

William Blake's Emoji: Composite Art and Composition

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“If you look closely at the letter C,” I explained to the class as I zoomed in on the title of William Blake’s poem “The Chimney Sweeper” on the projector screen, “you can see that inside the letter, there’s a child hunched over with his cleaning tools.” I paused for a moment and gestured toward the figure as I circled it with the laptop’s cursor. “Blake forces us to question the distinction between text and image. It’s a letter, but it’s also a picture.”

“So it’s like an emoji,” one student laughed from the other side of the room. Several others nodded in agreement.

I was teaching William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in my freshman writing class, Writing in Context I at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and we were examining “The Chimney Sweeper” from *Songs of Innocence* ([Figure 1](#)).¹ This poem famously highlights the injustice of child labor in the eighteenth century and indirectly condemns the Church of England for tacitly supporting the exploitation of children by offering to the poor a message of conformity to the social order. Like most of Blake’s poems, the *Songs* were the product of his unique methods of printing: an engraver by trade, Blake wrote, illustrated, engraved, printed, colored, and sold his works with the help only of his wife, Catherine.² The results of this process are what W.J.T. Mitchell has called “composite art,” a marriage of text and

image working complexly in tandem to produce meaning.³ Text and image cannot be fully separated in Blake's works, as they comment upon and modify each other's significance.



Figure 1. The title of William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper" (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Copy L*).⁴ Chimney sweeps appear in the letter C and above the letter P.

My student's comparison of Blake's art to emoji reminds us of the extent to which college-aged adults employ and confront images in textual communication each day.⁵ Emoji are ideograms and pictographs used in electronic messaging, most commonly text messages and private messages through apps such as Twitter or Snapchat. As the descendant of the "emoticon" – such as a smiley face created with a colon and a close parenthesis – emoji include facial expressions, but they also encompass animals, objects, types of weather, food, symbols, and more. They have also been used in advertisements and magazine articles, and Oxford Dictionaries selected an emoji as the 2015 "word of the year," noting that "emoji have come to embody a core aspect of living in a digital world that is visually driven, emotionally expressive, and obsessively immediate."⁶ Growing numbers of people, especially college students, are increasingly using such images in daily communications.⁷ When composition and literature


classes ignore the centrality of images in much of today's communications, they pass up an opportunity to prompt students to examine their own regular engagement in a kind of modern composite art. In the class period described above, I encouraged my students to think through how Blake's incorporation of images into his texts resembles and differs from our own. Our insights developed over several class periods and ultimately prompted me to generate a series of assignments that interrogate the relationship between image and text.

In what follows, I examine how Blake's composite art anticipates our contemporary blending of image and text through emoji. Showing how this aspect of Blake's work can be brought into classroom discussions, I explore how studying Blake's poetry can help students think critically about the function of emoji and other images in the written word beyond the classroom. The final section of this article provides an example of a series of writing assignments that prompts students to reflect on the intersection of image and text in Blake's work and in their own lives.

A Meeting of Meanings: Blake's Composite Art and Emoji

The nature of Blake's composite art renders incomplete any study of his poems based only on their words. In Mitchell's formulation, Blake's work contains an "energetic rivalry, a dialogue or dialectic between vigorously independent modes of expression" (4). As such, image and text interact to produce meanings on nearly every plate. Rarely subordinated to his poetry as straightforward illustrations, Blake's designs relate to his text in a variety of ways. As Mitchell details, Blake sometimes presents images that refuse to illustrate the poetry, inviting readers to

imagine their own poem to complement the image. In other instances, Blake's designs provide a counterpoint to an image in the poetry, such as his illustration of Orc's fiery, energetic speech in *America* with an angel, and a passage about angels with Orc. In such instances, image and text serve as foils of one another, and readers are encouraged to consider the relays between apparently antithetical concepts. At still other times, Blake engages in "syncopation," a term Mitchell borrows from Northrop Frye, in which the image is separated from the passage it seems to illustrate. Ultimately, Blake's composite art "embodies the drama of a divided, polarized consciousness seeking reunification – the subject of his prophetic books" (Mitchell 52). Blake invites his readers to perform the imaginative work of unifying these elements, thereby discovering new meanings and insights that neither the image nor the poetry contains on its own. Many times, Blake's designs suggest meanings that compete with or even diametrically oppose those suggested by the words of his poetry. Often, they cast the poetry in new light, and *vice versa*.

Blake's illustrations function in many ways like emoji in contemporary communications. Both can emphasize, develop, transform, and in some cases contest the text with which they are paired. As Marcel Danesi's *Semiotics of the Emoji* has indicated, emoji indeed have a "semantic system," one that is "intrinsically connotative and, some might say, even poetically so to a degree." Using the heart-shaped eyes emoji () as an example, Danesi compares its function to literary symbolism: "When found within a text, it instantly compels one to process it as if it were a visual-poetic symbol." It not only "encodes an immediate object (happiness ensuing from romance), but dynamical objects, such as the feelings associated with 'heart-felt' romance

through the poetic form in which it is presented” (59-60). Drawing on numerous studies, Danesi documents several common functions of emoji, including phatic, emotive, conative (“emoji with strong emotional content”), referential (“concrete referents”), and poetic (103).⁸ Often emoji serve the function of framing a message with the author’s tone, frequently used in positions where punctuation would be placed. But “Beyond their enhancement of tone, emoji can act as an emotional coping strategy and a novel form of creative expression, even if, in both cases, they are constrained by pragmatic-textual conventions” (99). I would suggest that in their capacity of enabling creative expression, emoji offer rich opportunities for people to generate their own version of digital “composite art.” Like Blake’s images, emoji can reinforce meanings present in a text but also generate new meanings.

An example of the power of Blake’s composite art comes from his most anthologized poem, “The Tyger.” Beholding the titular animal, the speaker wonders what sort of Creator could produce such a ferocious creature.² Running just beneath the surface of the poem is the challenge of theodicy: how could evil exist in a world supposedly produced by a benevolent God? Would not a Creator who allows evil to exist be evil himself – or at least be too weak to prevent it from occurring? Or might some other creator or demiurge lurk behind the world’s evil? The poem’s staccato rhythm and multiplication of questions (without answers) underline the speaker’s uncertainty in the face of these doubts:

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,

What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? what dread grasp,

Dare its deadly terrors clasp! (ll. 9-16)¹⁰

Yet the image of the tiger that appears in the lower right corner of the plate ([Figure 2](#)) queries this attitude of doubt. Far from the “fearful” creature interrogated by the speaker, the titular animal appears docile and smiling, almost like a toy. One way to read this contradiction is to conclude that the image reveals a limitation in the perspective of the speaker. The tiger may not actually be an evil beast forged by a malevolent creator; instead, the speaker’s pessimistic attitude, a result of his state of Experience, causes him to misperceive reality. The image therefore reframes the poem’s message: perhaps Blake is suggesting that evil is less an objective feature of the world than an error of perception. The image thus causes readers to question their initial reading of the poem, and it opens new avenues of interpretation that would not exist in the words of the text alone.



Figure 2. “The Tyger” (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Copy F). The illustration of the titular creature looks friendly, challenging the perspective of the poem’s speaker.

Elsewhere in Blake’s *oeuvre*, images function more straightforwardly. For instance, the scene that decorates the bottom of “The Chimney Sweeper” from *Songs of Innocence* ([Figure 3](#)) appears to be an illustration of a sweeper’s dream recounted on lines 10-20, in which children are freed from “coffins of black” by an angel and rejoice on a “green plain” near a river (ll. 12, 15). Yet even this image may be read ironically: the figures of this scene appear to be dancing joyously, but they can also be interpreted as fighting. The blend of serene and sinister tones nicely complements the ironic text of the poem, in which an innocent (naïve) speaker celebrates the consolation provided to the working poor by promises of an afterlife. Though the exploited children of the poem are thereby comforted and encouraged to “do their duty,” both the poem and its companion piece in *Songs of Experience* clarify the extent to which such religious beliefs serve as tools for the ruling classes to keep the poor content with their miserable lives on earth. As I have discussed in an article in *The CEA Critic*, attention to Blake’s images enriches classroom discussions: asking students first to write down a description of the illustration of *The*

Chimney Sweeper and then to share it aloud often results in students voicing competing interpretations.¹¹ Highlighting this divergence of readings, I ask students to consider whether the possibility of a sinister reading of the image could undercut the apparently hopeful ending of the poem (which many students initially take at face value). Leading questions about the position of the image – which one of my students characterized as “squished down on the bottom” – can help them see how even the layout of Blake’s plates can carry meaning, here suggesting a parallel between the “confinement of the image” and the “social position of the chimney sweeps” (Leporati 95).



Figure 3. The image at the bottom of “The Chimney Sweeper” (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Copy L).

Such interaction between words and images anticipates the composite art of modern electronic communication. Like Blake’s images, emoji can complement, oppose, and query the meaning of the words that accompany them. In some cases, emoji act as a substitute for words. In other instances, they are added before or after a message to punctuate, emphasize, or clarify its

meaning. At still other times, they contradict and throw into question a reader's interpretation of the message.

Texting in Class

In discussing the role of images in contemporary communication, I find it useful to invite students to bring into class text messages they have received. Some students are comfortable enough to share them with the class (I always review these messages ahead of time to make sure they are appropriate).

An enjoyable classroom exercise involves students reading these text messages aloud. I transcribe the messages into a Word document and project them, and then I prompt the class to draw conclusions about the relationship between text and image.¹² Here, I often give students a few minutes to jot down thoughts about the textual message first, then the emoji, and finally the way the emoji complement or transform a reading of the message.

Often, the emoji serve to clarify tone or underscore aspects of the meaning, much as Blake's illustrations can do. One text message, for instance, was a simple comment expressing outrage at a current event: "What is wrong with people? 🔥" Our class discussion about this message began with the observation that the flame emoji illuminates the texter's attitude. A common complaint about textual communications is that it can be difficult to discern how a message is intended to be read. A recipient might not know whether to take the words of this text message as a playful dismissal or an indignant condemnation, and the emoji elucidates the tone.¹³ The use of a question mark emoji instead of the regular mark of punctuation proved more

difficult for my class to evaluate. Some students felt there was no difference between the emoji and the standard mark of punctuation. But this conclusion raised a new question: why bother using a question mark emoji at all, then? The class speculated that this emoji serves in part to signal the texter's skill in contemporary modes of communication. The texter's proper capitalization at the beginning of the sentence suggests that he is familiar with the conventions of grammar and is perhaps choosing an alternative punctuation to indicate his ease with image-based messaging. The emoji therefore functions as a kind of meta-language, contributing to the texter's construction of self for the recipient. The class further speculated that the emoji draws attention to the mark, underlining the irate bewilderment conveyed by the message.

Other emoji can turn the apparent message on its head. The upside-down smiley face emoji is notoriously difficult to interpret and acquires various meanings in different contexts. *Emojipedia*, a wiki that catalogues meanings attributed to the ideograms, notes that this symbol is "often representing a sense of silliness or goofiness. Sometimes used as an ambiguous emotion, such as joking or sarcasm" ("Upside-Down Face"). Students have reported that it can also convey a sense of frustration, self-deprecation, embarrassment, or confusion. Indeed, this inverted emoji often re-orientates readers toward the message, sometimes in ways that leave them unclear as to the original intent of the texter.

One student brought in a message from a friend complaining about a restaurant. The text simply read, "great service here gotta come more often 🙄" The emoji thus signals an inversion of the literal meaning of the words. The grammatical fragments of the text can be read as emphasizing the texter's feeling of annoyance, conveying his or her disjointed emotional state.

Even if such a reading seems a stretch, suggesting it to students impresses upon them how close attention to the minute particulars of grammar in even the shortest, simplest, and seemingly frivolous pieces of writing can disclose interesting insights. This habit of close reading will serve students well in more advanced intellectual activities.

Another student had received a message from a friend who had arrived at the wrong location for a meetup: “guess I came here for nothing 😏” Here, the emoji indicates sarcasm, but it also provides a sense of self-deprecation and playful frustration that might not be apparent from the text alone. By themselves, the words of the text message might imply simple bitterness, but paired with the image, they communicate a sense that the texter is constructing herself as a hapless victim of fate. The omission of the word “I” at the beginning of this message suggests the texter’s sense of a loss of agency at which her use of the emoji pokes fun.

Still other emoji pose challenges to interpretation. Researchers have explored the phenomenon of emoji misunderstanding, the fact that individual ideograms are frequently interpreted in wildly different ways (a difficulty sometimes exacerbated by the fact that different brands of electronic devices deliver different-looking emoji).¹⁴ For example, I asked students about the emoji 😬, which has proved especially difficult to interpret. While some see this face as laughing, others interpret it as gritting its teeth or expressing worry or concern. Sometimes context clarifies the image, but sometimes it deepens the confusion. One text message, written in response to friends cancelling plans, was difficult to interpret: “😬 Yeah, that’s okay.” Students were divided on whether the texter was amused, disappointed, angry, worried or authentically

satisfied with the outcome. We suggested that the ambiguity of the symbol may have signaled that the texter himself was unsure of how to feel about the situation. Our discussion also raised the issue of an emoji's placement. How might it change the meaning to place the image before, after, or in the middle of text?

Many other symbols register obscurely, such as 😐. *Emojipedia* defines it as “not giving away any particular emotion,” but students have brought in text messages where it is used to signal disappointment, bemusement, or even shock (“Neutral Face”). Other emoji create confusion by their visual ambiguity: both 😂 and 😓 potentially look like sad, crying faces, though the former is intended to be “laughing to the point of crying” while the latter is intended to be “embarrassed” (the drop is supposed to be nervous sweat, not a tear).

What emerges from our discussions about text messages is a sense that understanding modern textual communications involves interpreting not only text and image, but the relationship of the two. These classroom discussions are a preamble for an exercise in which students write about image and poetry in Blake's *Songs*. After close reading a few text messages, we turn our attention to the “Holy Thursday” poems. These texts express Blake's sense of outrage at childhood poverty and the insufficiency of charity schools to address this problem.¹⁵ The poem of this name that appears in *Songs of Experience* is among Blake's fiercest condemnations of poverty:

Is this a holy thing to see,

In a rich and fruitful land,

Babes reduced to misery,

Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?

Can it be a song of joy?

And so many children poor?

It is a land of poverty! (ll. 1-8)

Before we read the poem, I project the plate ([Figure 4](#)) and give my students time to write a paragraph about the images alone. Then we read the poem as a group, and my students write about how their understanding of the image is altered by the text (and *vice versa*).

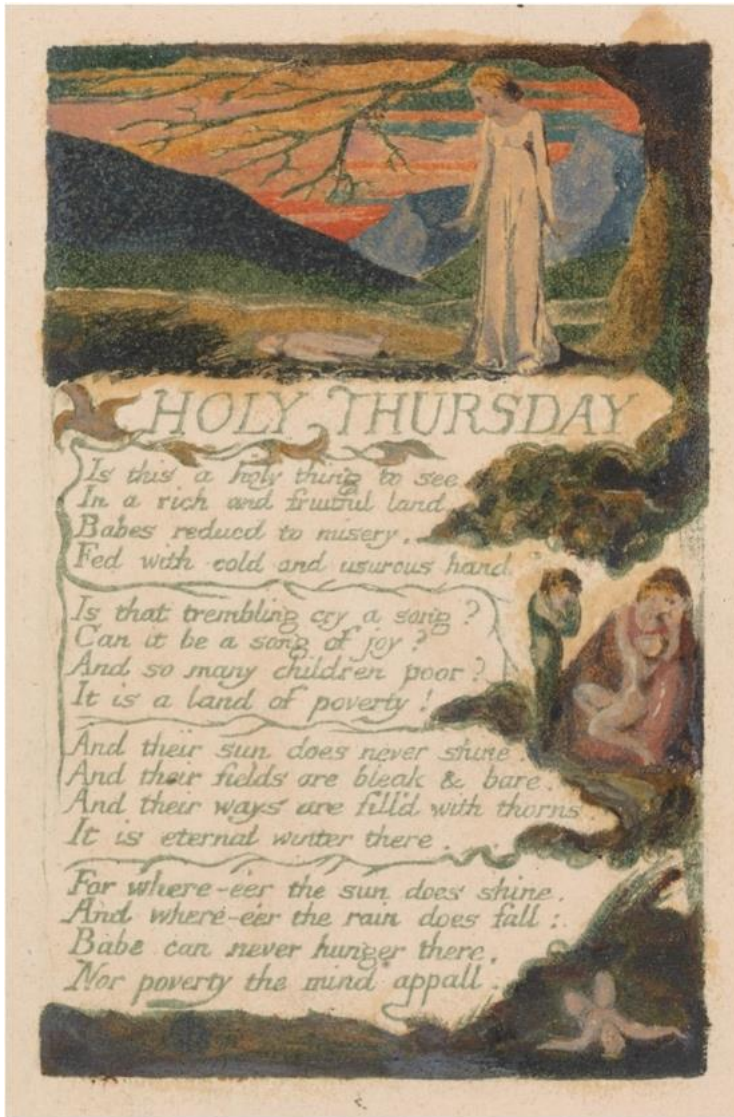


Figure 4. "Holy Thursday" (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Copy F).

In one discussion of this poem, the class's attention was first drawn to the apparently dead child that crowns the plate. Several students commented that they thought the child was a stone. Reading the poem clarified the image, yet the ambiguity of the image further contributed

to the meaning of the poem, suggesting that the oppression of the poor robs them of their humanity. Other students observed that this image could be the referent of the rhetorical question in the poem's first stanza ("Is *this* a holy thing to see?"). Like some emoji, Blake's image requires text to clarify its meaning, but the varying interpretations of the image enrich and expand our reading of the text.

Other students wrote about the figures to the right of the text: the farthest person appears to be a mother whose child is clinging to her, but many students reported not seeing this child until after we read the poem. Together, we concluded that this pair, which could look like a single figure at first, signifies the dependence of children on their guardians. Some students were convinced that the image comments on the lines "So many children poor? / It is a land of poverty!" The figure(s) create an effect similar to that of Blake's exclamation point, the only such mark of punctuation in the poem. A few students even wondered if the image comments on the notion that poor children are "fed with a cold and usurous hand." While the woman appears to be the child's mother, Blake elsewhere in the *Songs* suggests that parents can be complicit in the state's apparatus of oppression. And while the primary referent of these lines are the charity schools that the "Holy Thursday" poem from *Songs of Innocence* implicitly attacks, attention to the image opens questions about parenthood that connect the poem to others in Blake's volume.

Like emoji, the images Blake deploys in his art acquire their meaning in tandem with text. They can raise questions about the text that deepen the meaning of the work as a whole.

Writing about Composite Art

These classroom discussions and writing exercises lay the groundwork for a series of assignments that lead students incrementally in writing and thinking about the relationship of text and image in literature and their daily lives.¹⁶ The first step of the assignment asks students to choose an image in popular culture or advertising that they wish to write about. My students select images from ads on the New York City subway, ads on websites, movie posters, and even the cover art of video games. The purpose of this step is to prompt students to consider how writing about images differs from writing about text. I want them to consider not merely how a picture looks, but how it is staged/blocked, where the images appear in relation to text, how colors are employed, etc.

The next step of the assignment asks students to close read several text messages that they have received or sent that include at least one emoji. Their reading needs to pay careful attention to the appearance and placement of the emoji, and they are invited to quote *Emojipedia* as well as to report their own subjective experience of the ideogram in question. After our class discussions, the results of this assignment tend to be interesting. A popular emoji to write about has been 🍷. Students have interpreted this symbol to mean love, lust, thankfulness, greed, ironic greed, and other emotions, depending on the context. One student wrote that she had included the symbol in a text intended to convey thankfulness and appreciation, but her friend had misinterpreted it as a suggestion of flirtation or romantic affection. To say the least, my student experienced an awkward interaction in the aftermath, prompting her to write about the potential drawbacks of image-based communication. Yet, as she noted in a revision to this

assignment in response to my comments, text-based communications are open to similar kinds of misinterpretation. Communication, she concluded, is more than the exchanging of ideas: it is the development of the relationship between people.

Another student wrote about 😂, which was attached to a message he received from a friend: “I’d wish you luck but i doubt you need it 😂” He wrote that although he knew his friend meant well, he felt put off by the emoji, which my student reserves for signaling mockery or sarcasm. He came to consider in his revision that individuals might each attach different meanings to the same image, much as they might take the same word to have differing denotations and connotations. Effective communication must always be alive to the ways that messages can be (mis)read. And more than this, electronic communication is not only often a marriage of text and image but always a collaboration between the sender and recipient.

After my students write about their messages, they compose a more traditional close reading of one of William Blake’s *Songs*, considering the interaction of image and text. Without prompting, many students already draw connections between their own messages and Blake’s composite art. For instance, some write about “London,” which addresses the social issues associated with the rapid urbanization of the Romantic period, including poverty and prostitution. At the side of the second stanza, an impoverished Londoner crouches near a large flame for warmth ([Figure 5](#)). One student wrote that this flame not only illustrates poverty but functions much like the flame emoji, underscoring the sense of outrage with which the poem may be read.



Figure 5. The fire in the margin of “London” (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Copy F).

The final step of this assignment is for students to gather together the preparatory steps after having revised each one separately. They then compose a paragraph that reflects on the relationship between text and image in general, based on what they have said about composite art, both from William Blake and their everyday messages. These conclusions become the basis for a class discussion near the end of the semester, and several interesting points emerge from these conversations.

Most students reach conclusions about the mutually transformative nature of text and image. While we often assume that images are supplemental to text, the act of closely attending to composite art of the past and present reveals that images possess their own meanings that exist

in dialogue with text. The process of producing and interpreting such dialogue – both in the everyday act of text messaging and in classroom discussions and assignments – can lead to deeper engagement with such art, raising questions about the relationship of those engaged in communication, whether they be poets and audiences or texters and recipients.

Techniques like those discussed in this article help students come to perceive directly that their everyday writing is a kind of creative expression. Blake’s notion of art is not limited to poetry or drawing: his work suggests that all labor, and indeed all expenditures of energy, can be perceived and experienced as artistic endeavors. Thinking in this way helps us to understand that our electronic communications – like Blake’s poetry and like students’ formal writing assignments – are framed with implicit questions about audience, intention, and the interconnection between elements of the message (both verbal and visual). Conceiving of text messages as miniature artistic projects not only invests everyday activities with a sense of wonder, it invites students to consider how these modes of modern communication might be leveraged in the manner that Blake employed his composite art: to raise awareness about sociopolitical issues and to prompt those who read these messages to view the world in new and broader ways.

Students have suggested that online posts that join image and text – “memes” – might be better suited to this function, as many already take political and social issues as their subject. In future iterations of this assignment, I would like to encourage students to examine memes – both serious and apparently frivolous – to interrogate content and form as they consider how composite art continues to evolve.

Appendix: Prompts

Step One

For the first step of this assignment, you will choose an image from popular culture or advertising. You can select ads from websites or the subway, movie posters, the cover art of books or video games, etc. Any still image accompanied by text will do.

You will compose a paragraph or two that “close reads” the image, as we have been doing with William Blake’s images in class. You should describe the image, but also consider the staging of figures within it, its colors, its layout, and the relationship between the image and words that appear on it. You should give your thoughts on how the words might be interpreted differently when accompanied by the image, and *vice versa*. As we have discussed in Blake’s work, do the images straightforwardly illustrate the words, or do they pose potential alternate readings of the words, and *vice versa*?

Step Two

For the second step of this assignment, you will choose a handful of text messages (at least three) you have received or sent that includes an emoji. The messages you choose may include one you brought into class and discussed, or you may choose all new messages entirely.

Write a paragraph close reading your text messages. Pay careful attention to the appearance and placement of the emoji in relation to the words. Does the ideogram appear before, after, or in the middle of the message? Does it substitute for a word? What are some ways

the emoji could be interpreted, and how does its presence and position potentially change the way a reader could interpret the message? How would the message be different without it?

You may wish to look up the ideogram in *Emojipedia* and quote from this source in addition to drawing on your own subjective experience in receiving this message.

Step Three

For the third step of this assignment, you will choose one poem from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

You will write a paragraph or two providing a close reading of the poem, considering both its words and images. As with our discussion of Blake in class – and as with Step Two of this assignment – consider not merely a description of the images, but their placement on the plate and the relationship of the images to the words. What are some ways the illustrations could be interpreted, and how do their presence and position potentially change the way a reader could interpret the message? How would the poem be different without the images?

Step Four

For the final step of this assignment, you will first revise the previous steps and assemble them in a single document. There is no need to provide transitions or make them into a cohesive essay (though you are welcome to do so if you like). You could give each step its own heading or subtitle.

You will add to these paragraphs a final paragraph or two reflecting on the previous steps to draw conclusions about the relationship between text and image in general. How do images interact with text? What are the differences or similarities in this relationship across different forms of media? That is, how do text and image interact differently (or similarly) in an advertisement, a text message, a poem?

Notes

¹ Writing in Context I and II are freshman writing courses that use close reading of literature as a basis for composition assignments.

² On Blake's method of producing his poems, see Joseph Viscomi, "Blake's Invention of Illuminated Printing, 1788." On "The Chimney Sweeper" and its context, see Martin K. Nurmi and Northrop Frye, "Fact and Symbol in 'The Chimney Sweeper' of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*."

³ See Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* for an extended exploration of Blake's pursuit throughout his career of "an energetic rivalry, a dialogue or dialectic between vigorously independent modes of expression" within his texts (4).

⁴ Images from these texts have been made available by the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

⁵ Originally a Japanese word, "emoji" is both singular and plural.

⁶ See "Announcing Oxford Dictionaries 'Word' of the Year 2015."

⁷ For a study of emoji in contemporary communication, see Marcel Danesi, *The Semiotics of Emoji: The Rise of Visual Language in the Age of the Internet*.

⁸ Drawing on Roman Jakobson, Danesi distinguishes "emotive" from "conative" speech functions as terms indicating the "addresser's intent in constructing the message" and the "effect the message is intended to produce on the addressee" (101).

⁹ For an examination of this poem and its illustration, see Rodney and Mary Baine, "Blake's Other Tigers, and 'The Tyger.'"

¹⁰ I have retained Blake’s idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation throughout this article.

¹¹ For an account of a class discussion that guides students in discovering the ambiguities of the text, see my article “William Blake’s Perspectives: Teaching Romanticism in the Community College Classroom,” 92-98.

¹² There is an Emoji Keyboard available as a free add-in for Microsoft Word. It can be obtained under the Insert tab.

¹³ Emoji thus extend the demonstrated ability of emoticons to clarify intent. See Dominic Thompson and Ruth Filik, “Sarcasm in Written Communication: Emoticons are Efficient Markers of Intention.”

¹⁴ “After being incorporated into Apple’s iPhone, Android, and similar apps,” Danesi observes, “emoji have accrued unexpected meanings, because the blending processes [by which features of emoji are combined to produce meaning] vary cross-culturally. Moreover, the exact appearance of emoji is not fixed [...] but varies between platforms or devices, in the same way that normal typefaces do” (68). For a further exploration of this issue, see Garreth W. Tigwell and David R. Flatla, “Oh That’s What You Meant!: Reducing Emoji Misunderstanding.”

¹⁵ On the historical context surrounding this poem, see David Fairer, “Experience Reading Innocence: Contextualizing Blake’s Holy Thursday.”

¹⁶ See the [Appendix](#) for examples of prompts that can be adapted to any Composition classroom.

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