 Intertextuality – teacher activities

What is intertextuality?

Intertextuality is the term we use to describe the ways that texts and their meanings are shaped by other texts. In literature and many other works, writers and artists are influenced by numerous factors that link their texts. For example, a writer who has viewed a certain film may be influenced by some of the ideas in that film.

https://www.wallpaperup.com/11623/Abbey\_road\_the\_simpsons\_the\_beatles.html

There would not be a single episode of The Simpsons which does not reference other texts, visual or written at least once. This is not only part of the intended humour it helps to create the humour, while also commenting on contemporary Western culture.

Introductory Student Activities

Get students to look at the word intertextuality. Break it into smaller words and discuss their meanings as a class activity.

* The prefix - Inter
* Text –
* Suffix - uality

Intertextuality involves looking at the sources and influences of texts to identify the origin of certain features. Most texts would simply not be the same if certain works had not been written before them.

Can you think of a text you have read or viewed that could not have existed without a particular text that came before it?

Look at the image at the top of this worksheet. Which texts or people are being referred to?

Write your own definition of the term intertextuality. Make a list of some types of creative works that could be considered examples of intertextuality.

Essential Knowledge

* Appropriation: a text or work adapts, reuses or reinterprets something from an existing text to produce a new text
* Allusion: a reference in a text to a person, place, event or other work, which the writer assumes to be part of the shared cultural experience of the readers
* Parody: a humorous or satirical imitation of a serious piece of literature, writing, art or music
* Context: The context of a work or text is pivotal to understanding an authors work and the intertextual intent. All texts are affected by context, whether it is social, political, cultural or historical. The personal background and experiences of the creator are part of its context, and help us in understanding the meaning of any text. Context is like the background of a text — this includes:
	+ Both the writer’s and readers’s background
	+ who the writer is, when he or she lived and wrote; what country it was written in; what was occurring in society at the time the work was created
	+ what else was being written at the time
	+ when it is being read and by whom

Student Activity

The aim of this activity is to have groups or pairs of students research and report on different aspects of intertextuality in a variety of texts.

In groups or pairs students write a report answering the following questions. Each group/pair is allocated one of the below listed assigned texts and choose to explore one or more of the three aspects of intertextuality in their assigned texts.

Understanding intertextuality includes an examination of the following:

* explore how ideas, storylines, characters and themes can be shared among texts
* identify which techniques, appropriation, allusion, imagery, parody, quotation are used.
* identify how the meaning of a text varies with the form, context and interpretation.

Texts to explore:

* In groups or pairs students are to research the sources of Shakespeare’s plays, Twelfth Night and Taming of the Shrew and their context. Students research the films She is the Man and 10 Things I Hate About You and analyse how the contexts have changed the original play and students understanding about human experiences.
* Students research the sources of Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet and compare with Luhrmann’s film.
* Students research and summarise the stories, Emily Bronte’s Jane Eyre and Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea. How Wide Sargasso Sea informs Jane Eyre and how the responder might change their view of Rochford and his wife.
* One type of intertextuality involves borrowing or reinterpreting ideas explored by others in order to create new meanings.
* Students examine Marcel Duchamp’s The Mona Lisa and discuss using appropriate language to explain the context and intent of the artist and Leonardo Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa.
* Research aspects of intertextuality in their own chosen texts.
* Students share their findings with the class.