EXPLORING MULTIMODAL TEXTS: RESOURCES

## VISUAL METALANGUAGE

**Symbol:** Symbols or signs can be used as shortcuts to represent ideas or concepts. Symbolic aspects can include drawing style, design of physical appearance, choices of clothing, the setting depicted in a panel, and objects. It also includes icons. For example, the drawing style used by Tan references the artwork of John Brack and Jeffrey Smart.

**Vector:** A vector shows action and direction in an image through *lines*. A vector can indicate movement in a still image, for example using arrows in a diagram or depicting a dog straining at the line of a lead in a particular direction.

**Colour:** Use of colour can be symbolic and choice of colour in an image can be used to represent feelings and mood. The meaning viewers make depends on the context and is strongly influenced by historical and cultural conventions. For example, in Western culture black is often viewed as a colour of mourning.

**Focaliser:** Focalisation, the design of visual point of view, is how the author positions the viewer to see the subjects and action in an image.

**Salience:** Salience is how the viewer's eye is drawn to what is important in the image. An aspect of an image can be highlighted by placement in the foreground, size of the object, and contrast in tone or colour.

**Social distance:** Social distance is the distance between the viewer/focaliser and subject. How close or far away is the subject shown? Social distance is measured on a continuum from extremely close, to extremely remote. This is based on how comfortable we generally feel with people being close to us, in real life situations.

**Subject gaze:** There are two variations on gaze. **‘Direct subject gaze’**, when the subject (or character) looks directly at the viewer and **‘No gaze’**, which is more common. When there is ‘no gaze’ the eyes of the subject of the text are turned away from the viewer, which positions us as observers of what is happening.