

SECTION 4: IMPORTANT GUIDANCE FOR LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: STUDYING COLLECTIONS OF NON-LITERARY TEXTS

Your study of “language texts” in the course can happen in many ways. It is most important that you study a wide variety of what we like to call “language in use”. In other words, you already have half of your reading devoted to works that we consider to be literary—works that often have an aesthetic goal. Language texts can take almost any form. In fact, we would argue that it is just as important to study memes, conversations and text messages as it is to study longer “non-literary texts” such as a political speech or an editorial. The idea is that you are studying the ways in which language of any kind—and even text combined with images—creates meaning. You will find that in your course you might study a longer literary work that is surrounded by a constellation of individual language texts.

At the same time, the IB expects you to be exposed to a “body of work” or a collection of language texts by the same author or producer. These might be advertisements by a single advertising company or even advertisements for a single brand. These could be a collection of essays by the same opinion writer or a series of political cartoons by the same artist. The point is that by studying what is called a “body of work” you are given deeper insights into the elements of that particular text type (eg the benefits, the restrictions, the important features) and are also given a sense of how a particular producer works with that type. You can gain an understanding of characteristics that bring these individual texts together, or those that differentiate them.

Here are some points to consider:

- Your teacher will be sure that you approach a body of work in your study. Every school will do this differently. You might exclusively study bodies of work or you may primarily look at individual texts and approach a body of work a couple of times per year.
- Most importantly, though, you will need to study a body of work in preparation for your individual oral and possibly for your higher level essay.
- In the oral presentation you will bring a passage from a non-literary text into your presentation. While you will refer to this in your discussion of the global issue, you will also be expected to show an understanding of the “body of work” from which it originates. This could mean either discussing how the global issue is reflected in other texts within that body of work, or making reference to key elements of text-type with reference to the other texts as support.
- The same would be the case if you were to approach a non-literary text in your higher level essay. While a long work might stand on its own, a smaller advertisement, a meme or an editorial (for example) should be discussed in the context of a larger body of work.