SUBTEXT

BACKGROUND

SUBTEXT:

BACKGROUND

- **The goal in argument is**
  - To **argue, persuade, convince**
  - To **move, motivate**
  - To **sway, manipulate**
  - To **pull in the reader/audience**

BACKGROUND

- **Writers/Speakers can achieve this goal**
  - (and Critical Thinkers can – should – study how writers achieve this goal)
- **through what Memering & Palmer call "The Psychology of Argument"**
  - By "psychology" they mean
    - processes, strategies
    - methods, devices, or tactics
  - In short, the ways to argue*

BACKGROUND

- **Some of the "ways to argue" include**
  - **through REASON (*Logos*)**
    - **logic, reasons, explanations, examples**
    - **facts, statistics, figures**
    - **proof, grounds, support**
    - **induction, deduction, coherence, organization**
    - **(most of the Rhetorical Strategies)**
  - **through EMOTION (*Pathos*)**
    - **emotions, emotional appeals (guilt, fear, pity)**
    - **appeals to *values, beliefs, attitudes***
    - **(analogy, subtext)**

BACKGROUND

- **And these "Persuasive Appeals" can be presented in 1 of 2 ways or manners:**
  - **Overtly:**
    - **openly, obviously, directly, explicitly**
    - **(typically the Logos/Logical appeals)**

  - **Covertly:**
    - **indirectly, implicitly, subtly**
    - **(while any appeal can be indirectly presented, those not based on reason characteristically are**
   - **especially advertisements**

BACKGROUND

- **As we can see, these "ways to argue" are often <u>not</u> so direct, obvious, or logical.**
- **Thus, Memering & Palmer further assert, "Persuasion is a subtle art" (179).**
  - **By "SUBTLE" they mean**
    - **covert, hidden, concealed**
    - **shrewd, crafty, sly**
    - **obscured, veiled, camouflaged**
    - **ingenious, cunning, tricky, perhaps even devious**
      - **especially advertisements**

BACKGROUND

- **And this is where SUBTEXT comes in.**

- **Because it concerns the most *subtle* aspects of this "subtle art"**
  - **the indirect manners**
  - **the emotional appeals not based on reason**

- **Because "critical thinking," in part, concerns the awareness of the *subtle psychology of persuasive discourse* and the ability to discover (or uncover) it.**

BACKGROUND

- **"Uncover" is a good term to use when referring to SUBTEXT**
- **Because it points to the *layers, levels, strata, or tiers* of an argument (document/image)**
- **That Critical Thinkers must *dig* through in order to *unearth* hidden meanings, values, beliefs, or attitudes.**

THERE'S SUBTEXT EVERYWHERE

A Calvin and Hobbes Collection by Bill Watterson
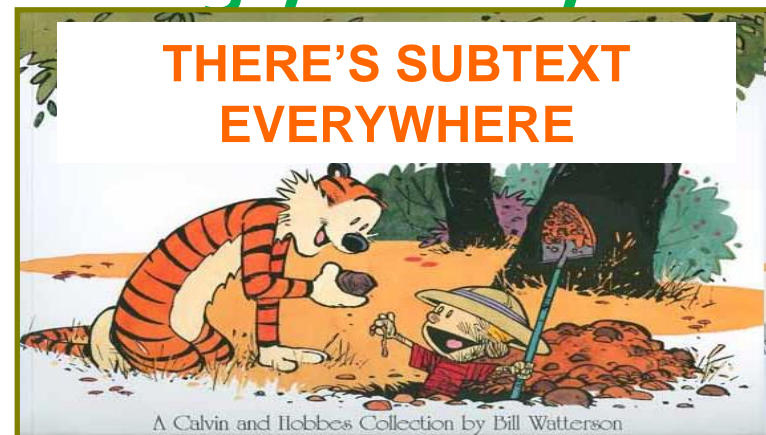
BACKGROUND

- In this "argumentative archeology,"
- Critical Thinkers must excavate beneath the obvious layer of what is *overtly* presented
  - (in the text or image)
- to uncover and expose the concealed layers of what is *subtly* and *covertly* presented
  - (in the subtext)

Critical Thinkers have to dig like this to find hidden meanings in texts and images.

BACKGROUND

- **So as we begin to define SUBTEXT,**

- **Please bear in mind that *DOCUMENT* can be in *any* format, in *any* medium:**
  - **written, spoken, drawn, painted, filmed, ...**

- **Please bear in mind that a document has *multiple* layers of meaning -**

If what we see (text, image) is the
- *overt*
- *obvious*
- *evident*
- *explicit*
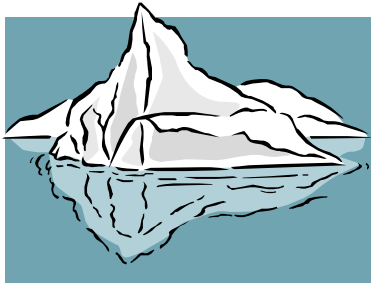- *stated* **message**

LAYERS

Then what we don't see (subtext) is the
- *covert*
- *hidden*
- *concealed*
- *implicit*
- *unstated*
- **message**

of

MEANING

BACKGROUND

- I suppose an "iceberg" analogy could work just as well as the anthropology one –
- The text is the seen part of the iceberg above water, and the subtext is the unseen and potentially dangerous part underwater.
- If Thinkers are not Critical, then they may crash and sink, like the *Titanic*.

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DEFINITION

DEFINITION

SUBTEXT =

- **Meanings, messages, ideas, or emotions *implicitly*, rather than explicitly, stated.**
  - Not overtly verbalized
  - *Implicit, implied,*
  - *Unspoken, understood,*
  - *Embedded, hidden,*
  - *Indirect, roundabout*

DEFINITION

SUBTEXT =

- **What is it saying without saying it?**

- **When someone asks you to "read between the lines," s/he is asking you to locate the subtext.**

DEFINITION

SUBTEXT =
- Subliminal messages
- Implications
- Suggestions
- Connotations
- Hidden meanings
- Innuendos
- Dramatic Irony & Soliloquies
- False or Faulty Metacommunication
- SEMIOTICS

DEFINITION

SUBTEXT:

- In short, "subtext" can be defined as a document's *hidden, unstated,* or *implied*
  - Values
  - Beliefs
  - Attitudes

DEFINITION

SUBTEXT =

- **Values:**
  - ethics, morals, standards, aesthetic tastes
  - what one likes, admires, and desires
- **Beliefs:**
  - assumptions, ideas, opinions, faith
  - knowledge (taught, experienced)
- **Attitudes:**
  - feelings, moods, emotions, associations
  - V + B = A

DEFINITION

- **Before continuing any further, let me be clear about the nature of subtexts:**
- **While they are often unfavorably characterized,**
- **SUBTEXTS are *not necessarily* good or bad, positive or negative, or principled or wicked**
- **Their moral quality depends on the purpose or intent of the author**
  - **depends how it's used, like money**
  - **"[…] there is nothing / either good or bad, but thinking makes it so […]" (Hamlet 2:2:245-46).**

PURPOSES

PURPOSES

PURPOSES of Subtext: (+/-)

- FICTION: *creative* works

  - such as novels, short stories, plays, poems, movies, television shows, music videos, paintings, sculptures

- PERSUASION: *argumentative* works

  - such as essays, articles, newspaper columns, Op-Ed pieces, advertisements, political speeches, posters, tee shirts, bumper stickers

PURPOSES

PURPOSES of Subtext: (+/-)
- **FICTION:** *creative* **works**
  - **In characterization, to create the sense of realism, authenticity through minimalism**
    - **to develop the bond shared by characters**
    - **quality writers don't have to spell out everything**
  - **In characterization, to reveal unspoken thoughts or motives or feelings**
    - **characters' hidden beliefs, true feelings, prejudices, fears, loves, sexuality, memories, past, plans, agendas**
      - (*psychology* **of character**)

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PURPOSES

PURPOSES of Subtext: (+/-)

- **FICTION**: *creative* works
  - **To draw in the audience/reader, to make him/her a participant in the story**
    - Active Reading (as opposed to Passive)
    - fill in the gaps; read between the lines; make connections; find themes, symbols, images
  - **In terms of themes,**
    - to relate ideas, ideals, principles, controversial stances, and socio-political comments, safely, without alienating the audience
    - to convince, sway, argue

PURPOSES

PURPOSES of Subtext: (-)

- **PERSUASION:** *argumentative* works
  - **To draw in the audience/reader, to make him/her a participant in the argument**
    - To play upon the interplay, interaction, participation between author & audience
    - To make the readers willing participants
      - "beggars to their own demise" (or, deception)
    - To engage, manipulate, and alter readers' values, beliefs, attitudes

PURPOSES

PURPOSES of Subtext: (-)

- PERSUASION: *argumentative* works
  - To relate ideas, ideals, principles, controversial stances, and socio-political comments, safely, without alienating the audience
    - without taking any blame
  - To convince, sway, manipulate subtly

PURPOSES

PURPOSES of Subtext: (-)

- **PERSUASION: *argumentative* works**
  - **Unspoken thoughts, feelings, or motives of authors or speakers**
    - their implied agendas, meanings, themes, intentions, messages, social or political commentary, barbs to opposing candidate
      - (*psychology* of writing and argument)
      - as opposed to the psychology of *character*
      - think of politicians & advertisements

DANGERS

SUBTEXT:

DANGERS: Stereotypes

SUBTEXT (–)

- Due to a lack of imagination or effort
  - (laziness)
- a lack of time or space
  - (working within the confines of a certain medium, such as advertisements, commercials)
- or a plan to target a specific audience or demographic
  - (age, gender, class, race)

DANGERS : Stereotypes

SUBTEXT (–)

- **Some rely on easily recognizable symbols, characters, stances/viewpoints to appeal to**
  - **the "LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR"**
- **And therefore employ clichés, pat expressions, symbols, and STEREOTYPES**
  - Anything the audience and the culture at-large can quickly identify with and have already agreed upon or come to a consensus on
    - (even if that agreement is done unconsciously)

DANGERS : Stereotypes

SUBTEXT (–)

- **Thus, this communicative shorthand uses and *repeats*, *disseminates*, *proliferates*, *condones*, and *reinforces* STEREOTYPES**

- **Thus, SUBTEXTS often support "-isms"**

  - **age-ism, sexism, racism**

  - **overgeneralizations, typecasts, stock/flat characters, labels, preconceptions**

  - **bigotry, chauvinism, prejudice, discrimination**

DANGERS : Subtlety

SUBTEXT (–)

- **Subtext = stronger than Logos**
  - Hidden *values*, *beliefs*, and *attitudes*
  - Can *move, motivate, persuade, manipulate*
    - just like logical appeals (Logos)
  - perhaps *even more so*
    - indirect, subtle aspect
      - audience is not even aware of the manipulation
    - emotional aspect
      - sometimes Pathos is stronger than Logos

SUBTEXT (–)

- ## Subtext = NOT proof

  - ### While hidden values, beliefs, and attitudes can effectively (if covertly) persuade,

  - ### These kinds of appeals lack "grounds"

    - support, reasoning, explanation, examples
      - Remember the earlier reference to ANALOGY as more of a emotional part of speech than proof
      - AND the earlier depiction of "subtle" as devious

DANGERS : Subtlety

SUBTEXT (–)
- **So VBA =**
  - **mere opinion, personal preference**

- **So mere VBA =**
  - *not* **fact,** *not* **proof**

- **So SUBTEXT is** *not* **proof**

DANGERS

SUBTEXT (–)

- *So that's* the danger of Subtext
- *So that's* why Critical Thinkers need to be aware of Subtext and to be able to uncover it
- *Because* this is a subtly powerful means of persuasion
  - That is *not* based on reason, logic
  - That is quite often utilized for *manipulation*
    - without the audience's awareness
    - flying below their radar, so to speak

END

SUBTEXT: