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Comprehension question A – Visual Text

Some sample answers

- ▶ <https://educateplus.ie/free-exam-paper-solutions-pdf>
- ▶ HL – 2009 – 2016
- ▶ OL - 2009 - 2014
- ▶ Additional 2015 OL Sample answers on www.aoifesnotes.com

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**Leaving Certificate English
Higher Level Examination Paper**



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2023	2021	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015*	2014	2013	2012	2011*
One visual image in Text 2 to link to theme of paper	None	None	One visual image to compare with text	None	All of Text 3	50% of Text 1	50% of Text 1	Two book covers to compare with text	One book cover to compare with text	Two visual images to compare with text in Texts 1 and 3	Two visual images to compare with text in Text 2. Three visual images to compare with text in Text 3	Two visual images to compare with text in Text 1. Three visual images to compare with text in Text 2

The Visual Text



LIKE THE WRITTEN
TEXT, IT HAS A
PURPOSE



EVERY PICTURE TELLS
A STORY...



THE VISUAL AND
WRITTEN TEXTS ARE
CLOSELY
CONNECTED, AND
YOU MUST
COMMENT ON THAT
LINK



IF THERE ARE TWO
OR MORE IMAGES,
DO THEY HANDLE
THE THEME
DIFFERENTLY AND
WHICH HAS A
STRONGER
CONNECTION TO
THE WRITTEN TEXT?

Focus on

Composition: What is the focus of the image? Take careful note of everything that is included: it is all there for a reason. Look at the surroundings, background, centre, people, objects etc.

Lighting: Do light and shadows play a role? What, if anything, is highlighted? Why?

Framing: If it is a photograph, think of film studies in Junior Cycle or Comparative Study. How would you analyse camera work in a film?

Continued

Colours and tones: Think of analysing posters and advertisements in Junior Cycle. Do colours link characters, ideas etc.?

Body language and facial expressions

Symbols: are there objects in the image that have a symbolic value? How are these related to the written text?

Font: If there are words on the text, are they relevant? Examine the font used. Is it elegant, minimal or flowery and ornate?

Important

Every comment on the visual text must be **linked** to the written text

As you would in an unseen poem, think of the **theme** and **tone** of the piece. The visual images should reflect this.

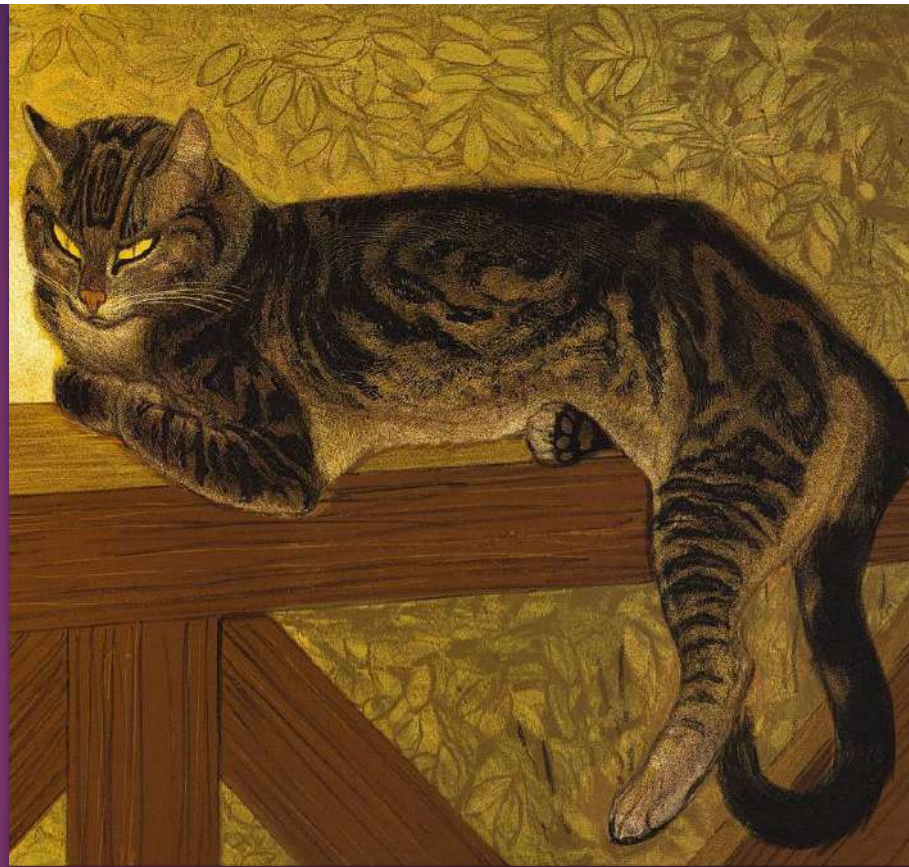
Get into the habit of thinking of images **you** would choose to illustrate/support texts and justifying your choice

2011 – Text 1 – Lara Marlowe

‘Do you think the two visual images effectively capture the different characteristics attributed to cats by Marlowe and others in the text? Explain your answer with detailed reference to both visual images.’

Marks





The Visual Images

Note



'DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS
OF CATS'



'MARLOWE AND OTHERS'



'DETAILED REFERENCE TO
BOTH VISUAL IMAGES'

Over to you...

Positive

In column one, list all the positive aspects of cats

Go through the text paragraph by paragraph

Write down the quotes/references

In an exam, you may wish to underline the points and write (P) or (N) beside each one, as appropriate

Negative

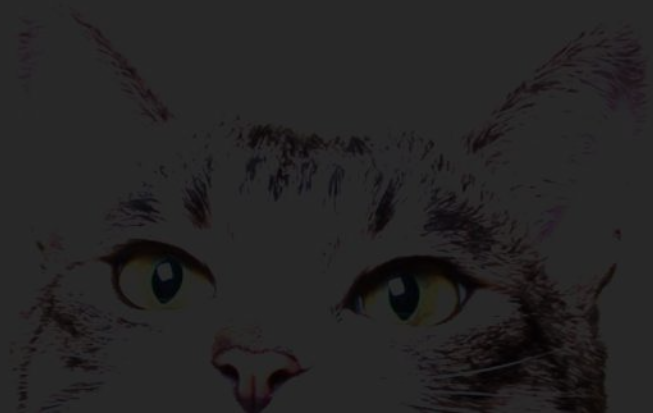
In column two, list all the negative aspects of cats

Neutral/Enigmatic

In column three, list all the aspects of cats that are neutral or could be interpreted in different ways

Note

This article is written in defence of cats, so you would expect to find mostly positive comments, quotes and observations



Cat characteristics

Positive

- ▶ **Comfort** of cat in 'teapot mode' or 'curled up at the foot of the bed'
- ▶ Egyptians **worshipped** cats
- ▶ **Mirrors/shares owner's emotions/attitudes**: 'loves 'feather duvet and fireside in winter' but is also 'chronically restless'
- ▶ **Empathic**: 'They understand us better than we understand them'
- ▶ **Good judges of character**: 'I had second thoughts about a visitor whom Spike hissed at'
- ▶ **Intelligent**: 'Of course they are thinking!'

Negative

- ▶ **Menacing**: Edith Wharton: 'snakes in fur'; 'Medieval man 'burned them as witches'
- ▶ **Predatory**: Spike 'prepares to leap' as he watches sparrows and doves from the balustrades

Neutral

‘A **mystery** that eludes us’

Inherent wildness: Victor Hugo: ‘ God invented the cat to give man the pleasure of petting a tiger’

Dominant: Spike walks on the keyboard and obscures the writer’s screen, just as Pangur Ban did; considers the furniture in the apartment ‘his’

Remember...

Composition

Framing

Colours and tones

Lighting

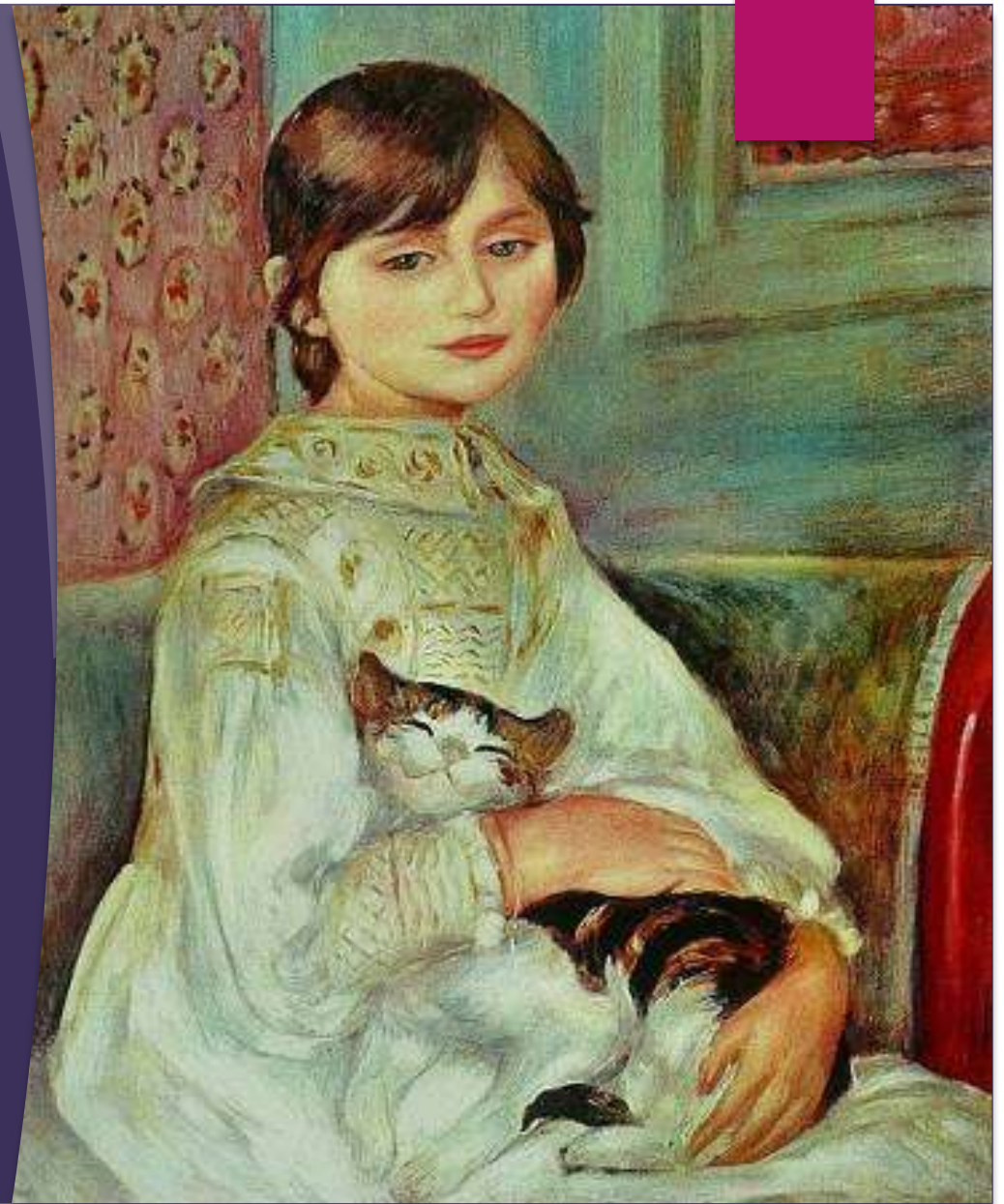
Body language and facial expressions

Symbols

You may not find all of these in every text, but several of them will be important in any given text

Positive – Cats bring comfort/peace

- ▶ Cat and girl as one; front and centre – united
- ▶ Cat blissful; head thrown back; eyes closed; 'smile' of content
- ▶ Girl's eyes are heavy/dreamy/unfocused: simply being with a cat is relaxing
- ▶ Comfort of cat in 'teapot mode' or 'curled up at the foot of the bed'



Connection between cats and owners

- ▶ Spike is in tune with owner's emotions: 'When I'm cheerful, his eyes light up'
- ▶ Owner also notes Spike's emotions: has 'second thoughts' about a visitor Spike dislikes
- ▶ This closeness is reflected in the image
- ▶ Girl cradles the cat as she would a baby
- ▶ Cat basks in loving attention and surrenders to embrace



Connection between cats and owners

- ▶ Colours add to sense of unity
- ▶ White areas of cat's fur blend into white fabric of girl's dress
- ▶ Gold detailing of girl's dress is echoed in the gold highlights in cat's fur
- ▶ Girl's dark hair matches darker part of cat's coat



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Air of menace

- ▶ Predatory
- ▶ Ears are pricked and eyes are fixed on something in front of him
- ▶ Narrow, yellow, slanting eyes with slit for pupil: 'snakes in fur'
- ▶ Spike stalks sparrows and doves
- ▶ None of the relaxed serenity of Renoir's portrayal
- ▶ Easy to see why Victor Hugo likened petting a cat to petting a tiger!

At home wherever he is - dominant

- ▶ Cat's leg dangles over the edge of the balustrade
- ▶ Poised and confident
- ▶ Marlowe says Spike walks across her computer, is pleased to see the furniture arrive at the apartment, he judges guests etc.
- ▶ Cat in picture dominates the frame as Spike dominates the household

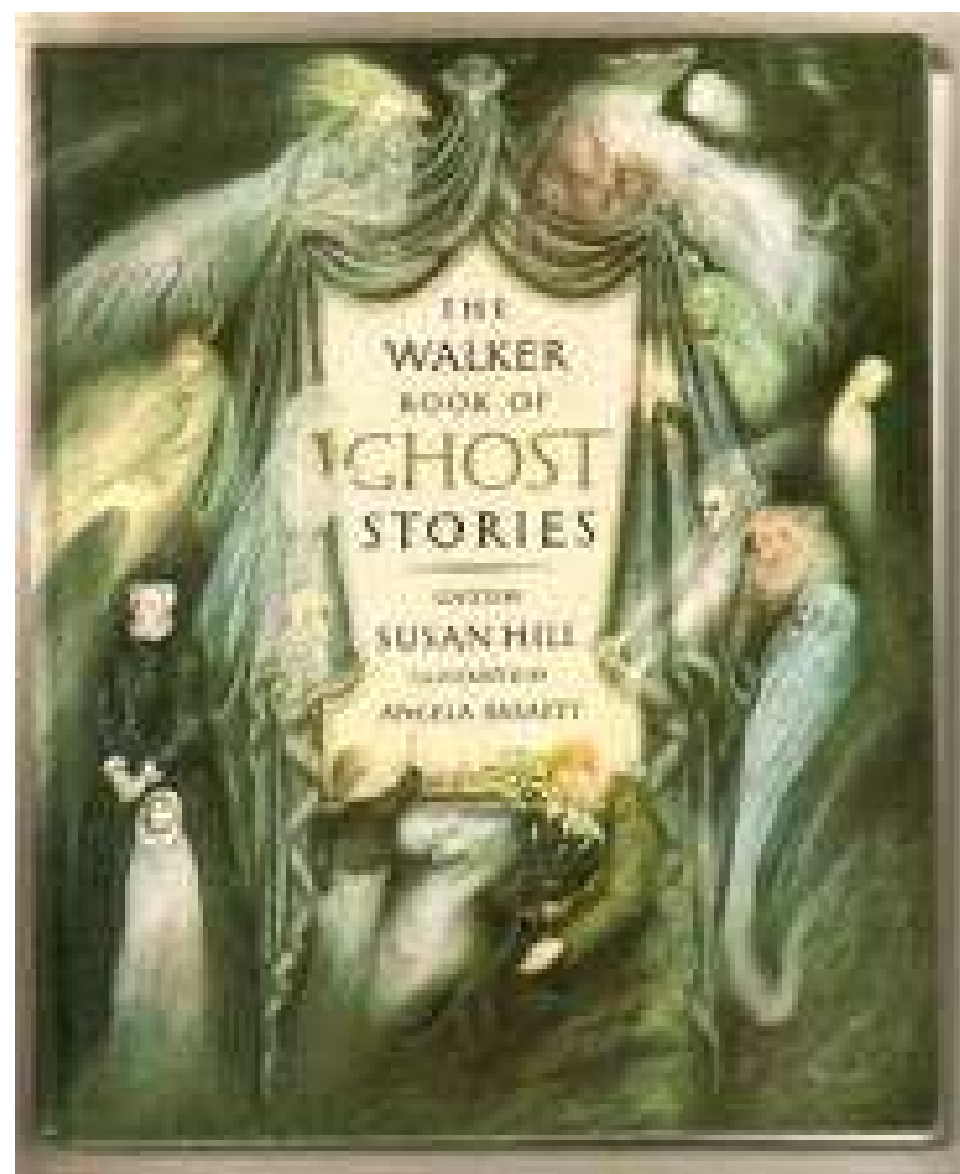
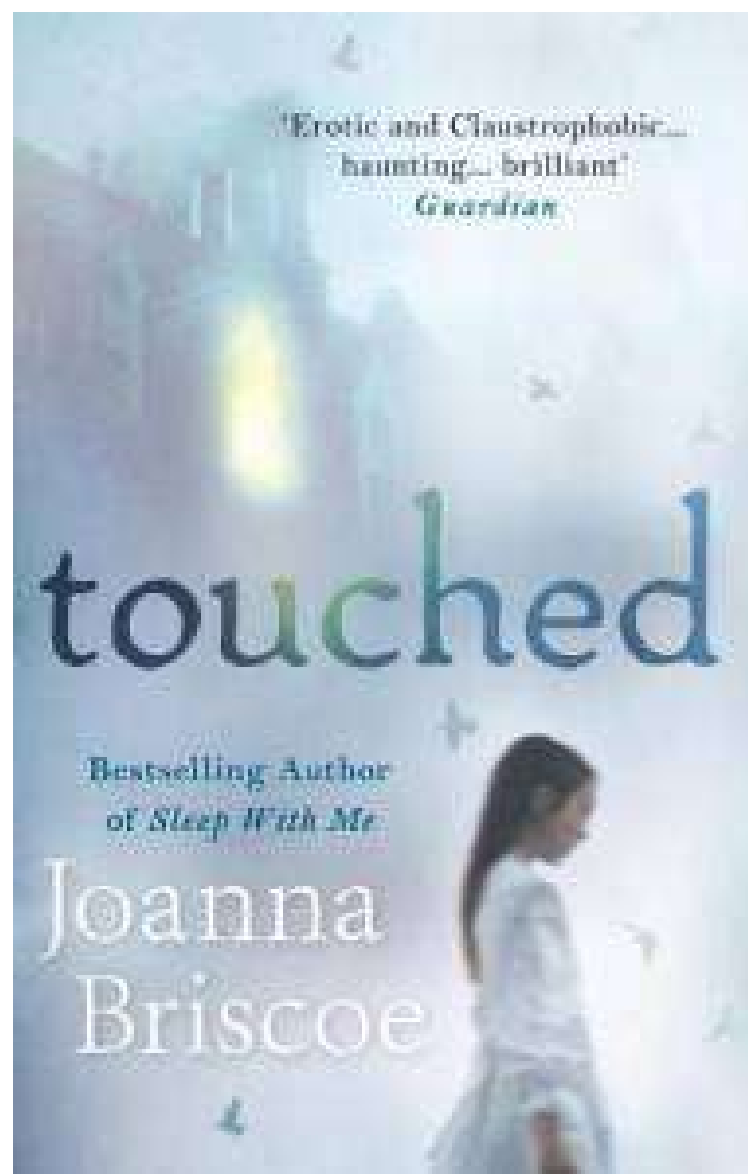


Cats' characteristics: Brief conclusion

DIFFICULT TO CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF 'A
MYSTERY THAT ELUDES US' IN ONLY TWO
IMAGES

2015 - Text 2 -Ghosts Don't Show Up On CCTV

In your opinion, how effectively do the book covers illustrate what Joanna Briscoe has to say about ghost writing in the written text above? Support your answer by detailed reference to both of the book covers and the written text.



Points to note

You must discuss both book covers.

Every point you make must contain a link between the visual and the written text.

You are free to discuss the font, quotations etc. as well as the visual images.

The words 'how effectively' mean you must say to what extent you think the covers do / do not illustrate the points Briscoe makes.

Prepare a short list of the points Briscoe makes about ghost literature but you do not have to discuss all of them, of course.

How to quickly summarise points made in the text



It is a good idea to do this as you read the piece the first time. It keeps you focused and is a quick reference point when answering questions.



The first and/or last sentences of paragraphs generally contain the topic sentence



You will quickly see that Briscoe's writing is clearly structured, so it is easy to pick out the main point in each paragraph. Look for a couple of key words you can jot down to act as a trigger to your memory

Briscoe's points

Ghosts should not be visible, at least not in any straightforward way

Dahl: best ghost stories don't have ghosts in them / Hill: less is always more

Brightness = unease: perfection can be eerie; power lies in terrors glimpsed or imagined



Writer can only keep reader in state of tension for so long

Ghost writing involves blurring between reality and madness; real chaos lies where no-one is looking

Tie up narrative strands at the end to satisfy readers but leave them uneasy

Writers can play with conventions of traditional ghost stories

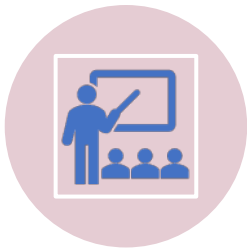


WE ARE USED TO EXTREME HORROR YET
DESIRE LESS DEFINABLE HAUNTINGS:
GOTHIC, VAMPIRES, GHOSTS



ATMOSPHERE IS KEY: A PLACE WHERE
ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN

Analysing the Visual Text



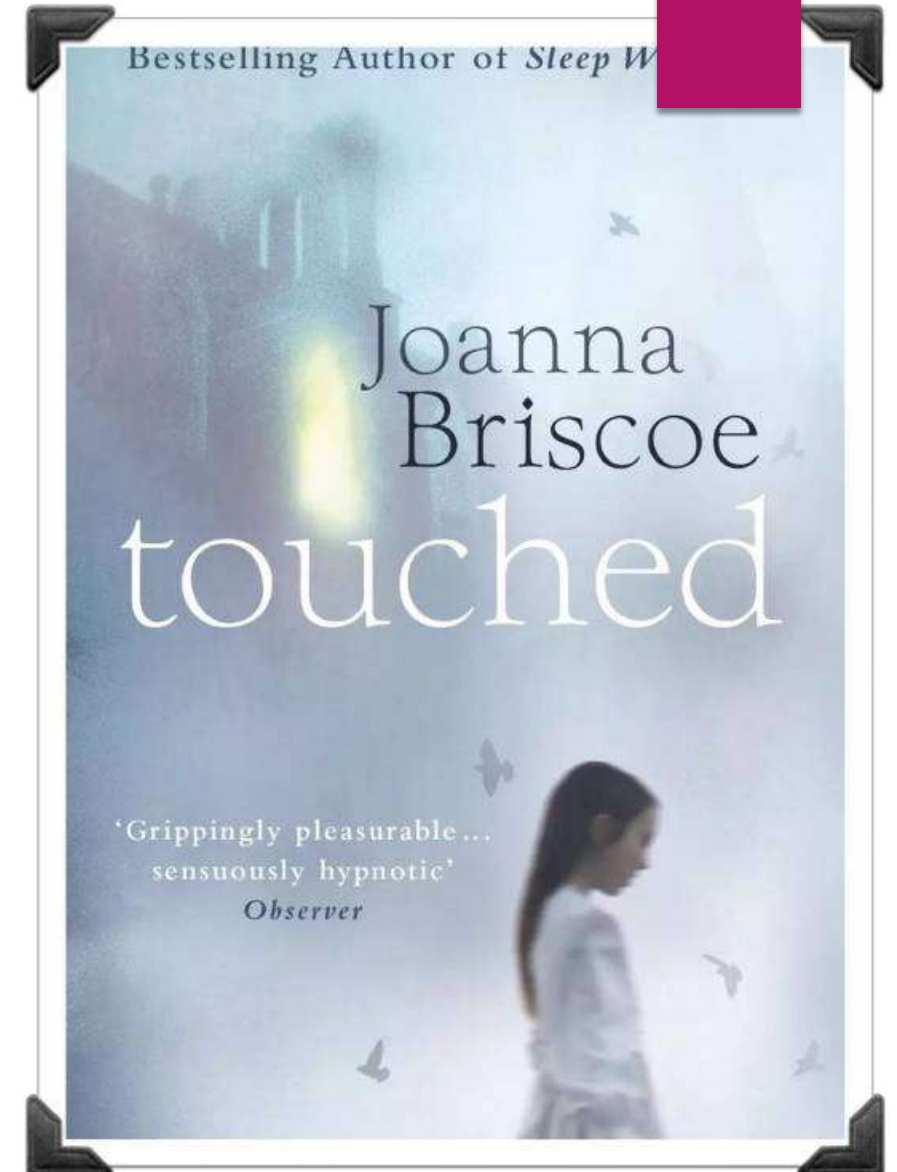
Refer back to slides on analysing visual texts before you begin



Look at each cover in turn under the following headings: composition, lighting, colour, posture, body language, clothing/props, font

Cover 1

- ▶ Blues/whites/bright - unusual choices but link to what Briscoe says about the less obvious and using brightness to evoke unease
- ▶ Figure of girl is old fashioned; head bowed in sorrow? Blend of innocence and sadness; seems ethereal - links to Briscoe's 'blurring between reality and madness'



Text



Font is simple and elegant rather than gothic and creepy - links to Briscoe's preference for 'less obvious' and claim that 'perfection can be eerie'



Comment from reviewer: 'gripping, pleasurable, sensuously hypnotic' - links to Briscoe's emphasis on atmosphere

Cover 2

- ▶ Different view
- ▶ Harks back to earlier examples of genre: colours are predictably gothic and spooky
- ▶ Figures are stereotypical: don't fit in with claim that 'best ghost stories don't have ghosts in them'
- ▶ No hint of 'terrors glimpsed in the cracks'

