

# Poor essay example

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Distinctively Visual Question: Compare the ways the distinctively visual is created in *The Shoehorn Sonata* and in ONE other related text. *The Shoehorn Sonata* 1995, a play by John Misto, and the poem *Aftermath* by Siegfried Sassoon both use various techniques to convey a distinctively visual text. These texts both address the ideas of war, power and survival and the composers have conveyed these in a distinctively visual way. *The Shoehorn Sonata* is a play that focuses on the relationship between Sheila and Bridie, two women who have experienced much trauma in a Japanese Prisoners of War Camp.

Through the course of the play, Misto allows the audience to learn many truths about the two women whilst uncovering the horrors of war. He uses distinctively visual techniques including symbolism, projected slides, music, stage directions and lighting to convey his ideas across to the audience. In Act 1, scene 3 of the play, stage directions instruct projected slides of Singapore Harbour onto the screen, including photographs of the burning ships and clouds of smoke. These images show the fall of the British Empire in contrast to the rise of the Japanese empire in a distinctively visual way. The slides are a visualisation of the vulnerability of the hundreds of young women and children at sea, emphasising danger and aloneness. Projected slides have therefore been used to create a sense of sadness, pity and concern amongst the audience due to the distinctively visual image of women caught up in tragedy being created in the audience's mind.

A projected image of the Japanese flag is also illuminated on the screen. “Large Japanese flag, the blood red rising sun”. This projection is ironic and creates a sense of fear, showing in a distinctively visual way the impact that

the Japanese had on the Prisoners of War. Further on in the play, images of the Japanese invasion of Singapore – Japanese soldiers riding bicycles, a sky filled with parachutes; Japanese battalions marching through the streets” page 36. This technique demonstrates the ease of the Japanese invasion and the powerlessness of the women.

Misto has used projected images to support the memories being described by the two women. They transport the audience into the past in a distinctively visual way. Music and sound as well as lighting are other techniques Misto has used to support the play. While there are projected images showing the fall of Singapore the audience hears the voices of a young Sheila and Bridie singing the hymn “ Jerusalem”. This hymn shows the greatness of Imperial Britain and adds to the emotion of the scene while placing the audience in the historical context of the play. Accompanying this hymn is the stage direction indicating gradual darkness. The lighting symbolises that a dark period for the women is about to occur. When Bridie describes the evacuation of the women and children, and criticises the British for their lack of concern, the song “ Rule Britania” is played.

This is a very patriotic song for the British which reinforces the ideas of the society of Britain. Misto uses this song as a distinctively visual technique to convey the arrogant attitude of the government and stress to the audience the lack of care they offered. Friendship is a recurring theme throughout *The Shoehorn Sonata* and is shown through the distinctively visual techniques of symbolism.

The shoehorn and the caramel are both symbols of the friendship that the two women created in the camp. The audience becomes aware of how the women shared the caramel, and the importance that it held regarding their friendship. Therefore Misto has used this as a distinctively visual symbol as the audience visualises the strong friendship existing. The shoehorn is a symbol of the women's survival and resilience during their time at the Prisoners of War Camp. The first appearance of the shoehorn is when Bridie uses it to keep Sheila awake upon their first encountering with each other. It then reappears when Bridie learns that Sheila didn't offer the shoehorn to the Japanese for quinine, instead she offered herself.

The audience is able to visualise these two scenes taking place and therefore the symbol of the shoehorn is allowing the audience to see the resilience that the two women had to survive, and to keep each other alive. Similarly, in the poem *Aftermath*, Sassoon has used distinctively visual techniques including repetition, simile, rhetorical question, alliteration and emotive language to show comparable themes to those of *The Shoehorn Sonata*. It is a poem that describes in vivid detail the tragedies of war, including personal experiences from Sassoon, the composer. These distinctively visual techniques show the audience the horrors of war and give them a visual image in their minds of the disastrous sights that soldiers witnessed whilst at war. War is a common idea for both the play and the poem. Throughout the duration of the poem, Sassoon asks a number of rhetorical questions which allows the audience to ask themselves the same question. "Do you remember the rats; and the stench of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench" is used in the first stanza of the poem. This rhetorical question

describes the conditions that were faced at war, recounting it as having a stench of corpses.

The audience is able to visualise this and they feel disgusted with the conditions that were faced. The rhetorical question is a distinctively visual technique that creates this reaction from the audience because they are able to feel a sense of disaster of war. Also, this rhetorical question has been used to communicate the idea of survival. Soldiers were able to survive such horrendous conditions such as these. The repetition of the rhetorical question “ Have you forgotten yet...

” emphasises that war is a traumatic experience that cannot be easily forgotten by those who encounter it. This repetition reinforces in the audiences mind that war, and surviving war is a difficult understanding.” The haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow like clouds in the lit heaven of life” is a simile that the composer has used to describe the way war influences your mind. He has compared the thoughts of war to “ clouds in the lit heaven of life”.

This simile creates a distinctively visual image in the readers mind of a person at war who is overwhelmed by the concepts of war, and is therefore confused and weighed down. Emotive language has also been used in the second stanza as a way to convey the feelings of the composer. “ And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you then”. This sentence is packed with emotive language which describes Sassoons feelings towards war. Overall, The Shoehorn Sonata and Aftermath are texts that have used distinctively visual techniques to show the common ideas of war, survival

and power. These distinctively visual techniques have each impacted on the audience in a different way.