Shades of meaning

Investigating texts using interactive whiteboard techniques

An interactive whiteboard offers you the chance of bigger-than-poster-size text for all to see and share. On its own this is an amazing facility. But the tools that come with the interactive whiteboard will allow you to manipulate the way the text is mediated to the class, the order that pupils see the text and how they engage with it.

You don't have to place all the text on the screen in one go; you can stage and stage-manage its progressive revelation.

All this implies new ways of reading and a pre-thought-out set of strategies.

There is a great deal more to this kind of approach than can be covered in one unit, but here we will attempt to launch the issue and provide some initial guidelines and pointers.

The key issue to establish when you display fresh text on a whiteboard is, "What is your focus?" As the lesson progresses, you may wish to move on to a fresh focus, or you may have worked out a coherent series of steps.

When we read text on a conventional book page, our reading is generally controlled by the size of text, the organisation of the text (e.g. into lines, paragraphs), the style of the text (e.g. fonts, italics, underline, bold, uppercase/lowercase, font colour), and the limit of the page. Just occasionally we encounter concealed text (mostly in children's books and certain kinds of greeting cards that deploy lift-the-flap). An author and publisher can use a combination of these devices to manipulate the way the text is mediated to the reader, its impact and sometimes its meaning. We usually start reading (if we're reading a European language) from the front of the book and read left to right. Interestingly, if we're browsing a magazine, those assumptions don't hold and we often start from the back and browse towards the front.

A whiteboard offers all the tricks above plus one or two more. It enables you to take control of which part of the text is read first and how much is revealed. You can also control the tempo of the reading by controlling access to the text.

This unit will consider just one of the many techniques available – using a blind (like a window blind) to explore formal rhyme-schemes. Most interactive whiteboard software includes such a facility. It can be improvised by creating a dark coloured graphic and using it to cover the text.

This lesson activity should be used in conjunction with the SMART Notebook™ file 'Shades of Meaning.notebook'.

✎ Notes

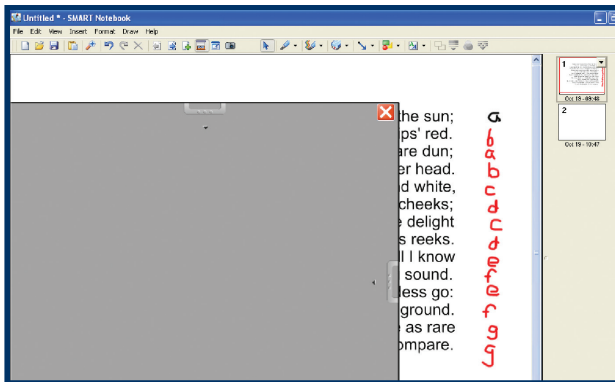## Suggested activity outline

- Display a suitable text that has been treated so that it justifies to the right.

- Immediately cover it up by clicking on the blind 'Screen Shade'.

- Drag the 'Screen Shade' with its right-hand handle until just the rhyme words show.

- Discuss the pattern of rhymes. Invite a pupil to the front to write the rhyme scheme in 'abab' format onto the board using an interactive whiteboard pen.

- Discuss the implications of this particular rhyme scheme.

- Drag the 'Screen Shade' with its top handle. Reveal the first two lines.

- Read the lines and discuss how they link in with the rhyme.

- Repeat for the rest of the poem.

- Sum up findings and generalise about function of rhyme in poetry.

SMART specific

Having found a suitable text (e.g. a sonnet), select and copy it. Open SMART Notebook. Click on the Text icon in the toolbar. Drag your finger on the Notebook page and a text box will appear with a set of editing tools above it. Paste your poem into this box.

Next you need to justify the poem to the right (this lines up all the rhyme-words neatly for you) and enlarge the text so that it can be read without strain. Select all the poem text and change the font size to 18. Click on the little right-justify icon to move the text over to the extreme right of the text box. Now, if you've positioned the poem suitably on the page, you're ready to work.

Select the 'Screen Shade'. It will completely cover the page. Experiment with the Shade. If you are actively dragging it, the leading edge becomes transparent so that you can see where you've got to, and you can stop at the right moment. (See Example 1)

Example 1

Extension activities

Reveal three lines of a quatrain. Ask children to write the fourth line, having explained the rules of scansion. Discuss the results from the class before revealing the author's line and considering its merits.

Resources

'Unlocking Literature – Approaching Poetry at KS4', Millum and Warren, CD of texts and resources, pub. NATE 2004.

www.bartleby.com ('Great Books Online')

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www.smartboard.co.uk

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