

CHAPTER 4

ATTITUDES AND VALUES

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

- develop an understanding of attitudes and values
- distinguish between personal, societal and cultural attitudes and values
- consider how attitudes and values are influenced by context
- analyse the ways in which attitudes and values are communicated in imaginative, persuasive and interpretive texts
- learn strategies for identifying and interrogating attitudes and values.

The English course requires analysis of the multiple ways in which texts represent attitudes for particular audiences, contexts and purposes. This chapter provides guidance about how to identify the attitudes communicated in a variety of texts. Language, structural and stylistic features work in texts to reveal their creators' attitudes and to influence their audiences' attitudes.

An exploration of attitudes necessarily requires an understanding of values. This is because values underpin attitudes. Values determine what we believe is ethical or morally 'right', and thus influence how we act or respond to others.

This chapter will highlight the relationship between values and attitudes, and also explore personal, social and cultural attitudes and values.

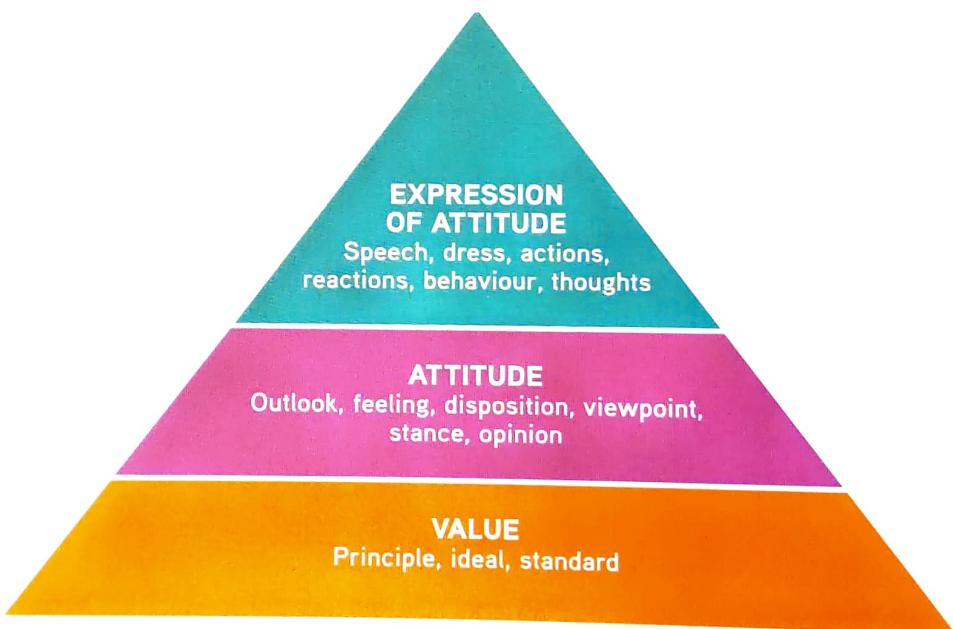


What are attitudes and values?

Attitudes are general outlooks, viewpoints or feelings *towards* or *about* something, such as an idea or issue. Attitudes are evident through our writing, thoughts, speech, actions and behaviour. **Values** can be thought of as the principles, ideals and notions considered important: literally, what is ‘valuable’ to a person or group. Attitudes and values are not fixed; they vary between cultures and societies, and individuals’ attitudes and values can change over time or in response to new experiences.

How are attitudes connected to values?

Values and attitudes are separate concepts but are frequently discussed together because they share a close relationship. Values *underpin* attitudes, providing the foundation upon which attitudes are formed.



The following examples articulate **attitudes** and **values** as connected but separate concepts.

- The value of **justice** *underpins* the attitude that people should be held accountable for their wrongdoings.
- The value of **honesty** *supports* the attitude that deception is not acceptable, and that the truth is always preferable.
- A committed, dedicated attitude towards academic study *reflects* the underlying value of **education**.

Attitudes are expressed not just in words, but also by our actions and even styles of dress. Consider the different ways in which the image opposite conveys a rebellious attitude, critical of society's apathy.



Articulating attitudes

Attitudes can be expressed in the following two ways.

IN ADJECTIVE FORM TOWARDS SOMETHING	AS A VIEWPOINT ABOUT SOMETHING
He had a contemptuous, critical attitude towards keeping animals in captivity.	His attitude was that animals should be in their natural environment rather than in captivity.
She expressed a frustrated, disgusted attitude towards littering.	She expressed the attitude that littering is a disgusting practice.
I have an optimistic, enthusiastic attitude towards travel.	My attitude is that travel is an exciting, adventurous experience.

Word bank for describing an attitude towards something

Ambivalent	Concerned	Disdainful	Neglectful	Scornful
Apathetic	Condescending	Dismissive	Optimistic	Selfish
Benevolent	Confident	Flippant	Patronising	Selfless
Carefree	Considerate	Hopeful	Reckless	Superior
Careful	Critical	Ignorant	Regretful	Sympathetic
Caring	Defiant	Indifferent	Relaxed	Thoughtful
Compassionate	Determined	Mature	Responsible	Thoughtless

ACTIVITY

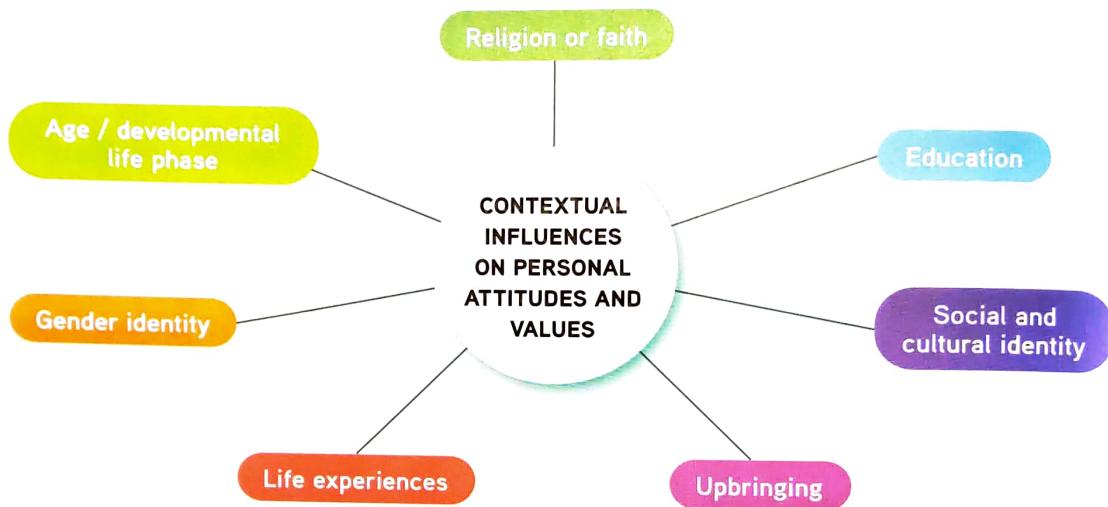
Practise expressing attitudes

Note down your attitudes towards the following topics in both adjective and viewpoint form.

- The banning of mobile phones in WA public schools
- Pill testing at music festivals
- Gender quotas in the workplace

Personal attitudes

Personal attitudes are the viewpoints or outlooks that are personal to us. This doesn't necessarily mean they are *exclusive* to us; our attitudes can be shared by many others. For example, the attitude that climate change is a pressing issue could reflect your personal feeling about the topic, but it is also an attitude shared by other young people, evidenced by their strong representation at school strikes and protests.



ACTIVITY

Understand your attitudes

Respond to the following statements to help clarify your personal attitudes.

	AGREE	DISAGREE
My attitude is that social media is only valuable as a tool for self-promotion.		
My attitude towards a sugar tax is a supportive one.		
I have a cynical, suspicious attitude towards telemarketers.		
My attitude is that the elderly should be treated with respect and patience.		
I have a dismissive attitude towards eating healthy food.		
My attitude towards my studies is one of determination.		
I have an apathetic attitude towards getting my driver's licence.		
My attitude towards technology is different from that of my peers.		

Personal values

Personal values are those we consider especially important to our own lives and wellbeing. They may differ from others' or change over our lifetime due to a range of contextual influences. For instance, someone who has experienced a serious, life-threatening illness may value their physical health more than someone who has not endured this situation.

Word bank for common personal values

Acceptance	Education	Leisure	Privacy	Success
Appearance	Fame	Love	Religion	Travel
Beauty	Family	Loyalty	Safety	Trust
Belonging	Friendship	Popularity	Security	Wealth
Comfort	Health	Power	Status	Work

ACTIVITY

Understand your values

- 1 Respond to the following statements to help clarify your personal values.

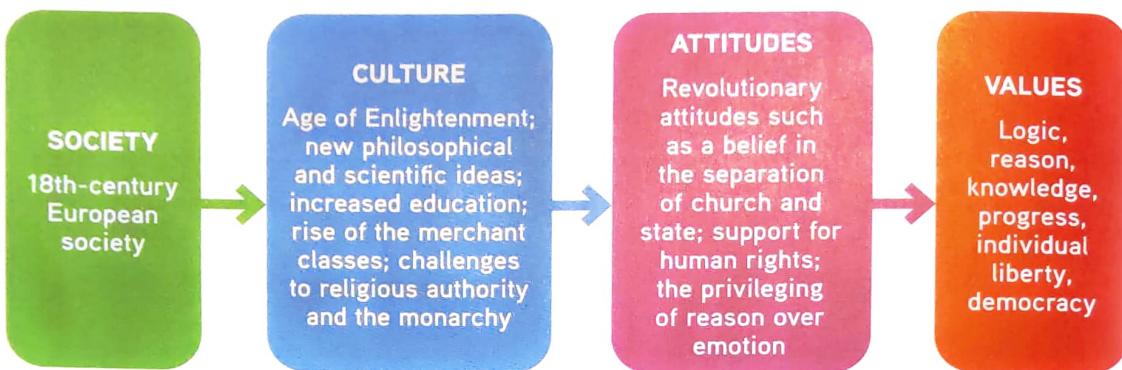
	AGREE	DISAGREE
In my friendships, honesty is more important to me than fun.		
I value my appearance more than my health.		
Acceptance is one of the most important things to me.		
I would much prefer to travel than to be wealthy.		
Popularity is more important to me than feeling safe.		
I would sacrifice my privacy for fame.		
I would rather be successful at school than in love.		
I am only friends with people who are loyal.		

- 2 Choose five values from the word bank and rank them from most to least important to you.
- 3 Discuss your personal values with a peer, noting similarities and differences. Refer to the contextual factors on page 54 that might influence your values.



Social and cultural attitudes and values

In Chapter 2 we defined what is meant by society and culture. Simply, society is a structure held to by a group of people and culture is the evidence of a particular way of life. For example:



Societal and cultural attitudes and values are often so naturalised that we accept them without question, although within a society there may be multiple countercultures that challenge dominant attitudes and values.

Word bank for societal and cultural values

Community	Environment	Inclusiveness	Order
Creativity	Freedom of religion	Integrity	Patriotism
Diversity	Freedom of speech	Justice	Respect for elders
Education	Honesty	Liberty	Tolerance

TAKING IT FURTHER Introduction to perspective

The important course concept of **perspective** comprises two related components: a *viewpoint* that is informed by a *context*. The viewpoint or attitude associated with a perspective results from considering something from a particular position.



For example, a person's perspective on celebrating Leavers Week in Bali might be informed by their personal context as a parent, as a Year 12 student, as a Balinese local, or as a person who has experienced Leavers Week in Bali themselves. A parent may have the viewpoint that Leavers Week in Bali poses a risk to their child due to the distance of the location, while the viewpoint of a Year 12 student may be that it offers a celebratory adventure in an exciting environment. Perspectives are as individual and diverse as we are.

Attitudes and values in imaginative texts

In imaginative texts, attitudes and values are often revealed through the **representations** constructed. These representations are constructed using the following narrative conventions, which are typical of imaginative texts such as novels, short stories, plays and feature films:

- setting
- characterisation
- narrative structure / plot
- atmosphere/tone
- narrative point of view
- figurative and descriptive language.

Characterisation

Sometimes a character in a fictional text will directly express their attitude towards something or overtly state that they value a particular principle. More often, though, their attitudes, and the values that underpin their attitudes, will be evident in the character's actions, dialogue, thoughts, appearance and behaviour. The following aspects of characterisation individually and/or cumulatively work to this end.

- **Dialogue:** e.g. the dismissive, patronising dialogue of the driving instructor in 'The Test', by Angelica Gibbs, reveals his sexist and racist attitudes toward Marian.
- **Behaviour and actions:** e.g. during Leonard Mead's nightly walk in Ray Bradbury's 'The Pedestrian', he closely examines and smells a leaf; this action indicates the strong value he places on the natural world and his contemptuous attitude towards intrusive technology.
- **Relationships and interactions with others:** e.g. in the *Black Mirror* episode 'Nosedive', Lacie's values of popularity and social status are evidenced by her superficial, inauthentic interactions with other characters.
- **Appearance and/or costumes:** e.g. in the film *Australia*, directed by Baz Luhrmann, Lady Sarah Ashley's inappropriate attire and numerous Prada suitcases suggest not only her materialistic values but also her ignorant attitude towards the rural Australian lifestyle.
- **Thoughts:** e.g. the first-person narrative point of view used in Tim Winton's *The Shepherd's Hut* reveals the protagonist's thoughts, and consequently his determined attitude towards remaining hidden from society.



EXAMPLE**Attitudes and values in *Out of Time***

The following extract is from *Out of Time*, a 2019 novel by Western Australian writer Steve Hawke, published by Fremantle Press.

The character's admiring attitude towards her natural surroundings is showcased through the deliberate action of note-taking and her desire to 'absorb' the setting by consciously observing it.

Third person limited narrative point of view reveals Anne's thoughts and perceptions, highlighting her personal value of attachment to the natural environment, contrasted with the human-made tankers on the horizon, which are represented as less significant to her.

Anne continues to display an appreciative, reverent attitude toward the landscape, which she asserts holds 'an ancient power'; she is drawn to the bird eggs that 'she cannot resist' touching, a seemingly compulsive action linked to her value of admiration for wildlife and the natural world.

The sea eagle glides out of sight beyond the ridge line. Anne lowers her binoculars, notes the date and details in her field book, then relaxes against the boulder at her back to absorb the vista. Just down to her left a single bright-red desert pea catches her eye. There are random clumps of pale, wiry spinifex amongst the jumble of angular, deep-brown rocks tumbling down to a narrow, white beach. A thin fringe of mangroves curves out toward a small headland. The sea is a vibrant azure, glinting with sun sparkles, dotted with rocky islets. The mammoth, low-slung iron-ore tankers out beyond the islands seem toy-like at this distance.

She can feel herself opening up to this country ... amidst the gritty industry of the ore wrought from the earth, there is an ancient power in the land, with the mysterious engravings of the Burrup bearing eternal witness. The boulder she has chosen as her backrest is the canvas for her favourite, a pair of grouse-like birds in plump profile, and a clutch of eggs. She knows it's frowned upon, but she cannot resist the urge to reach up and briefly feel a connection to the pocked outline of this creature from a time beyond memory.

ACTIVITY**Identify a character's attitudes and values**

Select a character from one of your studied imaginative texts. Explain how the following elements of characterisation reveal their attitudes and values:

- thoughts
- actions
- body language and facial expressions
- dialogue.

Narrative structure and plot

The narrative turning points in an imaginative text can work to consolidate particular values and attitudes, or to show them being challenged. Sometimes a character's attitudes and values will change over the course of a text. Central characters are usually complex and dynamic, so aim to identify their multiple or changing attitudes and values.

EXAMPLE**Changing attitudes and values in 'Stolen Car'**

The 1978 short story 'Stolen Car' by Indigenous author Archie Weller depicts a significant transformation of the personal attitudes and values of the Aboriginal protagonist, who endures several instances of police brutality. This change is due to various points of dramatic tension within the plot.

PLOT DEVELOPMENTS	ATTITUDES	VALUES
Exposition – Johnny's arrival in Perth from his small country town	Naive, hopeful attitude towards city life and its offer of new opportunities and adventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity • Exploration • Independence
Violent physical assault by police	A shocked, confused and affronted attitude towards the brutal actions of the police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice • Safety • Self-preservation
Climax in which Johnny speeds away from police in a stolen car	Resigned, accepting and apathetic attitude towards the police pursuing him; uncaring attitude to his life beyond this present moment of freedom, during which he feels empowered by his control of the car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom • Power • Control

ACTIVITY**Track shifts in a character's attitudes and values**

Refer to a character in a studied imaginative text to answer the following questions.

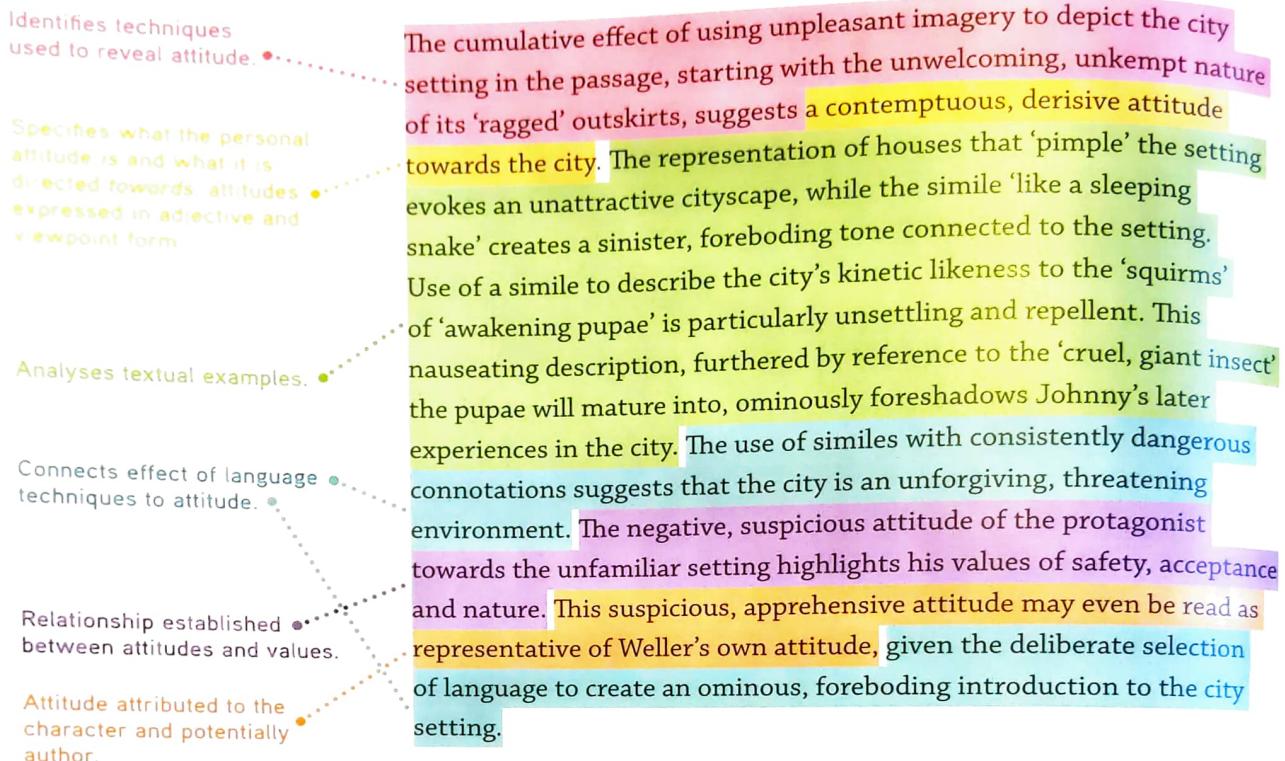
- 1 What are the character's attitudes and values during the text's exposition? Provide textual evidence.
- 2 Locate two complications or points of rising tension in the text. Explain how the character's attitudes and values are strengthened or challenged at these points.
- 3 Compare the attitudes and values of the character in the exposition and in the resolution. Have they shifted or solidified? Why?

Figurative and descriptive language

Imaginative texts commonly use figurative language, sensory imagery and descriptive detail. These language choices can reveal the attitudes and values of characters, as well as those of the text's creator(s). Throughout 'Stolen Car', Johnny reflects on his country home with a sense of nostalgia and fondness. By contrast, Johnny's first experience of the city is described in the following way:

He had hitched a ride with the truckie that morning from the country to the ragged outskirts of the city. Red and white houses pimple the hills that circle it like a sleeping snake. Orchards have tamed the crude wilderness, but now a new savageness, the city itself, squirms like the awakening pupae of some cruel, giant insect, between the hills and the ocean.

Writing about attitudes and values in 'Stolen Car'



Attitudes and values in persuasive texts

The attitudes and values conveyed in persuasive texts can be easier to detect than those in imaginative texts. This is because creators of persuasive texts usually overtly state their attitude towards a particular issue or topic in an attempt to convince an audience to accept their viewpoint. The techniques used to communicate attitudes and values in persuasive texts include rhetorical appeals and the construction of a convincing authorial voice. A list of common persuasive language features is provided in Appendix 1 (pages 215–20).

Rhetorical appeals

There are three main types of rhetorical appeals used to communicate attitudes and values in persuasive texts:

- **Ethos** (character/spirit) – establishes credibility, constructs a convincing authorial voice, often uses personal pronouns
- **Logos** (logic) – uses statistics, facts, expert opinions, jargon, formal language, evidence
- **Pathos** (emotion) – can use anecdotes, emotive language, inclusive language, rhetorical questions.

The following speech was delivered by Sir David Attenborough at the opening of the World Economic Forum in early 2019.

I am quite literally from another age.

- Personal pronouns draw attention to the presenter's biographical context.

I was born during the Holocene – the name given to the 12,000-year period of climatic stability that allowed humans to settle, farm and create civilisations.

- Scientific and anthropological discourse employing statistics.

Those conditions fostered our unique minds, giving rise to international trade in ideas as well as goods making us the globally-connected species we are today. Much of what will be discussed here is the consequence of that stability.

- Inclusive diction.

Global businesses, international co-operation and the striving for higher ideals – these are all possible because for millennia, on a global scale, nature has largely been predictable and stable.

- Juxtaposition between former stability and new era of unpredictability.

Now in the space of one human lifetime – indeed in the space of my lifetime – all that has changed.

- Relationship established between attitudes and values.

The Holocene has ended. The Garden of Eden is no more.

- Attitude attributed to scientists and potentially also the speaker.

We have changed the world so much that scientists say we are now in a new geological age – The Anthropocene – The Age of Humans.

- Direct address to audience.

When you think about it, there is perhaps no more unsettling thought. The only conditions modern humans have ever known are changing and changing fast.

- Negative consequences of shift outlined.

It is tempting and understandable to ignore the evidence and carry on as usual or to be filled with doom and gloom.

- Disjunction used to introduce an alternative option.

But there is also a vast potential for what we might do.

- Sense of urgency and pragmatism established.

We need to move beyond guilt or blame and get on with the practical tasks at hand. We did not get to this point deliberately – and it has happened astonishingly quickly.

- Returns to personal pronouns and several historical anecdotes, all references to well-known professional work, covered in chronological order.

When I made my first television programmes most audiences had never even seen a pangolin – indeed few pangolin had ever seen a TV camera! When in 1979 I made a series tracing the history of life on earth, I was aware of environmental problems but I didn't imagine we were fundamentally changing nature.

- Inclusive language and phrases that emphasise ease of human connection and universality of a common goal.

In 1999, whilst making the Blue Planet series about marine life, we filmed coral-bleaching, but I still didn't appreciate the magnitude of the damage that had already started.

Now, however, we have evidence, knowledge and the ability to share it on a scale unimaginable even just a few years ago.

Movements and ideas can spread at astonishing speed ...

If people can truly understand what is at stake, I believe they will give permission to business and governments to get on with the practical solutions.

Identify attitudes and techniques in a persuasive speech

- 1 Read the annotated speech on the previous page and complete the following table.

DEVICE IDENTIFIED IN THE MARGIN ANNOTATIONS	DEFINITION OF THE DEVICE	ETHOS, LOGOS OR PATHOS APPEAL?
Personal anecdotes		
Inclusive diction		
Scientific discourse		
Juxtaposition		
Statistics		

- 2 In a short paragraph, summarise the attitudes and values highlighted by Attenborough in his speech.



See the digital bonus material for another persuasive speech, by Stan Grant, and a related activity.

Persuasive appeals

Persuasive texts typically appeal to the values of their target audience. Advertisements – a form of persuasive text – may appeal to such values as popularity, family, financial savings, patriotism, tradition and custom.

The following advertisement uses written and visual language to appeal to the values of its target audience.



Writing about appeals to audience values in a Dragon Alliance advertisement

The Dragon Alliance advertisement appeals to viewers' values of leisure, responsibility and environmentalism through its compositional arrangement and symbolism. Through the focus on a composed yet windswept model standing before a bright beach background, the advertisement associates Dragon Alliance sunglasses with nature and relaxation. The subject is presented at eye level, looking away from the camera, in stylish, light-coloured clothing and displaying relaxed, laid-back body language, creating the impression of a young person on a glamorous holiday, or perhaps a wayfarer passing by. The bright lighting draws attention to the model's dark sunglasses which, combined with his relaxed pose and the serene background, epitomises the aspirational 'cool' characteristics commonly associated with sunglasses and beach culture. The clear, unpolluted beach in the backdrop is likely to appeal to those who appreciate the natural world.

Specific personal values identified.

Implied narrative is examined using visual textual evidence.

Personal attitudes and values connected to the appeals; a sense of the audience is established.

This appeal is furthered through the text and the illustration of a plastic bottle becoming a pair of sunglasses. The impression is that the sunglasses are not only stylish, but also environmentally responsible. The call to action – 'Reduce your impact by making one' – appeals to viewers' desire to contribute to the preservation of the natural environment; this is reiterated in the playful combination of the bolded imperative 'GetUp' and the term 'Upcycled' in '#GetUpcycled' which encapsulates the ad's assertion that viewers should take action by purchasing recycled products from responsible companies such as Dragon Alliance. The hashtag works to create a bandwagon appeal through which social media users can publicly demonstrate their support of an environmental cause while simultaneously demonstrating their interest in the fashionable commercial sunglasses.

Effect of written textual features in developing the appeals is explored.

ACTIVITY

Practise writing about appeals to values

- 1 Find an advertisement online or in a print magazine.
- 2 Using the example analysis above as a model, construct a response of between 200 and 300 words to your selected advertisement, addressing the question: *How does the text appeal to audience values?*

Attitudes and values in interpretive texts

Given that their primary purpose is to interpret events, issues, people and places, interpretive texts can appear to offer a more balanced or impartial representation by exploring different attitudes related to a topic. This is not to say that interpretive texts do not promote certain attitudes or values. They do, but in subtle ways rather than directly.

EXAMPLE

Attitudes and values in an interpretive text

The following extract is from 'Time for horses to come first' by Tom Percy. The text is a 'comment' piece, published in late 2019 in the *Weekend West* newspaper. It responds to the controversial treatment of former racing horses in Australia.

Personal anecdote

suggests mare had no financial benefit but the writer valued its right to life anyway.

Juxtaposition implies criticism of commercial racing industry.

The values of the racing industry are revealed as being focused on economics and efficiency.

Hypothetical scenario reveals the value of one's reputation or brand.

Euphemisms suggest the euthanising of old racehorses is controversial.

Short sentence implies euthanasia is no longer an acceptable option.

About 20 years ago I bought a young mare who was never able to race. I bred a few foals from her – none were really any good or paid their way on the track. I still pay for her on the stud farm where she lives, and will do until the end of her days. I imagine most hobby owners do much the same. At the commercial end of the racing industry, however, it is probably somewhat different. The turnover is high and the need to place retired horses is more urgent. Sometimes, the easy option is to quickly dispose of them. Quickly and without any ongoing cost.

The prospect of a horse with your brands coming to the attention of the authorities in a malnourished condition on a remote property somewhere, many years after you have in good faith 'rehomed' it, is a fear that is always in the mind of an owner or trainer who is retiring an ex-racehorse.

One way of avoiding this, is to have the horse more 'permanently dealt with'. Although this has been tolerated for years as being an unfortunate but necessary service to the industry, times have changed. As have attitudes.

ACTIVITY

Identify conflicting attitudes and values

- 1 Identify the attitude towards horse racing expressed above and rewrite it in your own words as a viewpoint *about* the topic or an adjective *describing* the topic.
- 2 Explain the language features used in the text to represent the writer's attitude.
- 3 Explain how the extract reflects:
 - personal values
 - societal values
 - cultural values.



See the digital bonus material for responses to Percy's piece and a related activity.

Attitude and tone

Tone is the mood or feeling conveyed by the voice of a text. The tone reflects the attitude of a text's creator(s) towards their subject matter. In fact, the words used to describe tone can also be used to describe the attitude being conveyed. Tone can be constructed through an author's choice of words, modality and other stylistic choices. A highly critical tone, for example, will be created by the selection of negative vocabulary, while a sentimental tone will emerge from the use of warm, positive details.

Describing an attitude or tone as 'positive', 'negative' or 'neutral', without further clarification, is simplistic. Instead, try using some of the more precise words shown in the table below.

Word bank for describing tone

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
Admiring	Ambivalent	Accusatory
Cheerful	Bland	Aggressive
Encouraging	Diplomatic	Contemptuous
Humorous	Nonchalant	Cynical
Lighthearted	Noncommittal	Dismissive
Optimistic	Nostalgic	Outraged
Reverential	Serious	Pessimistic
Sentimental	Uncertain	Sarcastic
Whimsical	Unconcerned	Scathing

ACTIVITY

Practise identifying tone

- 1 Read the following extract from the 2015 text *Island Home: A Landscape Memoir* by Western Australian author Tim Winton.

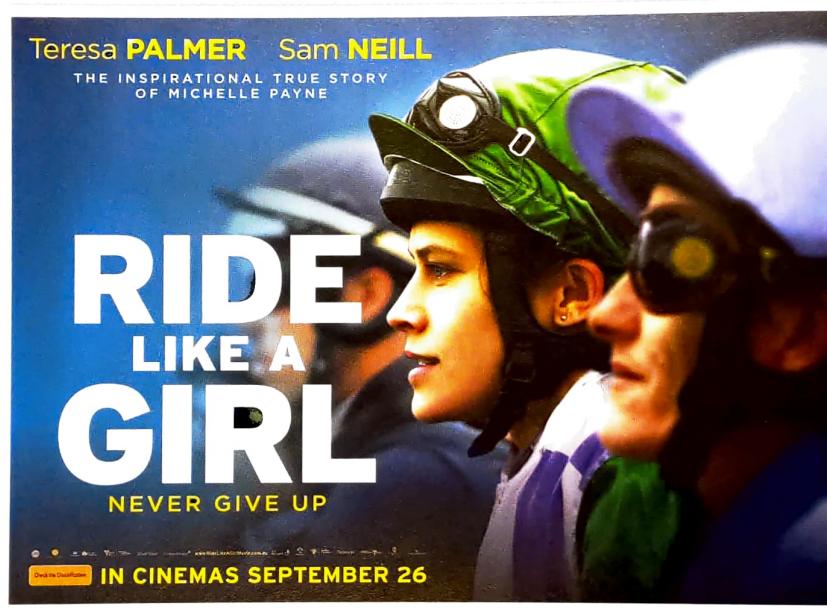
At thirteen or fourteen I had only theuzziest apprehension of the natural world, but this is where my reverence for it began. This growing awareness had a mystical tinge to it, it's true, but by and large its inspiration was material, the result of long immersion in the physical facts. In my case it was a very literal suspension and absorption, for when you're in water all day, with dolphins and sea lions, when you swim in a shoal of salmon beneath a halo of diving birds, it's hard for even the most dull-witted boy to ignore the inkling that you're a small part of a larger process.

- 2 Select three adjectives from the word bank above to describe the tone of the text.
- 3 Describe the primary attitude conveyed through the tone of the text.
- 4 Explain how language, structural or stylistic features contribute to the tone.

Bringing it all together: *Ride Like a Girl*

Ride Like a Girl is a biographical feature film inspired by the true story of Michelle Payne, the first female jockey to win the Melbourne Cup. Released in 2019 and directed by Rachel Griffiths, the film recounts the numerous challenges faced by Payne throughout her early life and career. Much of the drama focuses on Payne's tireless attempts to establish her credibility in the male-dominated horseracing industry. Her triumphant win at the 2015 Melbourne Cup is the climax of the film and depicted as the well-deserved reward for her determination.

Ride Like a Girl promotes the values of family, loyalty and gender equality, as well as personal qualities such as perseverance, discipline and courage. In doing so, it represents the somewhat idealistic overarching attitude that a strong work ethic will lead to success.



Audience: Australians, sports fans

Purpose: to entertain and inspire; to highlight themes of courage and perseverance; to explore the issues of social expectations versus personal aspirations and female empowerment

Type: multimodal interpretive text

Form: biographical drama film (biopic)

Attitudes and values represented

The film highlights some of the chauvinistic **societal attitudes** entrenched in the horse-racing industry. Various examples of character dialogue in the film reveal that Payne is constantly overlooked as a serious competitor. For instance, her manager experiences difficulty securing racing opportunities for Payne when disclosing her gender. This example illustrates the unfairness of discriminatory societal attitudes that favour the **values** associated with traditional gender roles.

The fact that Payne is undeterred by her marginalisation emphasises her determined attitude towards achieving her goals. This **personal attitude** is in conflict with the broader societal and cultural attitudes she must contend with. Thus, the film endorses gender equality as an important **societal value** and determination as an admirable **personal value**, while challenging some of the sexist attitudes perpetuated by the racing industry.

Some of the ways in which the attitudes above are depicted include:

- recurring scenes and close-up shots revealing Payne's perseverance, particularly during her challenging rehabilitation following a near-fatal fall
- the positive portrayal of Payne's strict fitness regime and the extreme measures she takes to meet weigh-in requirements
- the dialogue of Payne and other characters, such as when her trainer informs her that the betting odds of her winning the Melbourne Cup would be multiplied if she were male
- recurring extreme close-ups of horses' hooves and of jockeys' facial expressions during races that capture their determined and highly focused attitudes
- the increased volume in racing scenes, which enhances the thunderous noise created by the horses galloping, emphasising the potential risks of the sport and thereby representing jockeys as fearless and courageous.



The audience is encouraged to feel respect and admiration for Payne, support for women in sport, frustration at Payne's setbacks, joy and relief at her ultimate success and a strengthening of values such as family and determination.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Interrogating attitudes

Though the film challenges sexist societal attitudes, other attitudes related to the racing industry are largely overlooked. The most obvious of these is the attitude that the unethical treatment of horses is perpetuated by the racing industry. With the exception of one fleeting frame depicting protesters outside the Melbourne Cup, and the memory of Payne's father instructing the children not to use whips, the film portrays horse racing as exciting, glamorous and fiercely competitive. Of course, the omission of negative attitudes surrounding horse racing is unsurprising; drawing attention to any criticism of the industry would undermine the complimentary representation of Michelle Payne at the heart of the film.

Write about attitudes and values

Comprehending

Read the following extract from a review by the ABC of *Ride Like a Girl*, then respond to this question:

Explain how language features reveal the reviewer's attitudes towards Ride Like a Girl.

When it comes to Melbourne Cup movies, it's a pretty small field.

There's the winner — Simon Wincer's much-loved 1983 *Phar Lap* — and the loser, Wincer's cumbersome 2011 failure *The Cup*. For the filmmakers of *Ride Like a Girl*, these are the ones to beat.

This celebration of history-making jockey Michelle Payne can't surpass *Phar Lap*, but thanks to a strong finish, it at least leaves *The Cup* for dead.

Ride Like a Girl's real strength is it never lets anything get in the way of telling the superb true story at its heart (something *The Cup* couldn't manage).

It follows Payne (played with grit by Teresa Palmer) from her rambunctious childhood with her nine siblings and widower dad (Sam Neill) through her hard-fought attempts to gain a foothold as a jockey in a male-dominated sport.

Bookended by file footage of the real-life Payne, *Ride Like a Girl* tackles the dangers of her profession and the sexist attitudes she had to overcome to follow her childhood dream and etch her name in the history books of 'the race that stops a nation'.

It's this struggle, and the way it builds to an emotional ending, that makes the film worthwhile. Actor-turned-first-time-director Rachel Griffiths said she set out 'to make a PG feminist sports film that would make men cry' and by focusing purely on Payne, she achieves that.

It's unfussy storytelling, which is why it works. Andrew Knight and Elise McCredie's script keeps the story's lens almost entirely on Payne, and Griffiths's competent, straightforward direction helps build the film to its climax.

But if anything, *Ride Like a Girl* is too straightforward. There's certainly nothing that elevates it from the middle of the field to the head of the pack.

Responding

- 1 Explain how *Ride Like a Girl* has been constructed to highlight a conflict between personal values and societal or cultural values.
- 2 Discuss how the attitudes evident in a text you have studied are communicated through the construction of voice.

Composing

Compose a persuasive text in which you seek to change the attitudes of a particular audience.