

# Anchoring Visual Images

Here we discuss meaning making impact of verbal captions and voice over on the images they accompany

### Captions images and meaning

- Captions anchor the meaning of an image
- Without caption there is no meaning or there are many different meanings

- Barthes's essay 'Rhetoric of the Images (1977 c) has been highly influential in media studies. He claims that today linguistic message is present in every image: as title, caption, accompanying press article, film dialogue, comic strip balloon.

Barthes identifies:

- A denotative level, designing or describing what is visible in the image
- Connotative level, which is suggestive or evocative of culturally attached meanings that accumulate around what is shown
- Denotative is straightforward. Signs visually resemble what they mean.
- Connotation varies from interpreter to interpreter and from case to case

Photo captions direct meaning in two different ways:

- Relay: in cartoons and comic strips, text and image work together as fragments of an overall structure
- Anchorage: for any image, an accompanying linguistic caption serves to fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs. The caption no longer guides identification but interpretation.