

Considering intertextuality in literary and non-literary texts

In literature: Read the following 2 poems. The first is a poem by the (famous) American poet William Carlos Williams. The second is a poem by (the arguably less well known) Scottish poet Tom Leonard. Williams' poem was written before Leonard's poem.

What, do you think, is the intertextual relationship between Williams' poem and Leonard's poem? That is, what knowledge of Williams' poem do you need to appreciate Leonard's poem?

This is Just to Say	Jist ti Let Yi No
<p>I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox</p> <p>and which you were probably saving for breakfast</p>	<p>(from the American of Carlos Williams)</p> <p>ahv drank thi speshlz that wurrin thi frij</p> <p>n thit yiwurr probbli hodn back furthi pahrti</p>
<p>Forgive me they were delicious so sweet and so cold</p>	<p>awright they wur great thaht stroang thaht cawld</p>

In non-literary texts (i): Black Wash

The word *whitewash*, in the context of sport, involves a series victory where the losing opponents fail to score. In 1984, the West Indies cricket team beat the England cricket team 5 – 0 in a series of matches.

To what extent do you need prior knowledge of (i) the meaning of *whitewash* (in its sporting context) and (ii) ethnicity and society to understand the photograph below which was taken in the aftermath of the 1984 cricket match?



In non-literary texts (ii): Intertextuality and the politics of public toilets (!)

Look at the following door sign. You will recognize that it is a conventional image that indicates the location of a public toilet intended for women.



We tend to think about the iconic door sign as 'normal' and, for most people, uncontroversial. However, if you think about it, the sign, above, has a particular history, and it is difficult to fully understand the sign without understanding something about how society in most instances regards men and women in an apparently uncomplicated binary opposition. These are ideas that have become *sedimented* over time. However, such ideas cannot really be separated from gender inequality in society. Moreover, a fixed binary opposition of males and females is problematic for those who identify as transgender or gender-variant.

Thinking critically about texts involves **seeing through language**, including the door sign above, to critically evaluate that which we frequently take for granted. With this in mind, how do the door signs, below, **disrupt** the taken for granted male-female dichotomy that informs much public life, including the availability of public toilets?

