

Understanding News Media: Informational Graphics

The old adage that, “A picture is worth a thousand words” refers to the notion that complex information can sometimes be understood faster and easier using a

single visual image. Consequently, many forms of news media contain graphics, such as maps, charts, tables, cut-away views of objects, timelines, flow charts and art illustrations to help readers to quickly comprehend stories. Newer technologies allow these images to appear in 3-dimensional form. These

design elements can be understood, on some level, even when the viewer doesn’t understand the language used to tag specific details.

Informational graphics are used in combination with good design to attract the viewers attention and draw them into the story. Design includes not only the placement of images but the type style or font, color choice and even the use of white space.

Carefully selected use of color combined with an informational graphic can be a very effective way to convey not only information but to set a mood. Colors can affect emotions. Generally, red causes the heart to beat faster, while blue is peaceful and tranquil. Green symbolizes nature and is considered a refreshing color. Sunny yellow is optimistic and is used as an attention-getter. Brown is thought to be solid and reliable. Purple stands for royalty, wealth and luxury. Black is the color of authority and power and white of purity and innocence.

News art is one component of today’s media but with the utility to attract, clarify, and excite the viewer, it’s an important one to remember.

Next installment: *Fact vs. Opinion*

Newspaper Activities:

- ◆ Collect several examples of informational graphics from a print or electronic newspaper. Identify the purpose of the graphic. What type of information is presented?
- ◆ From the newspaper select a text-only story. What type of informational graphic do you think could make the story faster and easier for the viewer to understand? If the article appears in black and white text, what color would you use to enhance the story and why?

For more about informational graphics go to <http://tinyurl.com/nytgraphics>