of English Studies, University of Nottingham, the editor of the Routledge INTERFACE series and co-editor of the Routledge *Applied Linguistics* series.

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The Intertext series

- **Why does the phrase 'spinning a yarn' refer both to using language and making cloth?**
- **What might a piece of literary writing have in common with an advert or a note from the milkman?**
- **What aspects of language are important to understand when analysing texts?**

The Routledge INTERTEXT series will develop readers' understanding of how texts work. It does this by showing some of the designs and patterns in the language from which they are made, by placing texts within the contexts in which they occur, and by exploring relationships between them.

The series consists of a foundation text, *Working with Texts: A core introduction to language analysis,* which looks at language aspects essential for the analysis of texts, and a range of satellite texts. These apply aspects of language to a particular topic area in more detail. They complement the core text and can also be used alone, providing the user has the foundation skills furnished by the core text.

Benefits of using this series:

- **Unique**—written by a team of respected teachers and practitioners whose ideas and activities have also been trialled independently.
- **Multi-disciplinary**—provides a foundation for the analysis of texts, supporting students who want to achieve a detailed focus on language.
- **Accessible**—no previous knowledge of language analysis is assumed, just an interest in language use.
- **Comprehensive**—wide coverage of different genres: literary texts, notes, memos, signs, advertisements, leaflets, speeches, conversation.
- **Student-friendly**—contains suggestions for further reading; activities relating to texts studied; commentaries after activities; key terms highlighted and an index of terms.

The series editors:

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Core textbook:

Working with Texts: A core introduction to language analysis (2nd edn; 2001) Ronald Carter, Angela Goddard, Danuta Reah, Keith Sanger, Maggie Bowring

Satellite titles:

The Language of Sport
Adrian Beard

The Language of Politics
Adrian Beard

The Language of Speech and Writing
Sandra Cornbleet and Ronald Carter

The Language of Advertising: Written texts
Angela Goddard

Language and Gender
Angela Goddard and Lindsey Meân Patterson

The Language of Magazines
Linda McLoughlin

The Language of Poetry
John McRae

The Language of Conversation
Francesca Pridham

The Language of Newspapers
Danuta Reah

The Language of Humour
Alison Ross

The Language of Drama
Keith Sanger

Working with Texts

A core introduction to language analysis

Second Edition

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LONDON AND NEW YORK

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notes on authors

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acknowledgements

introduction

The contributors

The authors of this book are practitioners, with much experience of language teaching, curriculum development work, in-service training, examining and writing. The ideas and activities here have arisen from their own practice; they have also been trialled independently.

Aim of this book

The aim of this book is to provide a foundation for the analysis of texts, in order to support students in any discipline who want to achieve a detailed focus on language. No previous knowledge of language analysis is assumed; what *is* assumed is an interest in language use and a desire to account for the choices made by language users.

How this book is structured

The book is divided into six units which, taken together, cover the main aspects of language that it will be important to consider in any rigorous textual description:

> *Unit one: Signs and sounds* explores some aspects of meaning in written sign systems and in the sounds that constitute the basic ingredients of spoken language;
> *Unit two: Words and things* examines the nature of the lexical system;
> *Unit three: Sentences and structures* considers the effects of various types of grammatical patterning;
> *Unit four: Text and context: written discourse* focuses on the cohesive devices that tie texts together across sentence boundaries;
> *Unit five: Text and context: spoken discourse* looks at some important aspects of spoken varieties, both in naturally occurring and in mediated texts.
> *Unit six: Applications* points forward to the ways in which language and analysis can be taken further into investigative research.

Although the units represent distinct areas of language, these areas are not independent of each other in practice, when language is actually being used: for example, written symbols are combined to form words, and lexical patterning is an important aspect of written discourse. But in order to study language rather than simply use it, some systematic ways of paying attention to its various components are necessary. When working through this book, it is obviously important to understand each of the language areas being considered in the units; but it is equally important not to lose sight of

language as a whole system while thinking about its parts. Practical reminders about the holistic nature of language occur in this book in a number of ways: in cross-references between the units, where some features of language are considered more than once, but from different perspectives; in analytical activities, where questions and commentaries on texts will focus on certain salient features, but will also suggest the larger picture to which these features contribute; in the developmental structure of the book, where later units will enable earlier skills to be re-applied and further enhanced; and in the final unit, where students are pointed towards the planning of their own research projects.

The intention, then, is that the book should build a composite picture which enables students to appreciate the nature of texts as a whole while being able to discuss meaningfully the contributions made by different aspects of language.

Ways of working

Wherever possible, the features of language referred to are shown in operation, within texts. This means the book is not intended to be a passive reading exercise but, rather, a set of active learning materials: instead of simply being told about features, readers are asked to consider how they work within texts and in particular contexts. The wide range of different genres covered is intentional, to show that skills in analysing language can be successfully applied whatever the text, and to break down the idea that only high-status texts such as literary forms are worthy of scrutiny: literary texts are considered here, but there is equivalent, if not more, discussion of such texts as notes, memos, signs, advertisements, informative leaflets, speeches and spontaneous conversation. For students of literature, comparative studies across a range of textual types can enable interesting questions to be asked about the nature of literary language.

Commentaries are provided after many of the activities. These commentaries, which highlight and discuss some of the main points of language use, are not intended to be model answers or definitive accounts: rather, they are a way to compare readers' perceptions with those of the authors. It is hoped that readers will use these commentaries in the way that best supports their own learning. Links to the relevant satellite titles are made throughout the core text, and the final unit provides both guidance on the initial stages of research planning and a selection of texts and commentaries that act as a sampler for the INTERTEXT titles.

While this book may form the basis for work in groups, it can also be used by individuals working alone. When readers work alone, the feedback that can often come via other group members is not available; the commentaries can, at least in part, make up for that.

At the end of some activities, suggestions are given for extension work. It is a common feature of many A-Level and undergraduate courses that students undertake their own language investigations. The ideas within the 'Extension' sections have this type of work in mind. As a core text, this book can only offer brief suggestions and pointers; the satellite titles that form part of the INTERTEXT series as a whole are designed to pursue many of these topics in considerably more detail.

Terminology and further reading

Because no previous knowledge of language analysis is assumed, the first usage of what is considered to be a technical term is emboldened in the text. Some of these terms are explained in context, but a brief explanation of most of these terms can be found in the 'Index of terms' at the back of this book. Suggestions for further reading are also provided.

Notes on the Second Edition

This new edition reflects some of the interesting changes that have taken place over the last few years in linguistic study:

- Computer-based communication tools such as Internet chatrooms have generated new types of text for study. We include some material from such sites, and ask to what extent electronic discourse disrupts our conventional notions of speech and writing.
- As well as providing new sites for communication, the Internet is also proving invaluable as a resource, giving us access to archives of language and to many different aspects of theoretical knowledge. A list of useful URLs is included at the back of the book.
- New approaches to research have sometimes overturned previous assumptions about language, or have provided fresh insights into the way language is used. Several examples of data searches from language corpora are included in order to show that corpus linguistics has much to offer, even at quite a simple level.
- Work on corpora has been particularly revealing of the features and strategies of speech. Spoken language is dealt with in closer detail in this new edition, which includes a greater variety of speech genres.
- New collaborations across subject disciplines have opened up fresh opportunities for applied language study. As the INTERTEXT series develops, we continue to support applied language work in a range of different areas via our satellite titles. This new edition offers greater transparency to students by explicitly demonstrating the connections between aspects of the core book and their applications in the satellite titles of the series.

Unit one
Signs and sounds

Aim of this unit

The aim of this unit is to explore the smallest elements within language—the symbols of written language, and the sounds of spoken language.

Contents

SIGNS

What is a sign?

This looks at how visual signs represent meanings.

As simple as ABC

This section will start you thinking about alphabetic letters as symbols.

Where it's @

This section presents some recent changes in textual conventions brought about by new technologies.

From speech to writing

In this section you explore the different functions of speech and writing and the signs and symbols used to represent speech and writing.

Space-shifting

Here you consider the use made of spaces and textual layout in a wide range of different texts.

Who's in the picture?

This brief section looks at signs and symbols involving human subjects.

SOUNDS

In this more extensive section you begin to analyse the sounds of English and how they are produced. You cover consonants, vowels, sound symbolism and are introduced to phonetic alphabets.

Texts used include

- Signs and logos
- The use of birds to connote particular services or companies
- Computer-mediated communication **(CMC)**
- Alphabets
- Early writing by young children
- Jokes, riddles and written symbols
- Extracts from novels
- Poetry and poems
- Cartoons which use signs and symbols
- Advertisements
- Visual shapes and sound patterns in texts
- Word repetitions and contrasts

Signs

WHAT IS A SIGN?

Language is sometimes referred to as a **semiotic** system.

This means that it is thought to be a system where the individual elements—'signs'—take their overall meaning from how they are combined with other elements. The analogy that is often used to illustrate this principle is the system of road traffic lights: the red, amber and green lights work as a system, and the whole system has meaning which is not carried by any one of the lights alone, but by the lights in a certain combination and sequence. In the same way, written letters of a language are signs that have to be in a certain order to make sense to the reader, and the sounds of a language are signs that only have meaning to a hearer when they occur in predictable groups. To take this idea to its logical conclusion, it is clearly possible for the elements mentioned to occur in unpredictable ways—such as for a red and green light to occur simultaneously in a set of traffic lights, or for an invented word to have an odd spelling, such as 'mldh'; but, in these cases, we still make sense of what is happening—by explaining away these occurrences as 'break-downs' or 'mistakes'. We are still therefore referring back to a system of rules, in defining such phenomena as deviating from what we expect.

Cultural analysts would go beyond language to look at all aspects of society as systems of signs: for example, films are a system where different signs are combined in patterned ways; dress codes embody rules where different elements can occur in many varied combinations; the area of food contains many rules about what can be combined with what, and when different foods can be eaten. In all such aspects of culture, conventions are highly culture-bound—in other words, different cultures have different semiotic systems.

Activity

This activity will focus on signs in the most traditional sense—road signs—and will explore the idea of how we read them. Look at the signs in Text: Road signs. These are all from an edition of the Highway Code published in the 1930s.

The originator of the idea of semiotics—the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure—suggested that there were at least two types of sign in cases such as these: **iconic** and **symbolic.** An iconic sign tries to be a direct picture of what it refers to (although this may consist of a generalised line drawing rather than a picture in the photographic, literal sense). A symbolic sign is not a picture of what is being referred to **(referent),** but a picture of something that we associate with the referent.

- Which of these signs are iconic, and which symbolic?
- Where a sign is symbolic, how does it work—what are the associations

(connotations) that are called up in the reader's mind?

Text: Road signs

CROSS ROADS	BEND	SCHOOL
ROAD JUNCTION	ROAD JUNCTION	ROAD JUNCTION
ROUND–ABOUT	LEVEL CROSSING	ROAD NARROWS
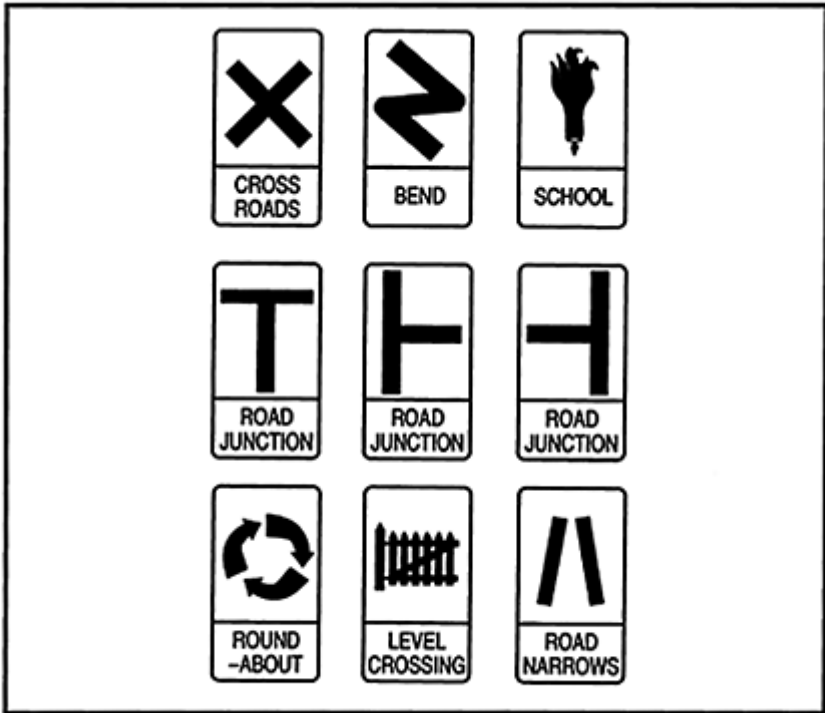
Commentary

All the signs are iconic apart from the sign for 'school'.

The 'school' sign, rather than picturing a school, symbolises a school by using a torch. This type of torch is often used on public statues, and carries classical references to such ideas as 'shedding the light of knowledge on dark areas', 'lighting up a path towards progress and civilisation'—ideas which are represented by the torch still used to mark the Olympic games. This same idea is in the word 'enlightenment', which is often used to describe a particular period in history when people looked towards classical civilisation (Ancient Greece and Rome) as ideal states.

Such associations are being played with in the Boddington's beer mat below, where the symbol (a cut-out shape) resembles both a torch and an ice-cream cone, and where the phrase 'the cream of' synthesises ideas of cream-as-luxury-foodstuff with that of high quality in general (as in 'la crème de la crème') and, ultimately, with the 'creamy' pint of Manchester-based beer.

THE CREAM OF MANCHESTER
WWW.BODDINGTONS.COM

Although all the other signs are iconic, the sign for 'crossroads' is slightly different from the rest in that it doesn't necessarily suggest the actual shape of roads coming up: instead, it takes the idea of the cross as a written symbol, and bases itself on that shape. Note that, outside the context of road signs, this shape can have other, highly symbolic, meanings—such as a 'kiss' on a personal letter, 'wrong' when written on an answer, or 'multiply' in mathematics.

Extension

Collect some examples of symbolic signs.

You might start by looking for more examples of the torch: for example, the contemporary Prudential Insurance logo; the Statue of Liberty; the logo of the Conservative Party.

Also look at a modern version of the Highway Code: how have the roads signs above changed? Do modern road signs work mainly in an iconic or symbolic way?

Activity

The fact that certain symbols call up powerful associations in the minds of readers is not lost on advertisers. The old adage 'a picture paints a thousand words' is demonstrated daily in the texts that advertising agencies produce.

In Text: Bird images are seven logos taken from texts advertising goods and services. Although each one is a picture of a bird, in each case the advertiser was using the bird image for its associations or connotations.

For each logo, write down the connotations that come to mind when you see it. Don't try to guess which product or service was being advertised, but rather concentrate on the image itself.

Text: Bird images
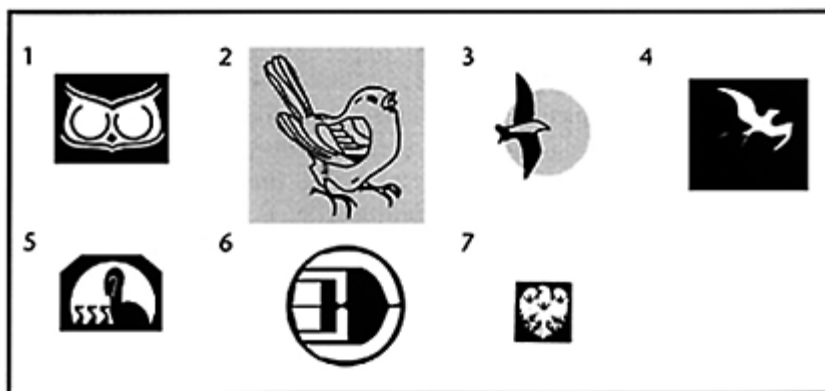
Commentary

The products/services and possible connotations are as follows:

1 Owl: from a small ads/services page in a local paper. The column headed by the owl logo was advertising children's reading clubs. We have connotations of the 'wise kindly old owl'; perhaps the fact that the owl has large, forward-facing eyes makes us associate the bird with reading and therefore acquiring knowledge. Or it could be that we associate reading with night-time activity, a time when the nocturnal bird is alert.
2 Sparrow: the logo of a local paper, placed in the top right-hand corner of the front page, just below the title of the paper, which was the *Enquirer.* Sparrows are thought to be bold, inquisitive birds—qualities which the newspaper would presumably like to be associated with.
3 Seagull: from a holiday company. We associate seagulls with the seaside, and therefore leisure-time activities. The picture shows the seagull flying across the sun: to see the bird at this angle, we would have to be lying on our backs—presumably basking in the warmth and sunshine of a summer's day.
4 Swallow: from a futon company. Associations we have for this type of bird are likely to include grace, elegance, freedom—soaring high in the air, swooping and diving. These birds also often feature in oriental art, and the futon itself is Japanese.
5 Pelican and chicks: from an insurance company. The adult pelican is known to peck

out its own feathers in order to line the nest for its chicks. Whether all readers would bring this idea to the image is doubtful, but even so the image of an adult bird with its chicks calls up associations for us of protection and security.

6 Swallow: from an airline company. The idea of 'flying high' would be something any airline would like to suggest. The design of the picture is very stylised and mechanistic, so in contrast to the futon company's 'natural' image, this picture suggests power and man-made speed, calling up the shape of an aircraft with its engines creating a slipstream of air.

7 Eagle: a bank. The eagle suggests power and strength. It has been used to symbolise the power of nation-states, as in the famous American bald eagle. It therefore calls up ideas of large, powerful institutions with extensive resources at their disposal.

There is nothing natural about the associations we have for these images: for example, the owl is, in fact, blind at night; and it would be absurd to suggest that a swallow felt 'freer' than a sparrow, that a sparrow thought of itself as cheeky, or that a seagull knew what a seaside resort was. These ideas are imposed on members of the animal kingdom by humans—a process so well recognised that we have a name for it—**anthropomorphism** (from Greek 'anthropos', human, and 'morph', shape). Further examples of this would be the 'cuddly' bear, the 'cunning' fox, the 'evil' snake. They are not universal ideas, but are culture-specific, and different cultures may well have very different connotations for the same animal.

As well as cultural associations, individuals of course bring their own experiences and feelings to images: a cuddly bear may not seem so cuddly if you've been attacked by one.

Signs such as the ones you have just been studying are powerful rhetorical devices, for a number of reasons: they call up strong associations in the mind of the reader; they are economic, using no verbal language at all, and taking up minimal space; meanings can be fluid, so there is space to manipulate, adapt and change; signs can suggest several ideas at once, so they can be multi-purpose.

The ideas behind such signs—here, animals having certain characteristics—are used frequently in literary texts as forms of symbolism: for example, a poem could use a verbal description of a bird to suggest ideas about personal freedom. Such a poem could go further, by also setting out its lines in the shape of a bird's wings. The use of verbal text as a visual art form in poetry is often referred to as 'concrete poetry', and you can probably remember occasions in school when you were asked to create a text of that kind. (For an example, see p. 128.)

AS SIMPLE AS ABC

In looking at logos, it's clear that, even if readers are not consciously analysing and interpreting them, logos bring to mind a range of associations.

Just as logos are signs, so too are our common alphabetic letters and punctuation marks. But we don't go through the same process with them—or do we?

Activity

Look at the signs in Text: Signs and logos, which are all based on the English alphabet and punctuation system. Apart from the triangular road sign, these are all company logos.

Which alphabetic letters are being featured, and what do you think each of the signs is trying to suggest?

Text: Signs and logos
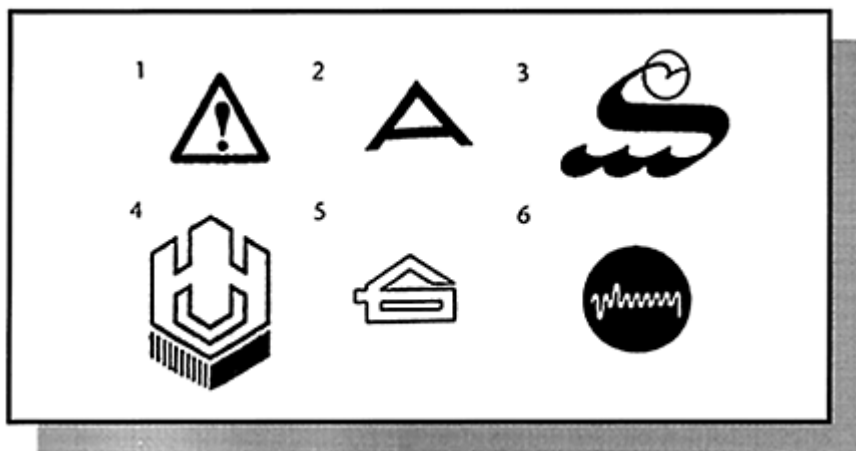
Commentary

1 The exclamation mark suggests emotive expression—presumably as a result of the shock or surprise that the driver may experience if s/he encounters the impending road feature unprepared. Notice how quickly we process the meaning of this sign, and how complex the meaning actually is. We know not to take this sign iconically—we do not expect to be showered by exclamation marks! This sign is therefore doubly symbolic—as a road sign, and as a punctuation mark.

2 This is a roofing company, using the letter 'A' to represent a traditional roof shape.

3 This is a South African cruise-line company. The letter 'S' is deployed very cleverly: to represent a ship and the sea in its shape, and to suggest **sound symbolism** (linking sounds with certain ideas) by calling up the 's' sound as well, to remind us of the sea. (See later in this unit for more exploration of sound symbolism.) In addition, the top of the 'S' becomes a seagull flying across the sun. Perhaps this company is capitalising on the fact that this has become a well-known symbol as a result of the success of another company—Thomson's—but hopes that we will associate the symbol with holidays in general rather than just the Thomson name.

4 and 5. These are both building-society logos, using an H and a G respectively. The associations we have may be for different types of building, the three-dimensional 'H' resembling a castle structure (an 'Englishman's home') while the 'G' appears as a more modest residence, such as a bungalow.

6 This is Plessey Radar. The writing looks like the company name, with the added suggestion of the kind of electrical impulse produced by a sophisticated piece of equipment—a radar screen, perhaps in a military installation. On the other hand, the machine could be registering a human pulse in a hospital context: a company with a scientific profile would benefit from being seen as humane and concerned with saving life.

English alphabetic letters are not symbols in the way the earliest forms of our writing were, where written symbols pictured what they represented: such symbols, called 'pictograms' or 'pictographs', have been discovered in many parts of the world—for example, Egypt (dated around 3000 BC) and China (1500 BC). The pictogram would be similar to one of the letters A, G or H in the previous activity standing for the whole concept of 'house' in all contexts and occurrences.

WHERE IT'S @

New communication technologies, such as computer-based communication, have given us new forms of written language and images, and new sites for their exploration. For example:

- As readers of paper-based texts, we have become accustomed to the static nature of icons, symbols and logos, but many websites now use animations that require a different sort of reading from that of a 'still' text;
- Some of our traditional punctuation marks have undergone something of a status shift. For example, the mark above—@—only ever used to be used in business invoices, and the full stop—the bane of the schoolteacher's life—is now the essential ingredient in all website addresses. And…
- Whoever would have thought that punctuation could become a form of artwork? In the form of emoticons (written symbols put together to form a picture), punctuation appears to have a new, expressive function. Here are two examples. You need to incline your head to the left to understand them:

;-) (winking face)   :-p (sticking your tongue out)

- We have become so familiar with the kinds of texts that appear on the computer screen that they have begun to influence our paper-based texts, thus establishing a kind of reflexivity. The way in which one text can refer to or imitate another is sometimes called **intertextuality.**

Activity

Look at Text: *City Life,* which is the front cover from a traditional paper text—a Manchester-based listings magazine. How is this front cover imitating the types of text

you find on computer screens? Try to explore this in as much detail as you can. For example:

- Which different computer-based texts (and types of software) is this cover drawing on?
- How does the paper text imitate the types of interactive process that computer screen-readers regularly go through?
- Are there aspects of this cover that are more typical of traditional, paper-based magazines than of computer texts?

(Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Note: see satellite texts: *The Language of Magazines, The Language of ICT*

Text: *City Life*

In organising this unit, it was tempting to delay reference to computer texts until after the next section, which is about what we can learn from looking at children's writing, and at their views on literacy. But computer literacy is no longer the domain of a few adult specialists: even very young children know about computer texts, just as they know other forms of technology such as the telephone. However, the teacher who collected the material for the next section on children's views of reading and writing did not place a strong focus on computer texts when she did the activity. For this reason, you might think about how different the children's responses might have been if computers had been emphasised as sites for literacy. If you are interested in this area, you could do some

research of your own along these lines.

FROM SPEECH TO WRITING

By the time we have reached adulthood, most of us have forgotten what it felt like to move from spoken to written language, and to encounter, not just a whole new set of conventions in terms of the features of writing, but a new set of rules about functions as well: just what are the purposes of written language? Why bother to have it at all? Why pay so much attention to it?

Activity

Read through the comments in Text: Why we read, and Text: Why do we/adults write? They are from classes of 7–8 year olds, asked about the purposes of writing and reading. What ideas come through here, and how do their ideas compare with your own—what do *you* see as the functions of written language?

Text: Why we read

Why We Read

We Read for a lot of things. for one thing We need to Read because ... if there is a sign that Said "DANGER" and you cant Read it than Something bad Will happen.

Why do we n Pric because if we would our going £0.5. oourk

1. We read because if we had to Sing We would not be able to read the music.

2. To learn how to Spell things.

3. To read nice books that you enjoy.

4. To Spell properly.

5. To teach other people.

6. To read prices when you go in a Shop.

7 When you go into a book Shop you would now what book to get.

We read to our children to Educat them

We   read?

eed
cs   on tins
    we   didnt
    be   wasting
        time
        to the
        to ask.

to   find out whot nas
happened in the past

We need to read so we can tell
what temperature an apple crumble
goes in.

Spelling   Prices

What.   £50g
Why.   11p.
We.   £299.
read.   £4.00l
2g.   44p.
caf.   62p.
bowl.   £4.52
Light

Spelling.

① To teach other people to Spell
    prophley with out getting it wrong

②   Prices.

To read the prices when you go
into a Shop So you dont give
them the wrong price.

to find out
whats on on tv

Why do ve read

① To find what happened's in the past.

② is mum gives us a shopping list and we can't
read it you might get the wrong thing.

③ it makes you use a dictionary.

④ it helps you to spell things.

witchs need
to read
he spells to
read
e spell book

⑤ Because reading is good for us

Text: Why do we/adults write?

...use of checks and writing letters cards and to tell things to People they dcnt see.

They write to get atention and to cheques and lots of other things like that. Oh and Bills.

My mum writes Crosswords.
my Dad writes cheques.
my Grandra writes bets for the horses
So does my Grandad

My mother writes letters to her friends

Grown-ups write crosswords and shopping lists.

They write cheques Lettes Bank and holliday Letters.

They write to relitaves to tell them what happend

Grown-ups write to the milk man

because they need to.

I dune no

My mum and dad use a computer to write essays and important things for work.

Why do grown-ups write ?

Why do we write?

We write   because   in the   To   become   clerr   and
future   we   will   beaduL   Work.
to   Spell.

you   write   to   become   cleven
and   get   a   job

I write mostly for pleasure and because I want
to. I write for school and to keep up ideas for
my book stories.

Sometimes you write to communicate
with people or to remember something.

for fun. and edjercashon.
and writeing boobes.

so people can read it instead of
hearing it

Because it gives my
hand excorise

I   write   to   communicate   Sometimes I have to.

I write because it is relaxing and you
sometimes learn from it

I write because its nice to know
that you can and it gives my
mind a rest.

because   it is   a   why
to explan.

Because I am told

We write so we   can learn and
if you cant write you cant
read and then you can't learn.

I write because I enjoy
writing sometimes.

I write because the teacher makes us.

Commentary

Some of the ideas that are expressed by the children could be grouped as follows:

1 The importance of literacy in terms of day-to-day functioning: reading recipes,
   seeing signs for danger, not being cheated in shops, finding out what's on TV,
   leaving notes for the milkman, writing shopping lists and cheques, and putting bets

on. These are all ways of controlling and negotiating our world, and illustrate the importance of reading and writing as forms of instrumental, everyday communication.

2 Written language is seen as the repository of knowledge and therefore a means of educating ourselves. Writing produces tangible permanent artifacts—books—and as such is the archive of a culture's ideas and attitudes. To gain access to this store, we need to be able to read.

3 Written language is associated with being 'clever' and getting a job. In contemporary society, we take for granted the idea that literacy should be a universal entitlement. But compulsory schooling only started in 1870; traditionally, while spoken language was universal, writing was a very particular skill, learned only by those who were formally educated. In medieval times, writing was a professional skill—'scribing'—for which money would be charged.
Even though we now view literacy as a basic skill for everyone, we still have a legacy which connects literacy with power in all sorts of ways, from the most obvious—the importance we give to written exams and application forms, the way we pay large sums of money to lawyers to write our legal documents and 'translate' them for us—to the slightly more subtle—the importance of signing your name (as opposed to giving a verbal agreement), the way libel is seen as a valid legal concept, while slander is not taken as seriously.

4 Both the pleasure and the labour of using literacy skills come across here. Unlike speech, which is spontaneous and feels relatively effortless, both writing and reading are skills which require concentration and subtle co-ordination of hand and eye movements, aside from all the different types of linguistic processing that they entail.

Observing children's transition from spoken to written language can give us many insights into how written texts work for us as adults.

Activity

Text: Jonathon is a piece of writing by Jonathon, age 4, reporting on his day out to Blackpool. In it, the writer uses initial letters to stand for whole words; the child's teacher wrote the full lines of text, after Jonathon read his writing back to her.

   Using initial letters to stand for whole words is a common stage for early writers: it signals that a crucial connection has been made between speech and writing, but that not enough of each whole word can be mapped out in order to represent it graphically. Initial letters can be a useful aidemémoire, to recall the whole word if necessary at some later stage (as here—it was two days later that Jonathon read his text back to the teacher); in learning the manual skill of writing, the hand quickly tires. This method is therefore a good way of writing a long text—something any teacher in the vicinity would be encouraging. Note also the importance of drawing in early texts such as these, where pictures are often an integral part of the writing. It is only the adult world that puts strong boundaries around these two types of activity, putting them into the separate categories of 'art' and 'writing'; for children who have yet to learn about the way adults divide up the

world of representation, one type of symbolic mark must be much like another. It is well known that early drawing (what adults sometimes disparagingly call 'scribbling') is good preparation for the very fine movements needed to produce alphabetic letters.

Text: Jonathon
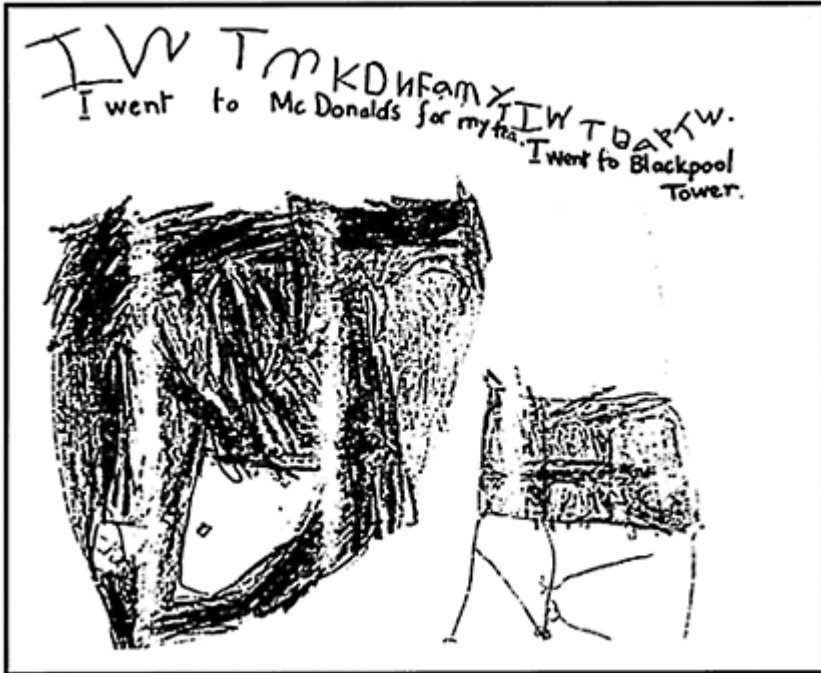
Where, in adult texts, do we use single letters or abbreviated forms of words on a regular basis? How do such alterations work? Are our reasons for doing this the same as Jonathon's? To get you started, read through Text: Estate agent's advert, then abbreviate the words as far as you can without removing the ability of the reader to reconstitute them:

Text: Estate agent's advert

> Beautifully restored nineteenth-century farmhouse with two reception rooms, a large kitchen, three bedrooms, a bathrooms and separate toilet. There is gas central heating throughout the house. Outside the propertity, there is a substantial double garage, and extensive gardens and outhouses. All the carpets and curtains are included in the selling price, which is £85,000 or nearest offer.

Commentary

In abbreviating the description of the house, you will have omitted many of the vowels (except where a vowel starts a word) but retained many of the consonants. This approach is at the basis of other examples of abbreviation, such as in 'T-line' shorthand. However, some words have such a distinctive profile, or are used so often in abbreviated form, that we come to understand them even when given only the first part of the word, especially when we see them used in a particular context—for example, the estate agent's material could have had 'beaut', '19thC', 'rec', 'sep', 'ext' and 'incl'. Some phrases are often abbreviated to initial letters (called **initialisms**) where this occurs on a regular basis: for example, GCH regularly means 'gas central heating', and ONO 'or nearest offer'. The latter examples are not very different from the child's strategy of initial-letter use; this same technique is also used regularly in personal ads (where GSOH in lonely hearts' columns means 'good sense of humour' and WLTM means 'would like to meet'), and in road signs—such as P for 'Parking' and H for 'hospital'. **Acronyms** also feature single letters, but they are then pronounced as whole words, whether recognised as a collection of letters (as in NATO) or not (as in laser—'light amplification by the stimulated emission of radiation').

The reasons for our uses of initialisms and acronyms in adult texts could be determined by any one or several of the following factors: financial cost of advertising space (e.g. estate agents, personal ads); demands on the memory made by having to remember the whole word or series of words (e.g. acronyms); the need for speed in writing (e.g. shorthand), reading (e.g. roadsigns) or speaking (e.g. initialisms which enable us to refer quickly to institutions or artifacts—BBC, TV, CD-ROM, PC).

Extension

Collect as many examples as you can find of texts that use abbreviations, initialisms and acronyms. When you have collected your material, sort your examples into groups according to the techniques they use. Try to draw some conclusions about the reasons for the usages you have collected. If you are unsure about the comprehensibility of some of your examples, test them out on some informants of your own.

One area that hasn't been covered, but which you could explore in your data collection, is that of jokes, puzzles and riddles which involve playing around with written symbols. For example, some use single letters (but not necessarily initial letters) to stand for whole words, as in the following hoarding outside a church:

WHAT'S MISSING FROM THIS CH-CH?

You might find some more examples like this in children's comics and magazines, or in some types of English school textbook.

Another area to consider is abbreviated language use in computer chatrooms, or in e-mails. For example, the following are quite common:

btw=by the way
pls=please
f2f=face to face
IRL=in real life
asl=age, sex, location (asked of participants in chatrooms)
ru=are you
2=to, too
y=why
afk=away from the keyboard
bak=back at the keyboard
cya=see you

Activity

Another area where children can teach us a lot about the resources of written texts is that of sound effects. The writing system has a range of ways to call up some of the aspects of sound that we learn to pay attention to as part of the meaning of spoken language.

Read through the two children's stories in Text: Omar, and Text: Lauren.

How are these children using aspects of written language to try to suggest sound?

Text: Omar

Ones a ponc Tieem Thefer
wes a hntb hous no one
went to the casel Be ccos The
Spereith The Spereith
meycs pecpel Then in to
goost .

Omar.S

Text: Lauren

~~The~~ ↑   my brithday

When   it   was   my   brithday   I   went   to
a   island   for   a   picaic..   I   toke
Simone   and   megan.   We   went   in   a   boat
Waen   we   got   there   we   played   for
a   pitr   Then   we   had . The   picnic
~~then~~   we   come   to   going home   the
boat   had   gone   I   Started   to
cry.   I   whant   to   go   home
Simone   had   a ~~~~   Idea   We can
make   a   ward   out   of   pebbles.
What   is   the   ward   going to
Say   ~~hdpt~~   help???   yes   Side
megan.   losts   get   going   I ho
I ho   its   of   to   work   We
go   There   ~~wehave~~   ~~wearld~~
Wave   Finish.   At   home   mum
ant   dad   had   Send   a
Sertch   party.   At   the   island
the   were   sitting   weting.
A   l   helicopter   they   Saw   the
Words   h.e.l.p   then   wa all
S.de   hepp.   the   helicopter
came   with   laders   we   ~~clamnd~~
Clamnd   up.

Commentary

Omar (age 5) enhances his story with a picture where a ghostly figure makes 'ooooo' sounds, in an attempt to provide something of an atmospheric soundtrack. This also

occurs within the text itself: the reader knows that the words 'The Spirit, The Spirit' need to be pronounced in a 'spooky' way, as a result of their having wobbly lines round them. It's difficult to say exactly where this convention is from, but likely contenders could be comics and those science-fiction films where the screen 'dissolves' as the narrator goes back in time to remember 'when it all began'. (Note the very logical sound-based spelling, 'ones a pone tieem' for 'once upon a time'.)

Lauren (age 7) uses a range of devices to suggest features of spoken language: the enlargement of letters and the darker print in the words 'gone' and 'help?' suggest increased volume—in the first word, as a result of shock, and in the second, to signal a voice calling out. The question mark on 'help' indicates a speaker's raised voice when asking another character whether that is the right word to use. While the characters work to build their word out of pebbles, there is a soundtrack: 'Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to work we go'. This is particularly appropriate, as in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* from which the soundtrack comes, the dwarfs sing this as they go off stone-breaking in the mines. The sense of time passing, as the characters go through a laborious routine of repetitive work, is therefore achieved.

Towards the end, there is a clever use of full-stops to indicate that the letters in the word 'h.e.l.p.' are written (in pebbles, of course) rather than spoken.

Activity

If writers can use aspects of writing to suggest sound, this is unlikely to remain unnoticed by the advertisers of hi-fi equipment.

Text: Metz & Rahmen is an advert for personal stereos.

Identify the written language devices being used by the advertisers to refer to or represent aspects of sound. (Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Text: Metz & Rahmen

Lots of people settle for any old personal stereo —they jusst put up with the hissSing and accept that sometimes only one earpiece works at a time. They TURN UP THE VOLUME until the sound is so distorted that its just a NIGHTMARE Then, just when they're listening to their favourite music, their batteries conk out on them..... or their headphones drop to bits in their lap.

Not with Metz & Rahmen.

EEZZZy listening that's a dream .

(((M&R)))

Note: see satellite text: *The Language of Advertising*

Activity

Writers of fiction often try to give the reader a sense of spoken language, in a variety of ways: they may want to construct a 'voice' for the narrator, so that the reader can distinguish this address from the language used by the characters; there are the various voices of the characters themselves when they are talking to each other; and there are 'inner voices' in the form of the thoughts of the characters, relayed to readers by the narrator.

Below is an extract from *Ladder of Years,* by Anne Tyler, published in 1995. It is the opening of the novel.

- How does the writer use graphological features—in particular, punctuation and variations in typeface—to suggest aspects of spoken discourse?
- How much cannot be conveyed by such features, but has to be explained by the narrator directly, in the form of description?

Text: *Ladder of Years*

This all started on a Saturday morning in May, one of those warm spring days that smell like clean linen. Delia had gone to the supermarket to shop for the week's meals. She was standing in the produce section, languidly choosing a bunch of celery. Grocery

5

stores always made her reflective. Why was it, she was wondering, that celery was not called 'corduroy plant'? That would be much more colorful. And garlic bulbs should be 'moneybags,' because their shape remained her of the sacks of gold coins in folkales.

A customer on her right was sorting through the green onions.

10

It was early enough so the store was nearly empty, and yet this person seemed to be edging in on her a bit. Once or twice the fabric of his shirt sleeve brushed her dress sleeve. Also, he was really no more than shirring those onions around. He would lift one rubberbanded clump and drop it and alight on another. His fingers

15

were very long and agile, almost spidery. His cuffs were yellow oxford cloth.

He said, 'Would you know if these are called scallions?'

'Well, sometimes,' Delia said. She seized the nearest bunch of celery and stepped toward the plastic bags.

20

'Or would they be shallots?'

'No they're scallions,' she told him.

Needlessly, he steadied the roll of bags overhead while she peeled one off. (He towered a good foot above her.) She dropped the celery into the bag and reached toward the cup of twist ties,

25

but he had already plucked one out for her. 'What are shallots, anyway?' he asked.

She would have feared that he was trying to pick her up, except that when she turned she saw he was surely ten years her junior, and very good-looking besides. He had straight, dark-yellow hair

30

and milky blue eyes that made him seem dreamy and peaceful. He was smiling down at her, standing a little closer than strangers

ordinary stand.

'Um…,' she said flustered.

'Shallots,' he remained her.

35

'Shallots are fatter,' she said. She set the celery in her glocery cart. 'I believe they're above the parsley,' she called over her shoulder, but she found him next to her, keeping step with her as she wheeled her cart toward the citrus fruits. He wore blue jeans, very faded, and soft moccasins that couldn't be heard above 'King

40

of the Road' on the public sound system.

'I also need lemons,' he told her.

She slid another glance at him.

'Look,' he suddenly. He lowered his voice. 'Could I ask you a big favor?'

45

'Um...'

'My ex-wife is up ahead in potatoes. Or not ex I guess but... estranged, let's say, and she's got her boyfriend with her. Could you just pretend we're together? Just till I can out of here?'

'Well, of course,' Delia said.

50

And without even taking a deep breath first she plunged happpily back into the old high-school atmosphere of romantic intrigue and deception. She narrowed her eyes and lifted her chin and said, 'We'll *Show* her!' and sailed past the fruits and made a U-term into root vegetables. 'ZWhich one is she' she murmured

55

through ventriloquist lips.

'Tan shirt,' he whispered. Then he started her with a sudden brust of laughter. 'Ha, ha!' he told her too loudly. 'Aren't you clever to say so!'

But 'tan shirt' was nowwhere near an adequate description. The

60

woman who turned at the sound of his voice wore an ecru rawsilk tunic over black silk trousers as slim as two pencils. Her hair was absolutely black, cut shorter on one side, and her face was a perfect oval. 'Why, Adrin,' she said. Whoever was with her—some man or other—turned too, still gripping a potato. A dark, thick

65

man with rough skin like stucco and eyebrows that met in the middle. Not up to the woman's standard at all; but how many people were?

Delia's companion said, 'Rosemary. I didn't see you. So don't forget,' he told Delia, not breaking his stride. He set a hand on her cart to steer it into aisle 3. 'You promised me you'd make your

70

marvelous blancmange tonight.'

'Oh, yes, my…blancmange,' Delia echoed faintly. Whatever blancmange might be, it sounded the way she felt just then: pale and plain-faced and skinny, with her freckles and her frizzy brown curls and her ruffled pink round-collared dress.

75

They had bypassed the dairy case and the juice aisle, where Delia had planned to pick up several items, but she didn't point that out because this Adrian person was still talking. 'Your blancmange and then your, uh, your meat and vegetables and da-da-da…'

The way he let his voice die reminded her of those popular

80

songs that end with the singers just absentmindedly drifting away from the microphine. 'Is she looking at us?' he whispered. 'Check it out. Don't make it obvious.'

Delia glanced over, pretending to be struck by a display of converted rice. Both the wife and the boyfriend had their backs to her, but there was something artificial in their posture. No one

85

could find russet potatoes so mesmerizing. 'Well, she's mentally looking,' Delia murmured. She turned to see her grocery cart rapidly filling with pasta. Egg nooldes, rotini, linguine—Adrian flung in boxes at random. 'Excuse me…', she said.

Commentary

David Crystal's *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (1995) lists four main functions for punctuation: grammar, where features such as full stops and commas mark out grammatical units; prosody, where such symbols as speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks indicate that someone is speaking, and that their voice is behaving in certain ways; rhetoric, where some forms of punctuation—most notably,

colons and semicolons—map out aspects of argument or explanation (as in this paragraph); and semantic nuance, where features of emphasis such as quotation marks suggest a particular attitude to a word or phrase being 'marked out'.

Anne Tyler uses punctuation to mark out grammatical units in the same way as writers of many other types of text. There are two examples of the rhetorical function listed above: these are a colon in line 72, which points forward to the explanation that follows it, and the semi-colon in line 66 which balances the sentences either side of the punctuation mark, bringing them into more dramatic parallel than a comma would do, and leading up to a rhetorical question (a question posed for effect, rather than one requiring a real answer).

What is noticeable, however, is Tyler's extensive use of the prosodic and the semantic nuance functions. This is hardly suprising, given that these are concerned with constructing a sense of voice, and with establishing attitudes.

> *Examples of the prosodic function:* within the language of the characters themselves—speech marks, lines of dots suggesting a voice trailing off, question marks, exclamation marks, italics to suggest emphasis; within the language used by the narrator—brackets and dashes in lines 23, 63 and 64, 87 and 88 to suggest a change in pace as a result of adding extra information.
>
> *Examples of the semantic nuance function:* quotation marks in the narrator's report of Delia's thoughts in lines 6 and 7; the same in the narrator's commentary in lines 39 and 59.

Despite these extensive markers, there is still much about the way the characters speak that has to be described by the narrator. Here are some examples: 'she called over her shoulder'; 'he lowered his voice'; 'she murmured through ventriloquist lips'; 'he whispered'; 'he startled her with a sudden burst of laughter'; 'he told her too loudly'; 'Delia echoed faintly'; 'the way he let his voice die reminded her…'.

These examples illustrate that, in the end, written language cannot do justice to the subtleties of speech. All it can do is to give us some signposts as readers, via devices such as punctuation marks, to help us create the idea of speech in our heads.

Note: see satellite text: *The Language of Fiction, The Language of Drama*

Extension

Collect some texts that are using features of written language in order to suggest aspects of speech. You could focus on a particular area: for example, children's early writing; advertising; literature.

SPACE—SHIFTING

In computer language, space is treated as if it were a mark on the page; it therefore has the same status as a punctuation mark or a letter. The fact that this seems like an odd notion is evidence of how much we take space in written texts for granted, both in its

existence and where it should occur: in English, words have gaps between them, lines of writing are separated by space, pages have no-go areas called 'margins', application forms announce sternly 'do not write below this line'. Rules about space are part of the way we formulate rules about textual shape.

Space is actually meaningful in a variety of ways. To begin with, different languages have very different rules about orientation—Arabic reads from right to left, Chinese from top to bottom—therefore ideas about where spaces should occur will be different, leading to different written patterns.

It's also clear that we have notions, as readers, of an appropriate amount of space in and around texts: for example, we talk about some forms of writing being off-putting because they look too densely packed, or some texts looking rather hectic and 'busy', perhaps because the writing in them is set at odd angles on the page or contains overlaps; we might also say that writing looks rather 'lost' on a page because it doesn't fill the space adequately. Such ideas about crowds and loneliness appear to vary according to a number of factors associated with the reader—age being one significant dimension: the size of print, the amount of space left on the page, and the ratio of verbal language to pictures will be very different in a children's reader compared with a book such as this one.

Activity

As well as the space around texts, the space inside texts is meaningful. For example, if we expect a text to occur, then its absence, or partial absence, can be startling. This is illustrated by Text: NSPCC, which uses the strategy of absence to make the powerful statement that the true text is too upsetting to print. Think about the following:

◉ Why has the advertiser decided to leave the lines and full stops in this text, rather than just offering a blank space?

(Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Text: NSPCC

This is a 12-year-old's account of the abuse she suffered from her father.
The more shocking details of her story have been removed.

Tomorrow is FULL STOP day. Wear the badge. Phone 09069 123 888 for yours. **Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP ● NSPCC™**
Calls cost £1 per minute at all times. Calls will not exceed 3 minutes. All profits from the phone line will go direct to the NSPCC. Registered charity 216401

Activity

Space, defining the shape of a text, is also one powerful way of recognising different

types of writing (also called **genres**). This activity will test out how far it is possible to identify different written genres without being able to read any of the actual words the texts contain. First, brainstorm as many distinctively different types of writing as you can think of. Here are some examples, to start you off:

- shopping list
- menu
- recipe
- letter
- poem
- newspaper article.

When you have exhausted your list, without writing any words, draw the shape of each of your texts by using lines to represent the shape of the writing, and boxes to show artwork such as photographs. You can use any number of different lines, plus asterisks, bullet points, arrows, or any ornamental features you want to include. Here is an example of a shopping list:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

When you have finished drawing your texts, swop them with those from other students in your group, without saying what the texts are: see how many can be guessed accurately. There may well be more than one possible outcome for a particular shape: where this happens, try to see what the various 'guesses' have in common in terms of their nature and purpose.

(Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Activity

Because particular written genres are associated with certain textual designs, the idea of textual design can be used by one text to suggest another. This was discussed with reference to the *City Life* magazine cover (p. 12), where the concept of intertextuality was

introduced.

Look at Text: Demon Internet, which consists of an envelope, plus contents in the form of a card plus 'Post-it' note. The context for these texts were that the recipient cancelled their subscription to the Demon Internet service. How does this mailing use our knowledge of a range of other texts to construct its message?

Text: Demon Internet

we were sorry when you left us . so let us tempt you back with our new
upgraded standard service , still only £10+vat a month . we now give
you 15mb of free web space (triple what you had before) , unlimited
email addresses and a free games web site . plus LineOne™ content for
only £3.20 a month after three months' free trial (one month from
september 25) and our fax to email service for a one-off payment of
£19.99+vat . re-registering your account is absolutely free and you can
keep exactly the same host name as before . call us on 0800 458 9666 .
welcome back .

⇨ **Demon Internet**
more people get back on with us

Commentary

The envelope uses the @ symbol to indicate that this is a communication about new
technology, with the @ substituting for the word 'at' in the phrase 'open at once'. This
phrase commands the imaginary recipient—the **narratee**—to take urgent action. Inside,
the 'Post-it' note imitates the kind of message written by the receivers of phone calls:
evidence for this is the phrase 'while you were away' at the top, which also refers to the
fact that the recipient of the mail was 'away' from the Demon service. Interestingly, the
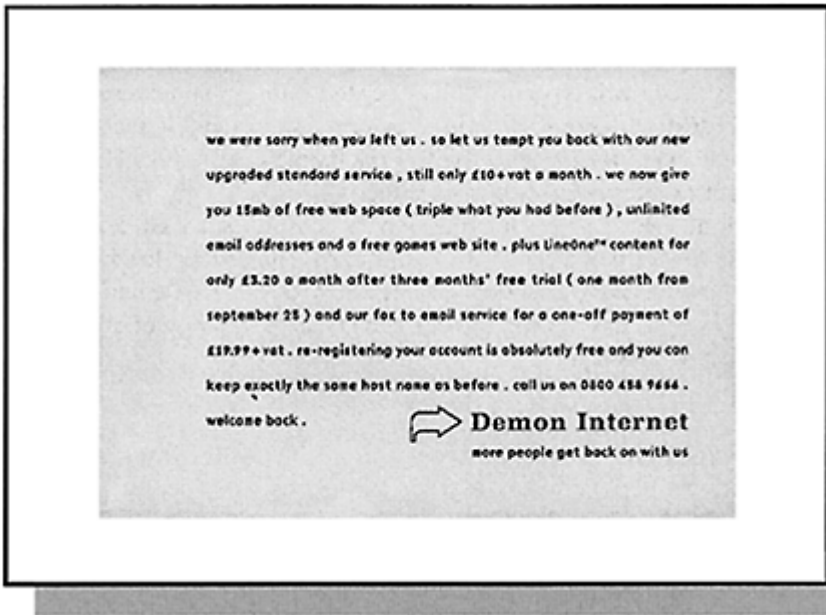pseudo-**URL** (Internet address) 'things-even.better@demon' is handwritten, suggesting
that the 'phone call' convinced someone other than the recipient—another narratee—that
good deals were to be had. When the 'Post-it' note is peeled off, the card sets out some of
the suggested improvements to the service. The text on the card endorses the fact that
Demon are old hands at Internet communication by using unconventional capitalisation:
lower case letters have become a **signifier** of computer-based texts. It also personalises
the communication by using direct address—'you'—to the recipient. By the end of the
text, it is assumed that the recipient has signed up again: it says 'welcome back'. The
slogan at the end is another piece of intertextuality in being a version of the regular
Demon slogan, which is 'more people get on with us'. Both slogans demonstrate a double
meaning in the phrase 'get on', referring both to getting on the Internet and having good
relationships with people.

This communication represents a growing number of texts that are interactive—that is,
they are constructed to be handled and manipulated by the recipient. Such texts feature
commonly in 'junk' mailings.

Activity

Text: Boots No. 7 is another piece of 'junk' mail that was addressed personally to the recipient. This text also uses strongly intertextual strategies. Read it through carefully and answer the following:

- Which other texts are being referred to throughout the mailing?
- Why are the intertextual references you have identified above being used?
- How do the verbal texts relate to the images and other graphological features being used? Pay particular attention to the typeface and layout (it may be useful for you to know that the original envelope was black with emerald green lettering).

(Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Note: see satellite texts: *The Language of Advertising, The Language of ICT*

Text: Boots No. 7
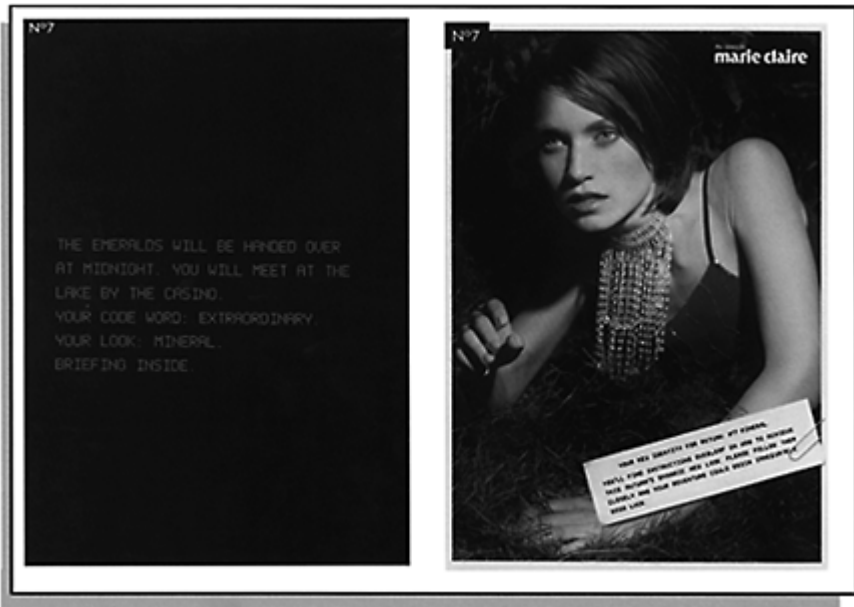
N°7

ONLY FOR EYES OF ADDRESSEE:

03116001 B   DM97000210 3

MS A GODDARD
2 PIKES LANE
GLOSSOP
DERBYSHIRE
SK13 8DA

                              20361

TO: MS A GODDARD
FROM: S.LAYTON, N°7

MESSAGE READS:

HERE IS YOUR NEW IDENTITY FOR AUTUMN - N°7 MINERAL.   AN EXPLORATION OF
METALLIC GREENS AND GREYS, BURNISHED COPPER AND A GLINT OF GOLD - INSPIRED
BY THE COOL, OXIDISED HUES OF NEWLY MINED PRECIOUS METALS.   DIG DEEP INTO
YOUR OWN SENSE OF ADVENTURE.   THIS IS A GO-ANYWHERE, DO-ANYTHING LOOK.

THESE ARE THE PRODUCTS YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR TOP PRIORITY.

NEW MINERALS COLOUR PERFECT TRIO...OLIVE SUPERLASH MASCARA...OLIVE PRECISION
EYE PENCIL...METALLIC TRUFFLE COLOUR LOCK" LIPCOLOUR...NEW MALTESE COLOUR
LOCK ULTRA" LIPCOLOUR...COPPER COLOUR LOCK ULTRA" LIPCOLOUR...MERLIN COLOUR
LOCK" NAIL ENAMEL...GREENGAGE COLOUR LOCK" NAIL ENAMEL...LIMITED EDITION
GOLDEN SHINE STICK.

YOUR REWARD:

CHOOSE ANY TWO OF THE PRODUCTS LISTED ABOVE OR ANY OTHER TWO FROM THE N°7
RANGE* AND YOU WILL RECEIVE A FREE DAILY SKINCARE PRODUCT.

RENDEZVOUS: NEAREST N°7 COUNTER
CRITICAL DATES: 30/9/98 - 28/10/98

TO CREATE YOUR NEW IDENTITY, YOUR INSTRUCTIONS ARE ENCLOSED.
READ AND PROCEED INTO ACTION.

MESSAGE ENDS.

*QUALIFYING PURCHASES EXCLUDE DAILY SKINCARE. OFFER SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY.
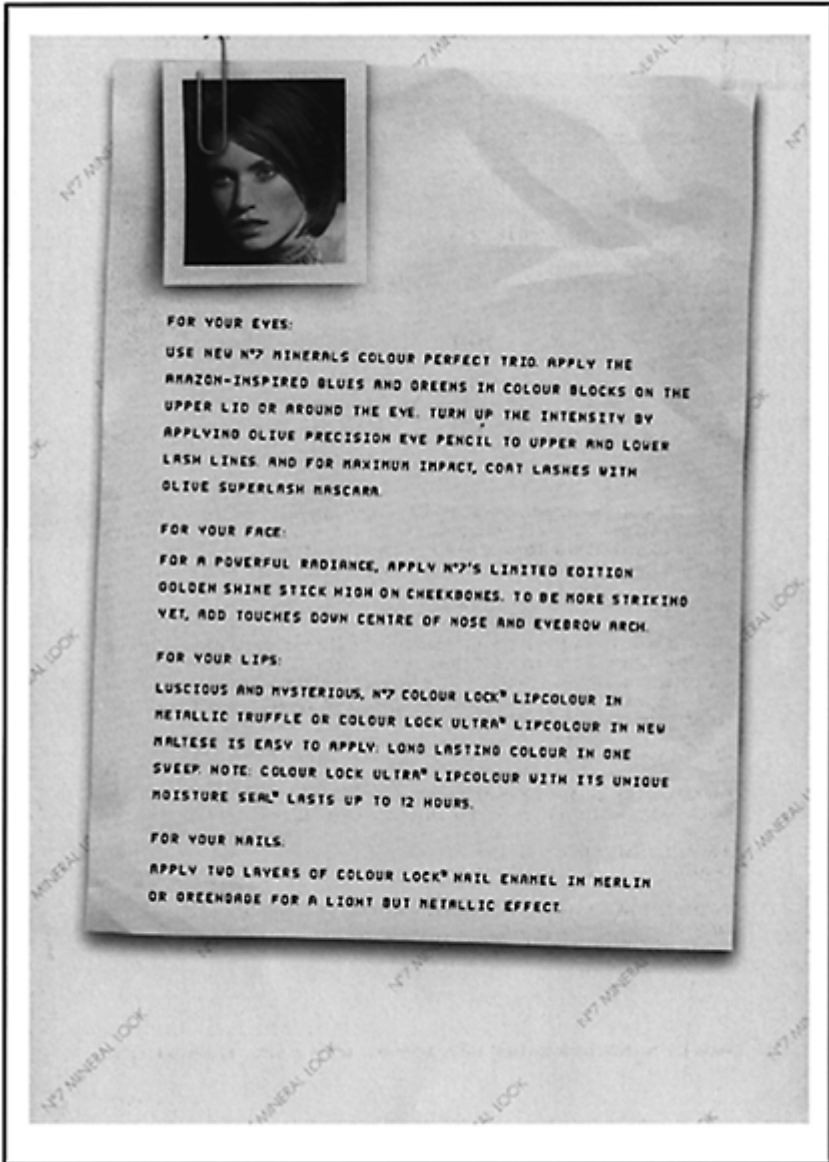
WHO'S IN THE PICTURE?

At the beginning of this unit, the focus was on signs and symbols involving non-human images. But as you saw more recently in this unit, images can also feature people and, as with all the signs that have been studied so far, there is no such thing as simple neutrality:

the way people are represented can call up powerful connotations that work alongside the verbal language in a text. Analysing images in the form of photographs, paintings and drawings is clearly a large area in its own right. To do justice to this, a range of academic areas would need to be addressed—including art, media studies, cultural studies and anthropology. But the fact that analysing images may open up several more academic areas doesn't mean that language analysts can simply ignore visual aspects, since images form an important part of the way we 'read' the world. What is offered here, then, is a set of headings and questions as a starting point: if you want to explore this area further now, look through this book, fix on some of the texts that use images as part of their message, and apply the ideas below to them. On the other hand, you may decide to come back to these questions later, as you deal with the texts that form part of each unit.

Content: what is the content of the picture?

- What artifacts are in the picture?
- Are there any non-human beings in the picture?
- What people are included?: consider gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, social class, region, sexuality.
- What is the setting?

Genre: how is the content being presented?

- What is being suggested by the content and how it is set up? For example, does it involve a story of some kind, where certain types of people might own the artifacts in the picture, or where some action has occurred before the image was 'captured'?
- How does the reader use his/her cultural knowledge to make sense of the picture and the way the items relate to each other within it?

Techniques: what are some of the mechanisms and effects?

- What method of representation has been chosen, and why (for example, photograph, line drawing, painting, computer-generated image)?
- How is the viewer's position established by the techniques used (for example, camera angle, perspective, body language and eye contact of the 'actors')? Is the viewer in a more or less powerful position than the people or things in the picture?
- Does the picture presume that the viewer is interacting with it in some way?
- What colours and dress codes are present? What technical treatments have been used (for example, glossy surfaces, sepia tints, soft-focus photography)?

Inter-rela tionships

- How do features of the image relate to the verbal aspects of the text?
- Does the whole text refer to or base itself on another text and if so, why?
- If so, what part does the picture play in this?

Agencies and audiences

- On the evidence of the answers to the previous questions, what cultural attitudes and values are being presented by the producers?

⚙ What assumptions are made about the audience's views, interests and composition?

Sounds

Just as signs connote ideas for language users, so do sounds.

Sound as a system is primary: it is the first code learnt by individuals in their lives; it also came before writing historically as a system of communication for humans in general. However, the fact that speech is primary does not mean that our responses to sound are simple and straightforward. The way we talk about sound, for example, is often metaphorical, where we describe sounds not in terms of our hearing, but in terms of our other senses: we say some sounds are 'big', 'small' or 'rounded' (sight); some are 'piercing', 'hard', 'soft' or 'abrasive' (touch); others are 'sweet' (taste). We have developed systems for the interpretation of sounds that may or may not have a base in physical reality; in the end, whether our attitudes to sound are physically based or culturally constructed, the result is the same—sounds still have an *effect* on us. The aim of this unit is to familiarise you with the physical nature of sounds, so that you are more accurately able to assess the way we interpret them, both in speech and in written texts.

A SOUND ALPHABET

The Roman alphabet, which is what you are reading now, cannot represent the sounds of spoken English with total accuracy and uniformity. It has been estimated that there is only about a 40 per cent correspondence between the sounds and written symbols of English. For example, one spelling can have many different pronunciations (consider how 'ough' is pronounced in 'through', 'cough', 'dough', 'thorough' and 'ought'); one sound can be represented by different written symbols ('meat', 'meet' and 'metre' all contain the same vowel sound, but this sound is spelt in different ways).

Because of the problems outlined above, linguists use a set of symbols called the International Phonetic Alphabet, or IPA, to represent sounds. Even if you have never heard its official name, you will have come across the IPA in dictionaries, where the pronunciation of a word is often given in brackets, before the definition. The IPA covers the sounds of all the world's known languages. This book will only be using that part of it that describes the sounds of the English language. Some of the symbols will already be familiar to you because they exist in the Roman alphabet; others won't be, but they will be explained later. When you work with the symbols that follow, remember that the underlined part of the word given as an example of each sound refers to how that sound would be produced by someone with a **Received Pronunciation** (RP) accent. This is the accent you would be likely to hear when listening to a British national TV news broadcaster. It is an accent which does not mark the speaker as coming from a particular region (but does give messages about the user's social-class membership). If you speak with a regional accent, you may find some differences between the chart and the sounds you would make in pronouncing certain words.

Text: IPA symbols

**IPA symbols for English
Sounds**

Constant		Short vowel	
p	pip	I	pit
b	bib	ɛ	pet
t	- ten	æ	pat
d	- den	ɒ	pot
k	- cat	Λ	putt
g	- get	ʊ	put
f	- fish	ə	patter
v	- van		
θ	- thigh	Long vowel	
ð	- thy		
s	- set	i:	bean
z	- zen	3:	burn
ʃ	- ship	ɑ:	barn
ʒ	leisure	ɔ:	born
h	- hen	u:	boon
tʃ	church		
dʒ	- judge	Diphongs	
m	- man		
n	- man	aI	bite
ŋ	- sing	ɛI	bait
l	- let	ɔI	boy
r	- ride	əʊ	roe
w	- wet	aʊ	house
j	- yet	ʊə	poor
		Iə	ear
		ɛə	air

(Note: the headings under
which vowels are grouped will
be explained later.)

Activity

In order to become familiar with the alphabet, write your name using the appropriate symbols. Forget the spelling of your name, and concentrate on the sounds that are produced when you say it aloud. Exchange your writing with someone else, and get them to read back what you have written.

  Then have a go at transcribing the sentence below, assuming that the speaker had an

RP accent. In some cases, the sounds in a word will be influenced by the words either side of it, so take notice of how the sounds blend together as the sentence as a whole is said, rather than taking each word strictly in isolation. This instruction itself says a lot about the difference between speech and writing: we don't necessarily speak in 'words' with pauses around them—the very concept of a word is an idea derived from writing.

> Would you please queue at the end of the corridor?
> (Answer and commentary on p. 69)

SPEECH PRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION: CONSONANTS

Sounds in English are produced as a result of air from the lungs coming up through the vocal cords and being manipulated in various ways. We describe consonants by answering three questions about how they are produced physically:

1 How is the airstream manipulated? *Manner of articulation*
2 Where does this happen? *Place of articulation*
3 Are the vocal cords vibrating or not? *Voiced or voiceless sound*

Plosives: p b t d k g

These sounds (or **'phonemes'**) are all explosions: they are created by obstructing the flow of air by bringing parts of the mouth together, then letting go suddenly. To explore this, place the palm of your hand in front of your mouth and, one by one, make each of these sounds in an exaggerated way. You should be able to feel the air from your mouth hitting your palm. English plosives (also called 'stops') are differentiated from each other in two ways: they are made in different places in the mouth (place of articulation, above), and they use different amounts of voice (as 3, above). While /p/ and /b/ are produced using the two lips (bilabial), /t/ and /d/ involve contact between the tongue and the teeth ridge (alveolar); /k/ and /g/ are made by closing off air at the back of the mouth (velar). See the diagram below.
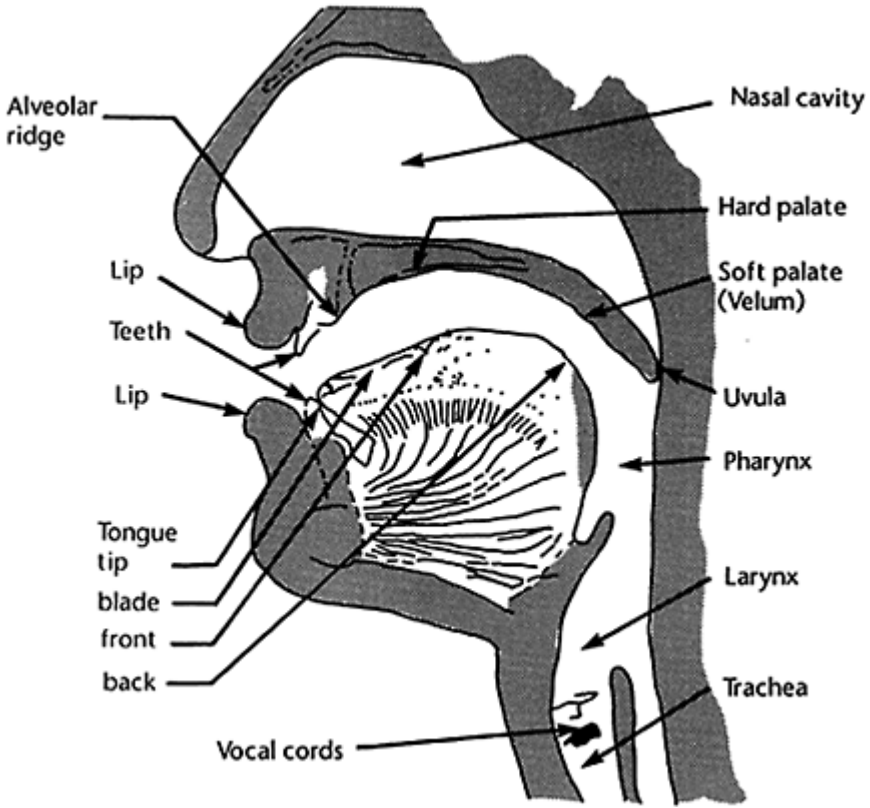
Each of these pairs of sounds has one voiced and one voiceless phoneme, as follows:

Voiceless	Voiced
p	b
t	d
k	g

To understand the idea of voice, put your fingers on your 'Adam's Apple' and alternate between the voiceless and voiced phonemes several times: you should be aware that your vocal cords are vibrating when you say the voiced sounds. If all the plosives sound voiced to you, this will be because you are adding a vowel (which are all voiced) and your voiceless plosives are picking up some of the vowel's voiced quality. For example, you might be adding the vowel /▢/. If you are doing this, make the voiceless sounds as if you were whispering them.

Fricatives: f v θ ð s z ʃ ʒ h

While plosives are produced by completely obstructing the airflow, fricatives involve a

lesser obstruction where air is forced through in a steady stream, resulting in friction rather than explosion. Plosives cannot be kept going in the way fricatives can: to illustrate this idea, say an /s/ until you run out of breath; now try to keep a /p/ sound going. You will find that all you can do for the latter is to produce a number of separate /p/ sounds, one after the other.

Fricatives, like plosives, are distinguished from each other by their place of articulation, and by voice, each pair below being made up of a voiceless and voiced phoneme—apart from 'h', which is voiceless but has no voiced partner:

Voiceless   *Voiced*
f   v
θ (as in 'thigh')   ð (as in 'thy')
s   z
∫ (as in 'ship')   ʒ (as in 'leisure')
h

As with plosives, go through these phonemes, exploring where they are made in the mouth and sounding out their differences in terms of voice. (If your version of 'h' sounds voiced, this is because you are adding a vowel again, and saying something like 'huh'. The 'h' sound above is the sound that you would make if you were whispering.)

Some linguists regard /h/ as a weak and vulnerable fricative because of its isolation, and point to its absence from many regional accents to support the view that it may eventually drop out of the English language altogether.

Affricates: t∫ (as in 'church') d3 (as in 'judge')

There are only two of these consonant sounds in English. They have double symbols to represent the fact that each one is a plosive followed by a fricative. If you make these sounds in very slow motion you may be able to hear this sequence. /t∫/ is voiceless and /d3/ is its voiced partner.

Nasals: m n ŋ (as in 'singing')

The distinctive feature of these sounds is that they are produced in a particular manner: the airstream comes out through the nose rather than the mouth. They differ from each other in being made in different places: /m/ is bilabial, /n/ is alveolar, and /ŋ/ is velar. When you have a cold and air cannot escape from the nose, nasals become plosives, as in the second version of 'good morning' below:

gʊd mɔ:nIŋ
    gʊd bɔ:dIŋg

Laterals: l

This sound is sometimes referred to as a 'liquid' sound, and is made by placing the tip of

the tongue on the teeth ridge and sending air down the sides of the mouth. The easiest way to experience this airflow is to put the tongue in the right position to say an /I/, then breathe in instead of out: you should be able to feel the air flowing along the sides of your tongue. This is the reverse of what happens when you say an /I/ normally.

Approximants: r w j

The final three consonants are usually grouped together because they share the property of being midway between consonants and vowels; in some linguistic descriptions you will see them called 'semi-vowels'. They all involve less contact between the organs of speech than many of the other consonants: compare /r/ with /p/, for example. While /r/ and /j/ are produced in the palatal area (roof of the mouth), /w/ is a bilabial.

Glottal: ☐

This does not appear on the list of symbols because it doesn't represent a sound as such. It is a closure of the vocal cords, resulting in shutting off the airstream, and it is sometimes produced as an alternative to certain plosive sounds. To explore this, say the words 'butter' and 'water', but 'swallow' the /t/ in the middle of each word. The glottal stop is a strong feature of some regional accents, and written texts often represent it by an apostrophe: for example, 'I've go' a lo' of li'le bo'les'.

Below is a summary of the consonant system in English. The chart shows place and manner of articulation; a colon marks voice, where there is a pair of sounds contrasted by this feature, voiceless sounds being to the left and voiced to the right, /r/ and /j/ are together because they are both palatal sounds, but they are not separated by a colon because they are not a voiceless/voiced pair.

	Place of articulation						
Manner of articulation	*Bilabial*	*Labio-dental*	*Dental*	*Alveolar*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Glottal*
Plosive	p : b			t : d		k : g	?
Affricate					t∫ : dʒ		
Fricative		f : v	θ : ð	s : z	∫ : ʒ		h
Nasal	m			n		ŋ	
Lateral				I			
Approximant	w				r : j		

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S THE WAY THAT YOU SAY IT

Some of the sounds you have been studying vary considerably on a regional and ethnic basis: for example, Cockney and Afro-Caribbean Patwa speakers have no /h/

phoneme; /ŋ/ is regularly replaced by /n/ in the West Country, and by /ŋg/ in some Northern accents; glottal stops are a common feature in many regional accents. Such regional variations are often stigmatised, being regarded as 'bad', 'sloppy' or 'lazy' speech in some quarters. It's important to realise that these judgements are social, rather than linguistic: they are examples of how language can be used as a shibboleth—a way of more powerful groups marking out their own forms of language as prestigious and 'correct' and that of others as inad-equate in order to forestall social movement and prevent others' access to power.

Being able to describe these aspects of language phonetically can help you to understand and explain the differences between linguistic facts and social attitudes. One aspect that should be apparent, if you work further on accent variation using the IPA, is that quite extensive and complex sets of attitudes are based on rather small features of language: for example, that a speaker has specific character traits, a certain degree of social status, or a particular level of intelligence as a result of whether s/he uses one phoneme or another.

Activity

In Text: Mother of the Nation, and Text: Leader's speech, both cartoons by Steve Bell, a certain type of accent is suggested by altering the spelling of words (known as 'eye-dialect'); this accent is then linked with particular attitudes and values as expressed by the speakers.

   Discuss the stereotypes that are often associated with this type of accent. Compare the stereotypes you have identified with those often associated with regionally accented speakers. (Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Text: Mother of the Nation

Text: Leader's speech

Extension

1 Collect some written material where the writers have tried to represent accent on the page, and analyse their approaches: for example, have they altered the spellings of words, or used apostrophes to show glottal stops? How do their strategies compare with the real phonetic features of that accent? (If you can't spend time doing some phonetic analysis yourself, you can find information on accent variations in linguistic textbooks.) You will find further work on the representation of speech in Unit 5.

2 Record some TV adverts, and analyse how differently accented speakers are used. For example, which products are sold by the use of regionally accented voiceovers or actors, and which by RP-accented voices? What qualities are associated with particular accents? Are male and female regional and RP speakers used in the same ways? What accents are given to non-white speakers of English in adverts? How are foreign-accented speakers used?

SOUND SYMBOLISM

Another important use of the IPA is to help us understand any possible basis for sound symbolism. This is the process by which we use the different sounds produced by our

speech organs to stand for some of the sounds around us in our environment. When we form these sounds into whole words that themselves stand for noises, like 'bang', 'crash', and 'thud', this is called **onomatopoeia.** This area is by no means clear cut, however. Take, for example, the sound effects often seen in comics, as in Text: Comic 'noises'. Are these really an accurate description of noises, or do we just interpret them as such because we are used to the convention of the words meaning specific things? Are they understandable outside the context of the page where they occurred, without all the picture and story cues to support comprehension? Would someone who had never read a comic understand them? And are they language-specific: would someone who isn't an English speaker interpret them the same way, even though that person's organs of speech produce all the same sounds as ours? (You might be interested to know that German cockerels go 'kikeriki', while the French for a dog's 'woof-woof' is 'oua-oua'; and that the Spanish for 'bang' or 'crack' is 'pum' or 'paf'.)

Text: Comic 'noises'
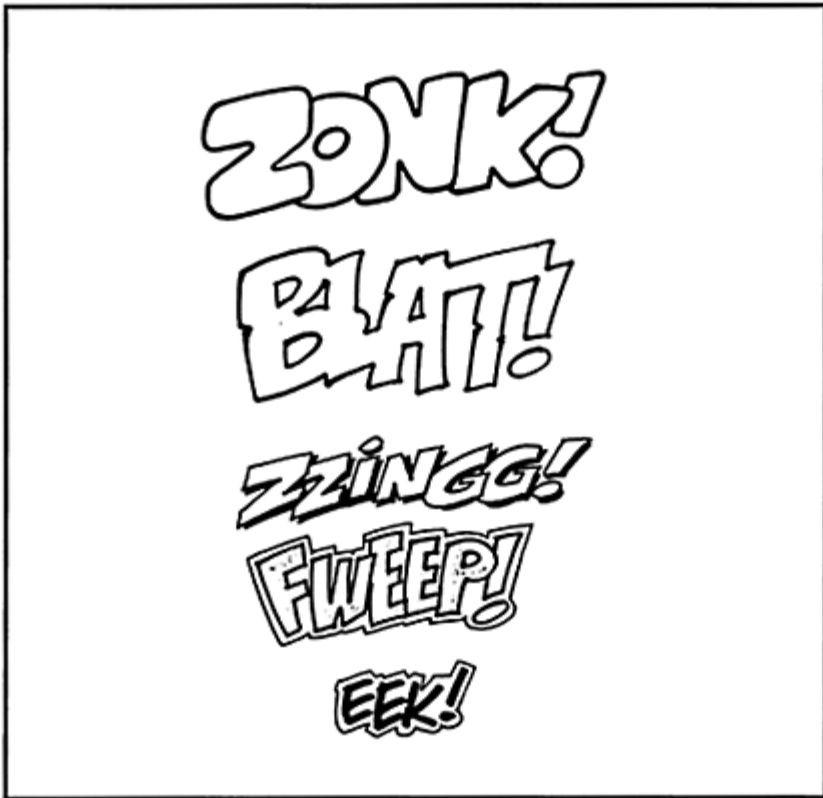
Activity

The aim of this activity is to look carefully at the relationship between the sounds we produce and the sound effects we try to achieve in texts.

Read the poetry extracts in Text: Sound effects.

In each case, the language is highlighting certain types of sound, which have been underlined. Look back at the phonetic information given earlier, think about the way the sounds are produced physically and decide why the writers might have used them:

Text: Sound effects

1 From a poem by Wilfred Owen describing a battle in progress:
  Only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle
2 From a poem by Geoffrey Hill about the Crucifixion:
  While the dulled wood
  Spat on the stones each drop
  Of deliberate blood
3 From a poem by Peter Redgrove describing wind around a
  house:
  Limped up the stairs and puffed on the landings
  Snuffled through floorboards from the foundations
4 From a poem by Sylvia Plath addressing a sleeping baby:
  All night your moth breath
  Flickers among the flat pink roses
5 From a poem by Tennyson describing the sounds of doves and
  bees:
  The moan of doves in immemorial elms
  And murmuring of innumerables bees
6 From another poem by Wilfred Owen describing the sounds of a
  summer's day:
  By the May breeze murmurous with wasp and midge

Commentary

Examples 1 and 2 are plosives, 2 using more voiced sounds. Example 1 suggests the explosive force of bullets (compare this with the sounds in 'rat-a-tat'); 2 tries to evoke the duller thud of drops on a hard surface.

Examples 3 and 4 use voiceless fricatives, suggesting the light friction of wind and breath.

Examples 5 and 6 use nasals, 5 suggesting the repeated and overlapping calls of doves and continuous hum of bees; 6 uses nasals in combination with fricatives and an affricate. The humming of wasps is combined with the lighter hissing noises of smaller insects.

Summary of broad categorisations

- Voiced/voiceless: louder, heavier, a fuller sound/softer, lighter, a thinner sound
- Plosives: percussive sounds—banging, striking, tapping
- Fricatives and affricates: friction—hissing, scratching
- Nasals and approximants: continuous sound or motion—flowing, rippling, humming

Activity

Some of the effects in Text: Sound effects are cumulative: particular sounds are repeated within a short space (termed 'alliteration' when the sounds are at the beginning of words). Individual words occurring on their own may or may not have in-built sound effects: for example, while 'murmur' may suggest the hum of mumbled talk—as 'mumble' itself may—the word 'immemorial' has no particular sound profile.

But it appears that some groups of words have acquired an 'aura' of meaning, as a result of an accumulation of another kind: that of simple force of numbers in the lexicon. These are much harder to explain. To explore this, brainstorm as many words as you can that belong to the following sets, then try to draw some conclusions about the operation of certain sounds.

slip, slide…	bump, lump…
glitter, glow…	smash, crash…
flip, flutter…	puff, bluff…
twist, twiddle…	

(Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Activity

'Meeting at Night' (1845) is a poem by Robert Browning.

How does Browning use sound—particularly consonants—to reinforce the action that takes place in the poem and the emotions that are involved?

Text: 'Meeting at Night'

The grey sea and long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,

And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

Commentary

The poem is organised into two 6-line rhyming stanzas. In stanza 1 the narrator is rowing his boat at night across the sea towards land. Stanza 2 describes his journey across land and culminates in the lovers' meeting of the title.

The dominant consonant sounds in the first stanza are:

- the voiced lateral /l/, sometimes referred to as a 'liquid' and associated with the flowing, rippling qualities of water
- the voiceless plosives /k/ and /p/—soft percussive sounds
- the voiceless fricatives /ʃ/ and /s/—soft hissing sounds
- the voiceless affricate /tʃ/—soft percussive, immediately followed by soft hissing.

The way that these sounds are distributed across the lines of the stanza helps to suggest the action and sound of the oars. The plosives enact the vigorous movement of the oars entering and pulling through the water and the fricatives are suggestive of the sound made by the disturbed water after the oars are taken up ready for the next stroke. The 'soft' voiceless quality of most of the sounds contributes to the emotional atmosphere of the poem—the action takes place at night, imparting an air of secrecy to the proceedings and the oarsman is perhaps driven by a sense of quiet determination. In line 5 the poet describes the boat coming to a halt as it drives into the sand of the beach. Here he introduces the voiced plosive /g/ in the word 'gain'—a loud percussive sound—and follows this with a concentration of voiceless plosives (/p/), fricatives (/ʃ/ and /s/) and the affricate (/tʃ/)—sounds that suggest the sudden stopping of the boat, the disturbance this creates in the water (the affricate /tʃ/ which involves both a plosive and fricative sound) and the gradual restoration of the sound and motion of waves lapping gently onto the beach and around the finally stilled boat.

In the second stanza the narrator crosses the beach and fields to arrive at the farm. 'A tap at the pane' echoes the rhythm of his action and the voiceless plosives /t/ and /p/ suggest that his tapping is cautious and muted. He doesn't want to alarm the occupant. The following line and a half use another series of voiceless sounds to describe a match being struck inside the house in response to his tapping. Think about striking a match. It involves friction (scratching sounds) and combustion (percussive sounds). The fricatives and affricates reinforce the sound of a match being rubbed against sandpaper and the

plosives contribute to the image of the match bursting into flame. All these sounds are voiceless until the point where the match takes light. We could perhaps interpret this as the moment when the lovers recognise each other, the tension that has built up in the poem is released, the door is opened and the 'two hearts' are united in the final two lines.

Extension

Explore the use of sound symbolism based on consonants by collecting a range of data. Here are some areas to consider:

1 Plosives are often used in newspaper headlines to give a sense of energy and drama: for example, in words like 'probe', 'cut', 'hit', 'snap', 'quit', 'scoop' and 'block'. (These words are also monosyllabic, giving them extra force.) Collect some headlines and investigate the types of words used in them.
2 Product brand names are carefully chosen by manufacturers to have a certain 'ring'. Choose some different products and list their brand names and slogans. Do certain sounds recur, or are certain sounds associated with particular types of product? For example, the names 'Twix', 'Crunchie', 'Snickers', 'Kit Kat' and 'Picnic' all contain plosives, perhaps because the manufacturers want to suggest a crisp, cracking noise. Are fricatives used for scouring creams and liquids, or air fresheners?

Slogans can often use alliteration, for example:

  Best Buy Bold (washing powder)
    P-P-Pick up a Penguin (chocolate bar)
    The Power to Hit Pain Precisely (analgesic)

3 Some newspapers also use phoneme substitution as a regular technique in their headlines. Rather than exploiting sound symbolism, this process is one of rule-breaking: the reader expects one sound and gets another which creates a new and relevant word or phrase—sometimes with deliberately comic effect. You can see this process in certain kinds of 'corny' joke:

  Q: What did the duck say as it flew upside down?
    A: I'm quacking up.
    Q: What do sea monsters live on?
    A: Fish and ships.
    Q: What do cats read?
    A: The Mews of the World.

But the same technique can be used for serious purposes too. Adverts can exploit the way phoneme substitution can call up two phrases at once, as in using 'Limited Emission' to describe a car with a catalytic converter (and calling up the sophistication and exclusiveness of 'Limited Edition' at the same time).
  See if you can find some examples of sound substitution from newspaper headlines,

advertising copy and jokes.

4 The jokes above are one example of how much we like to play with sound. Collect
   some further examples of sound play, in the form of tongue twisters and popular
   sayings.

Note: see satellite texts: *The Language of Advertising, The Language of Poetry*

SPEECH PRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION: VOWELS

Vowels also play their part in our interpretation of language.

Vowels are always voiced. Unlike consonants, they do not involve any obstruction of
the airway; vowel sounds are more to do with the shape and position of the tongue, and
whether the lips are spread or rounded.

English vowel sounds are grouped into two categories: 'pure' vowels and 'diphthongs'.
While the former are single sounds, diphthongs are a combination of two sounds where
the speaker starts with one sound and glides towards the other. Here are the relevant
symbols:

Short vowels		*Long vowels*		*Diphthongs*	
I	P<u>i</u>t	i:	b<u>ea</u>n	aI	b<u>i</u>te
ɛ	p<u>e</u>t	ɜ:	b<u>ur</u>n	ɛI	b<u>ai</u>t
æ	p<u>a</u>t	ɑ:	b<u>ar</u>n	ɔI	b<u>oy</u>
ɒ	p<u>o</u>t	ɔ:	b<u>or</u>n	□ʊ	r<u>oe</u>
Λ	p<u>u</u>tt	u:	b<u>oo</u>n	aʊ	h<u>ou</u>se
ʊ	p<u>u</u>t			ʊ□	cr<u>ue</u>l
□	patt<u>er</u>			I□	<u>ear</u>
				ɛ□	<u>air</u>

(Note: the phonetic system in this book marks long vowels with a colon (:). You may
encounter descriptions in other textbooks where this mark is not used, but you will still be
able to understand the sounds because the symbols themselves do not differ.)

In order to get a sense of these sounds, go through them, first alternating between short
and long vowels and trying to feel the difference between them—for example,
contrasting the vowel sound in 'pit' with that in 'bean'; then sound out some diphthongs,
trying to feel the way these sounds are sequences of vowels.

The diagrams below show where English vowel sounds are made in the mouth. The
shape of the diagram (called a 'vowel trapezium') is an abstract version of the space
inside the mouth: 'high', 'mid' and 'low' refer to how near the tongue is to the roof of the
mouth or bottom of the jaw; 'front', 'central' and 'back' refer to how far forward or
retracted the body of the tongue is; the shapes drawn around the sounds themselves are
explained below.

O = made with rounded lips

□ = made with spread lips

◉= starting with rounded lips and ending with spread lips

⊐ = starting with spread lips and ending with rounded lips

'Pure' vowels

| Front | Central | Back |

High

i: bean   boon u:

                                                            ʊ put

pɪt ɪ

patter ə

Mid   ɛ pet

burn ɜ: born ɔ:

putt ʌ

Low   æ pat

pot ɒ

barn ɑ:

Diphthongs

| Front | Central | Back |

High

ɪə ear   ʊə cruel

eɪ bait   əʊ roe

Mid

ɛə air

Low   bite aɪ   aʊ   ɔɪ boy

house
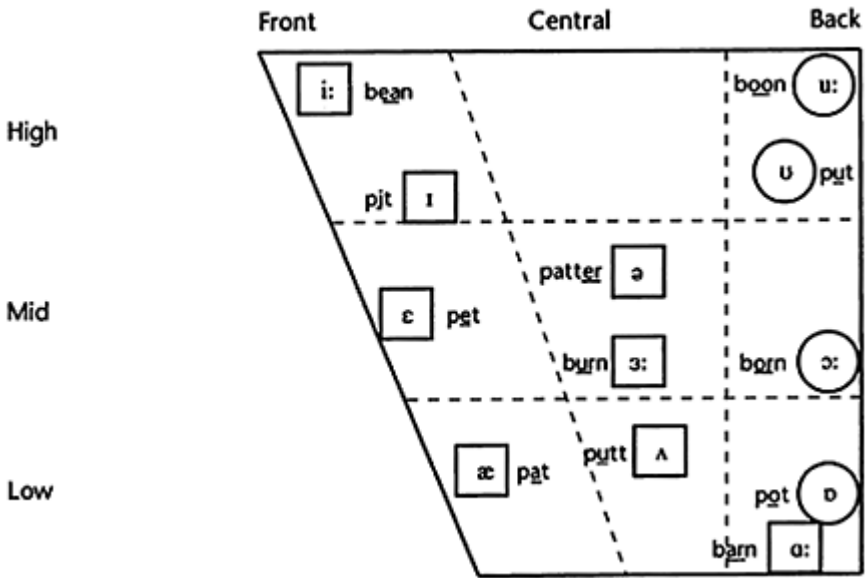
(Note: the arrows show the direction of
movement for these sounds.)
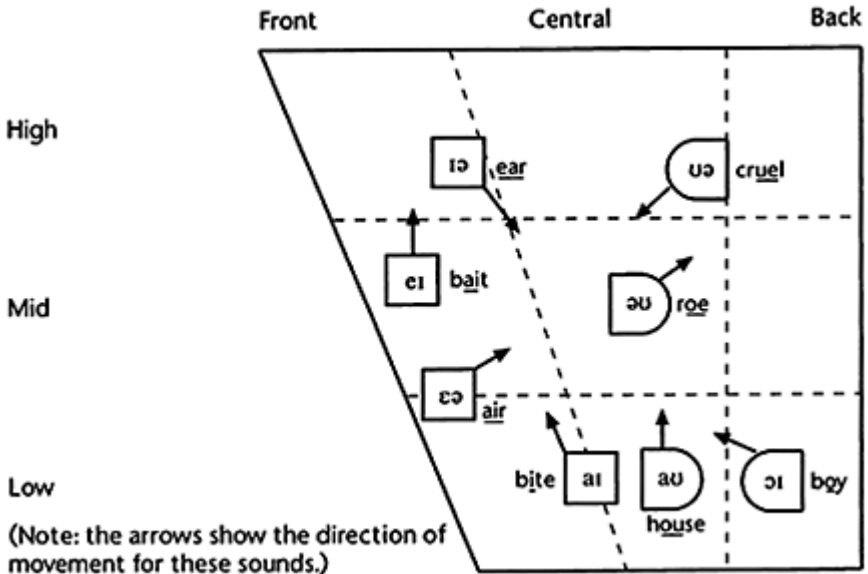
How now brown cow

As with consonants, vowels can mark out the region of origin, ethnicity or social class of a speaker: for example, Northern speakers have no /ʌ/, so will pronounce 'put' and 'putt' in the same way; speakers of Afro-Caribbean Patwa will use /a:/ instead of /ɒ/ in 'pot'; an older form of RP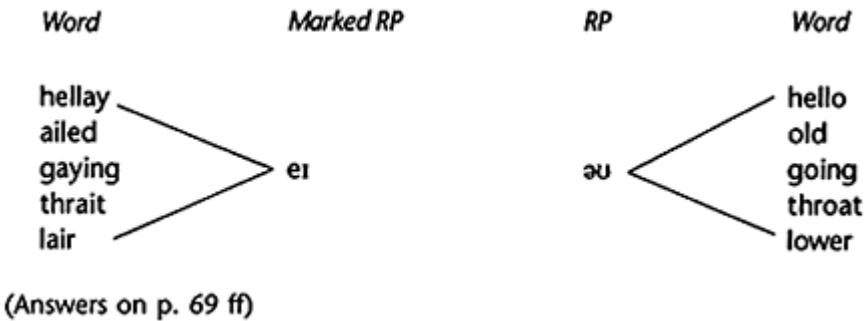, characteristic of the language of the royal family and upper-class speakers from years ago, is sometimes called 'marked RP'. In this accent, speakers would use /ɔ/ instead of /ɒ/.

Activity

Now that you have looked at vowels, read through the Steve Bell cartoons again (on p. 50). Previously, you discussed the stereotypes that are associated with this 'marked RP' accent (there is a reference to this accent as an older form, often heard on early radio and TV broadcasts, in the first cartoon strip).

Now map out the way Steve Bell has altered the vowel sounds in order to construct the idea of this accent for the reader. List the words whose spelling has been altered, then compare this pronunciation with the regular RP version. An example has been done below, to start you off:

Word	*Marked RP*	*RP*	*Word*
hellay			hello
ailed			old
gaying	eɪ	əʊ	going
thrait			throat
lair			lower

(Answers on p. 69 ff)

Extension

Choose an accent that you know well, and write some 'eye dialect' yourself, where you try to simulate the accent by altering the spelling. Think about vowel sounds as well as consonants.

In a previous activity, you collected some texts in order to examine how accent is represented on the page. How far did you find alterations in spelling to suggest vowel sounds? Are vowel alterations in 'eye dialect' more likely to be done in humorous texts than in those for serious purposes? What strategies are used in dialect poetry?

A bit of a teeny weeny ding-dong

As with consonants, vowels are used to suggest certain ideas: for example, /i:/ is often associated with diminutive size, as in the words 'teeny', 'weeny', 'wee'. We often put /i:/

on the ends of words in 'baby talk', using 'cardies' for 'cardigan', 'jarmies' for 'pyjamas', 'drinky' for 'drink', 'walkies' for 'walk', and so on.

As well as individual sounds appearing to have symbolic value, vowels also have cumulative force, either in repetition or in contrast: for example, 'teeny weeny' as a phrase is more effective for the repetitions in it; 'ding dong' draws attention to itself partly through the contrast of the high front /i:/ with the low back /ɒ/. (Note the effect of the consonants here, too: the striking note of the voiced plosive, followed by the drawn out resonance of the nasal.)

Activity

We have many expressions that exploit vowel sounds by using either repetition or contrast. Below is a list of some of them. Sort them out by referring back to the vowel trapezium and symbols you studied earlier: which of these use repetition, and which use contrast? Group them into categories, identifying which vowels are being used. When you have finished, think about the nature of these terms: what type of language do they represent? Where would they be used—by whom, and in which contexts?:

> helter skelter flip flop topsy turvey wishy washy fat cat hoity toity lovey dovey hip hop see saw mishmash spick and span big wig knick knack harum scarum tick tock tit for tat jet set eebie jeebies hanky panky sing song willy nilly shilly shally nitty gritty ping pong hotch potch pitter patter namby pamby hugger mugger collywobbles hoi polloi jim jams (for pyjamas) airy fairy arty farty roly poly
> (Answer on p.70)

Rhyme, pararhyme, assonance and reverse rhyme

Some of the expressions above use rhyme as part of their effect: for example, willy nilly, nitty gritty. This aspect of patterning is learnt early as part of our childhood experience of language, via songs, nursery rhymes and the chants that accompany play. As well as full rhyme, though, there are other types of near-rhyme that set up relationships between sounds, and these can be used where full rhyme may seem too neat and tidy or childlike (although sometimes full rhyme can be very effective in serious texts, as a deliberate device).

First, it's important to realise that rhyme of all kinds is based on the sounds of words rather than the spelling. Here, the operation of **homophones** (words that are spelt differently but have the same sound) can have an important role.

Activity

The following are homophones in RP. How many different words can be represented by these sounds?

1niː dz
2aː mz
3bruː z
4kɔː s
5sʊl
6kɔː t
7lɛsən
8kwɔː ts
9kɔː z
10rʊz
11sɛnt
(Answers on p.71)

The following words are homophones for some regional speakers, who would pronounce both words in each case as the first example. Can you identify where the speakers would be from? A random list of possibilities is given after the wordlist:

1   ant aunt
2   stir stair
3   moo mew
4   caught cot
5   tree three
Liverpool; Afro-Caribbean Patwa; Northern England; Norfolk; Scotland
(Answer on p. 71)

The homophonic principle can work across word boundaries as well as within them. For example:

Q: Where did Humpty Dumpty leave his hat?
   A: Humpty dumped 'is 'at on the wall.

Q: Where do all policemen live?
   A: Lettsby Avenue.

Q: What did Neptune say when the sea dried up?
   A: I haven't a notion.

and the book title *Dangerous Cliffs,* by Eileen Dover.
Supply your own answer to this question:

Q: If frozen water is iced water, what's frozen int?

   (Answer on p. 72)

Supply the answers to the following jokes, and identify the homophones involved:

Q: What trees come in twos?

Q: What fly has laryngitis?

   (Answer on p. 72)

Activity

Some of the expressions you sorted earlier use contrasting vowels within the framework of the same consonants: for example, 'sing song', 'shilly shally'.

   This is known as **pararhyme,** and can be found in many different types of text as a shaping strategy. For example, it is used in the poem 'Strange Meeting' (1918) by Wilfred Owen in order to set up echoes between words, without providing the sense of completeness that would come with full rhyme. The narrator describes an imaginary journey down into hollow spaces in the earth where he encounters a dead enemy soldier who was one of his victims during the battle.

   Identify some examples of pararhyme in these initial lines of the poem, and try to describe the effects produced. (Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Text: 'Strange Meeting'

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.

These lines also use a form of sound patterning called **assonance**—the repetition of

vowels, without the other components that entail full rhyme: for example, the vowel sounds in 'down' and 'profound'; or in 'dull tunnel'. This pattern is seen in the expression 'collywobbles', from the earlier list.

A final aspect of patterning that can be useful to focus on when explaining sound effects in language is **reverse rhyme**. This is the repetition of an initial syllable rather than the final one which is necessary to full rhyme: for example, <u>star</u> and <u>star</u>ling, or <u>grey</u> and <u>gra</u>iny.

Activity

The two texts for this activity—the poems 'Kubla Khan' (1816), by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (the first thirty lines have been printed here), and 'Ballade Made in the Hot Weather', by the late nineteenth-century poet W.E.Henley—both use sound as a strong element in their construction of sensation.

Explore how sound contributes to the overall meaning of the poem in each case. (Note: there is no commentary on this activity.)

Text: 'Kubla Khan'

Kubla Khan or, A Vision in a Dream, A Fragment

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the scared river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossmed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwrt a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless trumoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitterd burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,

Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

Text: 'Ballade Made in the Hot Weather'

Fountains that frisk and sprinkle
The moss they overspill;
Pools that the breezes crinkle;
The wheel besides the mill,
With its wet, weedy frill;
Wind-shadows in the wheat;
A water-cart in the street;
The fringe of foam that girds
An islet's ferneries;
A green sky's minor thirds—
To live, I think of these!

Of ice and glass the tinkle,
Pellucid, silver-shrill;
Peaches without a wrinkle;
Cherries and snow at will,
For china bowls that fill
The senses with a sweet
Incuriousness of heat;
A melon's dripping sherds;
Cream-clotted strawberries;
Dusk dairies set with curds—
To live, I think of these!

Vale-lily and periwinkle;
Wet stone-crop on the still;
The look of leaves a-twinkle

With windlets clear and still;
The feel of a forest rill
That wimples fresh and fleet
About one's maked feet;
The muzzles of drinking herds;
Lush flags and bulrushes;
The chirp of rain-bound birds—
To live, I think of these!

*Envoy**

Dark aisles, new packs of cards,
Mermaidens' tails, cool swards,
Dawn dews and starlit seas,
White marbles, whiter words—
To live, I think of these!

*An envoy is the summarising final stanza of a poem.

Glossary

mill	a water mill (a construction involving water falling onto a large wheel causing it to revolve. The wheel itself was attached to machinery which was set in motion as it turned.)
water-cart	at the time the poem was written, the village pump would have been the main source of water. In a hot summer the pump might run dry and water would have to be brought in by cart from elsewhere.
girds	surrounds or 'girdles'
ferneries	damp places containing ferns
minor thirds	a combination of musical notes producing a melanchoic sound
pellucid	transparent or translucent
incuriousness	a word of the poet's own making suggesting a lack of curiosity or active interest
sherds	same as 'shard', a broken piece or fragment
vale-lily, periwinkel, stone-crop	native English plants

rill	a brook or stream
wimples	ripples
fleet	fast
flags	traditional name for native English iris, a plant that grows in shallow water
swards	areas of mown grass

Extension

Collect some non-literary texts that use sound patterning involving vowels: for example, advertising slogans that use rhyme or pararhyme. You may also find that you see new aspects of sound patterning in the texts that you collected earlier in order to explore consonants.

This unit has not had the space to explore the effects of stress and rhythm in language, but these are often important ingredients in how sound patterns work. When you are collecting and analysing material, give some thought to the way these larger patterns contribute to the overall effects.

Answers to activities

Sentence for transcription (p. 44)

wʊdʒu: pli:z kju: (w) ⬚t ði: (j) ɛnd ⬚v ð⬚ k ɒrIdɔ:

According to how exactly this utterance was said (particularly, how strongly some of the vowel sounds were stressed), there could be some alternatives: for example, the vowel in the word 'you' could be /⬚/; the vowels in 'at' and 'of' could be /æ/ and /ɒ/ respectively.

The symbols in brackets are linking sounds, enabling smooth transitions between words.

Steve Bell cartoons (p. 60)

thet				that
hev				have
hed				had
fescinating	ɛ	æ		fascinating
hend				hand
inhebitants				inhabitants
ekshelly				actually
velue				value

stite				stout
trizers	aɪ	aʊ		trousers
ite				out

dinnah		ɔ		dinner
amarng	ɑː	ʌ		among
yarng		ʌ		young

advarsity		ɜː		adversity
imprissed				impressed
siveral	ɪ	ɛ		several
ivery				every
sincirity				sincerity

| drorped | ɔː | ɒ | | dropped |
| orff | | | | off |

Sorting vowel sounds (p. 61)

Repetitions

/ɛ/	helter skelter jet set harum scarum airy fairy
/ɪ/	willy nilly big wig nitty gritty
/æ/	hanky panky fat cat namby pamby
/ɑ:/	arty farty
/ɑ/	hotch potch collywobbles
/ʌ/	lovey dovey hugger mugger
/i:/	eebie jeebies
/ɔɪ/	hoity toity hoi polloi
/□ʊ/	roly poly

Contrasts

/ɪ/ → /ɒ/ flip flop hip hop sing song ping pong tick tock wishy washy

/ɪ/ → /æ/ shilly shally pitter patter mishmash spick and span knick knack jim jams
tit for tat

/i/ → /ɔ:/ see saw

/ɒ/   topsy turvey
→ /ɜ:/

These terms belong to the informal, spoken area of language. Some are so unfamiliar on the page that their spelling is uncertain: for example, is it 'colliewobbles' or 'collywobbles'? 'hoy polloy' or 'hoi polloi'? This is the language of personal anecdote rather than public lecture, although many a public lecture would benefit from the liveliness and energy contributed by these vigorous little items. Many express motion, emotion, muddle and incoherence—'helter skelter', 'eebie jeebies', 'mishmash', 'hotch potch'; others strike arch attitudes about certain types of people—'fat cat', 'hoi polloi'; some are straightforwardly onomatopoeic—'tick tock'. They are all cheeky.

Homophones

(PP. 62–3)

      1 kneads, needs
      2 arms, alms
      3 bruise, brews
      4 course, coarse
      5 sole, soul
      6 caught, court
      7 lesson, lessen
      8 quarts, quartz
      9 cause, cores, caws
    10 rose, rows, roes
    11 sent, scent, sent

1   Northern England /ænt/
2   Liverpool /stɜ:/
3   Norfolk /mu:/
4   Scotland /kɔ:t/
5   Afro-Caribbean Patwa /tri:/

(pp. 63–4)
Iced ink/I stink
  Pear/pair
  Horse/hoarse

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