Visual literacy can be simply described as the ability to make meaning from visual images. As technology advances and society becomes more reliant on digital mediums, children are being exposed more and more frequently to varieties of images. Educators are including the explicit teaching of visual literacy skills in their curriculums and programs to address the need for students to learn to analyse and interpret visual images that are presented to them.

This package of visual literacy resources has been created for use with students aged 4 to 18, presented with engaging photographs, video and artwork. The activities included provide the opportunity for students to develop skills in exploration, analysis, decoding, interpretation, questioning and evaluation.

The areas of visual literacy that are addressed include visual syntax (the form an image takes) such as colour, light, framing, depth, editing, space, foreground, background, line, direction, arrangement and patterns. Visual semantics (the cultural aspect of an image) is explored with investigations of form and structure, signs, symbols, social interaction and history.

These units of work also support a multimodal approach to teaching. A text may be multimodal when it combines two or more systems and can include linguistic, audio, spatial, visual or non-verbal features. Included are multimodal texts, addressing these approaches through photographs, video, and artwork whilst also including technology and literacy rich activities.

It is expected that, by completing the work included in these resources, students will meet the following outcomes:

1. To promote discussion and critical thinking in relation to visual images.
2. To teach students how to make meaning from visual images.
3. To enhance students’ verbal and written literacy skills through discussion and written responses.
4. To broaden students’ understanding of nature, world issues and charity organisations.
5. Develop a shared language or metalanguage to support students’ development of visual grammar when learning to read images.
6. Reflect on how information is presented through words, sounds and visuals.
7. Make informed judgements about the way the media represents the world.
8. Make judgements about the reality of a text by comparing aspects of what they see and hear with their own lives.
9. Understand that culture changes as society and individual members change.

We trust that students of all ages will be engaged and excited by the content of these resources and teachers will be equally enthusiastic about the contribution this work will make to their programs.