

Values

'Values' can be thought of as principles of significant importance or worth. At various times in our lives, depending on our personal development and circumstances, we may value principles such as friendship, financial wealth, education, independence or romantic love. In the texts we study, values can be explicitly stated but are more often implied; we can't always clearly detect their presence. This is particularly true when the values being endorsed or supported in a text are the same as ours – they are 'naturalised' so that we almost don't know they're there. In fact, we tend to empathise with and like a character if they share our own values and we generally perceive those with opposing values as antagonists.

The following questions are useful in helping you to identify the values underpinning texts:

- Who gets criticised and who gets endorsed? By whom? Why?
- Who are we encouraged to feel sorry for or empathise with and why?
- What values are given verbal support by characters/people? Do their actions support their words? Are those values rewarded?
- Does there appear to be a hierarchy of values at play? Which values are more highly regarded over others?
- Are there characters/people outside the main storyline that seem to comment on the actions of others?
- What happens to members of minority groups such as the homeless or Indigenous Australians?
- How are the members of minority groups represented? Are they shown to be different or similar? Are they stereotyped?
- At whom are we asked to laugh? Is that laughter affectionate, ironic or sarcastic?
- What is the tone of the text? What makes us decide to take it seriously/light-heartedly?

Values lie at the core of who we are; they are closely linked to identity and who we are as individuals, societies, communities and cultures. Here are some examples of how to write about values:

In Affluenza, authors Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss argue that Western society is characterised by overconsumption because of the dominance of values such as material possessions and financial wealth.

In the documentary Change My Race, focaliser Anna Choy explores the damaging effects of valuing only a narrow version of beauty based on western standards, which has contributed to an alarming rise in the rate of de-racialisation surgery which eradicates 'racial' features.

It is important to consider the values of different subjects in a text, how the text works to reveal these and what values are appealed to in readers or viewers.

VALUES

Include **things that you care about, believe, think and feel**. You use them to make judgements and your values **dictate your attitudes and behaviour**.

*E.G. If you **value the environment**, you may be the sort of person who recycles, does not litter, use things until they fall apart rather than buying the latest newest shiniest thing on the market (i.e. not materialistic), participates in river clean-ups etc.*

Family	Peace	Health / Cleanliness
Independence	Education	Image (body / reputation)
Culture	Success	Honesty
Integrity	Wealth	Tolerance
Relationships / Friendship	Social Status	Ancestry
Religion	Leadership	Bravery
Individuality	Work Ethic	Community
Race	Life	Trust
Ethnicity	Safety / Security	Technology
Loyalty	Freedom	Control
Power	Justice	Discipline
Humanity	Marriage / Fidelity	Extravagance
Respect	Fairness	Popularity / Fame
Democracy	Mateship	Beauty
Tradition	Multiculturalism	Conformity
Simplicity	Prosperity	Pride
Patriotism	Belonging / Identity	Dominance

Here are some phrases that may help you when discussing values:

- The value of is promoted in this text through.....
- The text reflects important values in our Australian society, particularly and
- A fundamental part of the Australian/Aboriginal/Male/Female/Christian/Hindu/Surfing/Digger identity is the value of
- She believes
- He feels strongly that
- They cling to the value of
- She upholds the right to

Knowing what **your own values** are will help you develop a clearer sense of **what's most important to you in life**. Similarly, **think** about the individuals and characters you study this year. What is most important to them?

"Values are like fingerprints. Nobody's are the same, but you leave them all over everything you do." - Elvis Presley

Attitudes

'Attitudes' is another nebulous term in the English syllabus. One way of grasping the concept of attitudes is to think of them as opinions or viewpoints. For example, in *I am Malala*, by Christina Lamb and Malala Yousafzai, the attitude (or opinion) that females should be entitled to an education is expressed very clearly through the representation of events and the perspective offered. Attitudes are based on our values; in this case, Yousafzai obviously values such principles as gender equality and education. These values have informed her defiant attitude in response to being denied the chance to pursue her academic potential due to the oppressive Taliban control of her native Pakistan.

Another way of thinking about attitudes is as a particular tone, reaction, disposition or feeling toward the subject matter. In *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw, Eliza Doolittle demonstrates a proud, defiant attitude towards classist prejudices based on her values of independence and self-improvement. The protagonist's actions and behaviours expressed these attitudes, just as they do for all of us.

It is important to understand that just because a text represents particular attitudes, the creator of the text doesn't necessarily support these themselves. In fact, sometimes characters, people or ideas may be represented in a negative way to emphasise their failings or invite criticism of their values and attitudes. Consider the following supporting examples:

- the destructive childhood actions of Amir in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini are based on the character's condescending attitude of social superiority, not the author's
- in *Gran Torino*, the initially ignorant and racist attitude of Walt Kowalski toward his Vietnamese neighbours is juxtaposed with his later, more accepting and enlightened attitude towards them. This dynamic characterisation serves to reveal the director's own concerns about some of the enduring racist attitudes which emerged in the US, post-Vietnam War.

Activity: Identifying precise attitudes

Although many candidates can easily identify if an attitude expressed in a text is 'positive' or 'negative', these terms are really far too vague to offer sufficient analysis. Select some of the specific terms below and decide whether they can be deemed positive, negative or neutral:

apathetic, contemptuous, jovial, critical, bitter, sincere, concerned, urgent, solemn, indifferent, defiant, optimistic, selfish, irresponsible, caring, sceptical, condescending, ambitious, considerate, mature, determined, hopeful, regretful, insincere, thoughtless

The decisions you made are really based on a value judgement, guided by what principles you feel are important. Now write a list of values which underpin these attitudes.

ATTITUDES

An attitude is a way of thinking or feeling about certain ideas, people or issues.

Authors reveal certain attitudes within their texts.

Attitudes are conveyed through language which positions you to accept the author's attitudes.

Attitudes can be revealed in characters: speech, thoughts, actions, body language, facial expressions, dress etc.

POSITIVE ATTITUDES		NEGATIVE ATTITUDES	
Respectful	Honest	Callous (uncaring)	Arrogant
Sympathetic	Co-operative	Hostile (unfriendly)	Patronising
Hopeful	Courageous	Cruel	Pessimistic
Loving	Determined	Envious	Complacent / Lazy
Humanitarian	Forgiving	Dishonest	Rebellious
Optimistic	Open minded	Intolerant	Condescending
Conservative	Selfless	Pretentious	Self-righteous
Passionate	Hard working	Petty	Hypocritical
Excited / Enthusiastic	Thoughtful	Resentful	Sarcastic
Admiration	Ambitious	Racist	Rude / Impolite
Sincere	Friendly	Sexist	Selfish
Nostalgic	Caring	Vindictive	Vain
Respectful	Patriotic	Unsympathetic	Insecure
Good humoured	Considerate	Abusive	Superior
Assertive	Generous	Scathing	Reckless

Here are some phrases that may help you when discussing attitudes:

- The character displays a attitude.
- The writer encourages us to be.....
- The text reflects the and attitudes that exist within our Australian society.
- The text promotes the attitude that.....
- My feelings about the idea/character/issue in the text are that.....

NEVER describe an attitude as negative or positive - this is too vague! **BE SPECIFIC!**

And remember, texts and authors are positioning us to accept certain attitudes, **BUT**, it is up to **US** whether we accept or reject these.

*"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our **attitudes**." - Charles Swindoll*

Perspective:

There are four ways to look at perspective

- The way a reader/viewer is **positioned by the author through the text**
- or how a particular ideology is **embedded** in a text, for example, a **feminist perspective**.
- The term 'perspective' may also refer to the ideological perspective, the values and attitudes that the reader brings to the text
- and it may refer to the **reading practice** or 'lens' used to read the text, for example, a **feminist perspective**, a **post-colonial reading practice**, a **Marxist perspective**, a **psychoanalytical reading** of a text.

Perspective = Viewpoint + Context

When discussing or considering perspective investigate the following:

- **Whose perspective is it?** We must be able to name a person or a group.
- **Does the owner of the perspective represent a larger group or a specific Ideology or Worldview?**
- **What is the viewpoint?** You must be able to state it as follows. Heaney holds the viewpoint that...
- **What contextual features contribute to the viewpoint?** Discuss context here, including your own where appropriate.
- **How do we know what the viewpoint is?** We examine the poetic devices, literary features, dramatic conventions or generic conventions.