La comprensione intertestuale

Aim: to compare different texts to establish how they are related and how their interaction can contribute to their comprehension and interpretation.

Obbiettivo: confrontare diversi generi testuali per stabilire il loro rapporto e in che modo l’interazione fra testi possa facilitare il processo di comprensione ed interpretazione.

PART 1

Short Story: “Notes from a Respectable Cockroach”
by Patricia Highsmith

Guiding question: How does the cockroach’s vision of the Hotel Duke symbolise contemporary society?
Domanda guida: In che modo la visione dello scarafaggio rappresenta la società contemporanea?

Breaking up the text (Jigsaw comprehension) (lettura e comprensione Jigsaw)

Step 1 Making Hypotheses

Hand out a Word Cloud representing part of the text to elicit hypotheses related to the setting/story
Step 2

**Cooperative Reading**  
Lettura cooperativa

Hand out different parts of the short story **without a title** to the different groups to identify the **narrator** and **setting** using **tools and strategies**.

Select the title which best sums up your passage

- The Air of Home Sweet Home
- Those were the good old days
- Goodbye Cruel World
- Climbing the Social Ladder
- Junky Junk
- No Shoe, No Party
- Censuship for the Homeless

Step 3

**Blowing Up the text**  
Guardare il testo con la lente di Ingrandimento

The Hotel Duke has now a **tattered** green awning extending to the kerb, so full of **holes** it wouldn't protect anyone from the rain. You go up four cement steps into a **dingy** lobby that **smells** of pot smoke, stale whisky, and is **insufficiently lighted**. After all, the clientele now doesn't necessarily want to see who else is staying here. People reel into each other in the lobby, and might thereby strike up an acquaintance, but more often it's an unpleasant exchange of words that results. To the left in the lobby is an even **darker** hole called Dr Toomuch's Dance Floor. They charge two dollars admission, payable at the inside-the-lobby door. Juke box music. **Puke** box customers. Egad! The hotel has six floors, and I usually take the elevator, or the lift as people say lately, imitating the English. Why climb those **grimy** cement air shafts, or creep up staircase after staircase, when I can leap the mere half-inch gap between floor and lift and whisk myself safely into the corner beside the operator at the controls? I can tell each floor by its **smell**. Fifth floor, that's a disinfectant **smell** since more than a year, because a shoot-up occurred and there was lots of blood-and-guts spilt smack in front of the lift. Second floor boasts a **worn-out** carpet, so the **odour** is **dusty**, faintly mingled with **urine**. Third floor **stinks** of sauerkraut (somebody must have dropped a glass jar of it, the floor is tile here) and so it goes. If I want out on the third, for instance, and the elevator doesn't stop there, I just wait for the next trip, and sooner or later I make it.

Select parts of the text related to the **setting** and blow it up (increase **font size** and use **purple and green bold type** to highlight the **decadent atmosphere**)

- **colour** in bold type words with **negative connotation**
- substitute them with **antonyms** or with expressions that have a **positive connotation**
- **blow up** (increase **font size**) key words to highlight **atmosphere conveyed**
- create a **word cloud** with key words highlighted to convey the squalid setting
- establish relationship between the words in the **WORDCLOUD**
Creazione di un word cloud per incorniciare le parole chiave che descrivono l'ambiente e creano l'atmosfera

**EXAMPLE:**

![Word Cloud Example](image)

Trasformare il testo dal Narratore in 1° persona al Narratore in 3° Persona

**Step 4**  
**What if it were written in 3° person?**

Choose a part of the short story and transform it into third person ...

**Example** he'd only heard about the good old days from his great-great-great-great-grandmothers and -fathers. But he believed them. They said you could jump into a shoe, for instance, outside the door, and be taken into a room along with the tray by a servant at eight in the morning, and thus breakfast on croissant crumbs. Even the shoe-polishing days are gone, because if anybody put shoes outside his room these days, they'd not only not be polished, they'd be stolen. Nowadays it's all you can hope for that these hairy, buckskin-fringed monsters and their see-through girls will take a bath once in a while and leave a few drops of water in the tub for me to drink. It's dangerous drinking out of a toilet, and at my age I won't do it.

**Reflect**

Compare the two texts and explain what happens when transformed into the third person? Why is the 3rd person narrator less gripping, convincing? Who would be the narrator in this case? Is the reader more detached or involved?

**Step 5**

**E se fosse una pubblicità per l'albergo Duke? (dalla descrizione negativa dell'albergo alla descrizione positiva)**

**Textual Intervention**

**What if it were an advertisement for the Duke Hotel?**

From negative to positive description
- manipulate other parts of the passage by substituting negative descriptions with positive ones
- Create an ad for the hotel inverting the negative features of the setting

**EXAMPLE:**

**Advertisement for Duke Hotel**

Welcome to Duke Hotel where the fragrance of Nature in Springtime will float into your room at any time and any season.

Feel, Taste, Touch the reality of your imagination!

Be one of our special guests and take a journey into the past where you will experience the genuine quality of our products. Nostalgia for the past will not be your room mate because you can sit on it, talk to it and caress it with pleasure. You will be happy to run into people who share your ideals in a life based on quality, beauty and style.

---

**Evidenziare in rosso le parti della pubblicità che sono in contrasto con il testo base**

Highlight in red parts of the ad that totally reverse the base text

---

**Reflect**

Confrontare la pubblicità con la descrizione dell’ambiente nel racconto breve

**COMPARE** the ad with the setting described in the short story

- what linguistic changes have been made?
- is the language more literal or metaphorical?
- what does the choice of either imply?
- what does the CONTRAST between the short story setting and the advertisement HIGHLIGHT?
- what other aspects of the short story has the ad brought to the foreground?
- In what way does the ad bring to the foreground the symbolic rendering of the setting as moral decadence?

- Scrivi nella sezione BLOG le tue riflessioni sulle attività di comprensione
Step 1
Poem: Suicide note from a Cockroach in a low income Housing Project by Pedro Pietri

- Read the whole poem and use the tools and strategies to highlight the condition of the cockroach.
- Circle the social issues which have created the situation
- Bring to the foreground all the elements that suggest poverty & alienation
- List the reasons why the roach wants to commit suicide
- what is it a victim of?

Step 2
Bookmarking main ideas (writing in the margin) utilizzare segnalibri nei margini per commentare le idee principali

I hate the world
I am dejected
I am rejected
I am neglected and disrespected
Ever since these damn liberals got elected
And corrected nothing really important
I am starving
I am no good at robbing
I have no ambitions
These damn housing projects
Are responsible for my nervous condition

I hate you credit cards
Because of you there is a pain in my brain
Because of you all the minority groups
Own a television set and will not let me sleep
At night watching the late late show
at full blast

I hate the world
I hate the world
I hate the world
I am disgusted
I totally busted

Reverse situation
It's the world that hates him by totally ignoring him

Living in a low income Housing Project is like being homeless...it gives you a roof but you are still poor and invisible

Programs that have no effect in reality
They don't help to reduce poverty

Capitalist politics that continue to provide for the rich

Consumerism & t.v
Even the poor can afford a t.v set which will only induce them to want more & run into heavy debts

An outcast is invisible for the welfare department

The welfare department
Will not handle my case
I am homesick for the past
When radios used to be a luxury
For the minority groups
And there were no such things
As the late late show
Oh how I hate those damn Anti poverty programs
Step 3
Discovering the Author's point of view / Alla scoperta del punto di vista dell’autore

Wanted Poster

Create a Wanted Poster without modifying the poetic language (in modo serio o ironico) to bring it to the forefront and interpret the social criticism expressed by the author.

Read the poem again and make a list of all the elements dealing with social issues such as poverty, health, etc. and create your wanted poster either ironically or seriously.

Step 4
Epitaph

Create an epitaph to interpret the social criticism expressed by the author.

Use words from the poem to write an epitaph.

EXAMPLE

It wasn’t suicide that brought me here
But
Bible Reading

Reflect

- What is the Wanted poster sending up and criticizing at the same time?
- Which themes in the poem does it reflect?
- What base text does it refer to? (WANTED DEAD or ALIVE)
- What social issues does the epitaph bring to the foreground?
Leggere un video ed interpretarlo

INTERTEXTUALITY

Videoreading the texts

Odyssey of a cockroach by Yoko Ono

Modern urban life seen through a cockroach

The cockroach in this video is a kind of Virgil who guides you through THE CORRIDORS of LIFE made by our leaders to help us see problems that humans can’t ignore, such as Injustice Violence War “Through the eyes of this other strong race, we may learn the true reality of what our dreams and nightmares have created.” (Yoko Ono)

Step 1 Con l’uso di Movie maker, fornire sottotitoli al video dell’allestimento artistico di Yoko Ono “Odissea di uno Scarafaggio” utilizzando il linguaggio del racconto breve di Patricia Highsmith e del testo poetico di Pietro Pietri.

- Download and watch the video clip and with moviemaker insert subtitles to comment what you see.

1 http://it.youtube.com/watch?v=Xhy4-8d_LNA

- make a list of all the social issues the video is criticizing

Videoclipping intertextuality

- Caption the images from the video with fragments from:
  - Notes from A Respectable Cockroach by Patricia Highsmith
  - Suicide note from a Cockroach in a low income Housing Project by Pedro Pietri

- Add music to highlight issues present in video
- Give a single title to embrace the 3 texts
Esempio di quattro diversi testi che interagiscono in un video per capire in che modo l’interazione tra diversi testi possa arricchire la comprensione e interpretazione di ciascun testo.
Il video è stato creato con: immagini da Odyssey of a Cockroach / Il testo poetico / racconto breve e per la colonna sonora “La mano destra Rossa” di Nick Cave (canzone contro il capitalismo)

Example of three texts interacting through video

http://it.youtube.com/watch?v=KS6lWeY4t_Y

INTERTEXTUALITY

- In what way did the reading of the three different texts interact and add to the interpretation of each?
- At what crossroad do the texts come together?
- What common themes or issues do they convey?
- What other interpretations did the video clip of the texts bring to the foreground?
- What strategies can you provide to make students aware that reading is comparative and intertextual?
- What hidden text did you bring to the foreground during your reading?
- In what way can subtitling a video with texts provide other interpretations?
- To what extent do the hidden texts of the reader guide the comprehension of the text?
- In what way do the different texts interact to enhance multiple meanings?
- In what way has your pre knowledge of Kafka’s Metamorphosis condition or facilitate your reading comprehension?
- What kind of feedback do the parallel texts provide?
- Write in the BLOG your thoughts regarding the activities carried out