Helvetica

Outcome: Students will study the development, use of, and societies response to the typeface, Helvetica.

Overview: By understanding Helvetica's history and breadth of use, in a **brief** 1 page double spaced essay or long paragraph, explain one of the quotes below and why you think the designer said what they said. Also, be sure to let me know if you agree or disagree with their statement.

Rick Poynor: "Type is saying things to us all the time.Typefaces express a mood, an atmosphere.They give words a certain coloring."

Massimo Vignelli: "You can say, "I love you," in Helvetica. And you can say it with Helvetica Extra Light if you want to be really fancy. Or you can say it with the Extra Bold if it's really intensive and passionate, you know, and it might work."

Michael Bierut: "Everywhere you look you see typefaces. But there's one you probably see more than any other one, and that's Helvetica.You know, there it is, and it seems to come from nowhere.You know, it seems like air? It seems like gravity?"

Jonathan Hoefler: "And it's hard to evaluate it. It's like being asked what you think about off-white paint. It's just... it's just there.And it's hard to get your head around, it's that big."

Erik Spiekermann: "Most people who use Helvetica, use it because it's ubiquitous. It's like going to McDonald's instead of thinking about food. Because it's there, it's on every street corner, so let's eat crap because it's on the corner."

David Carson: "Don't confuse legibility with communication. Just because something is legible doesn't mean it communicates and, more importantly, doesn't mean it communicates the right thing."

Tobias Frere-Jones: "The sort of classical modernist line on how aware a reader should be of a typeface is that they shouldn't be aware of it at all. It should be this crystal goblet there to just hold and display and organize the information."

Vocabulary:

font / typeface – These terms are often used interchangeably, but there is a difference.

A font is a complete assortment of type in one size and style, such as 10-point Times New Roman. A typeface is a set of one or more fonts that have stylistic unity.

graphic design – This refers to a number of professional artistic disciplines that focus on visual communication through the use of typography, page layout, color, images, symbols and words to create a message or represent an idea.

grunge – Most commonly used in reference to the music scene in Seattle during the 1990s, grunge also became a style of graphic design. Unkempt, jumbled-looking, ragged, disheveled and chaotic, grunge was in part a response to modernism by designers looking for a more expressive, energetic style.

modernism – This is considered both a style and a way of thinking. It takes a "form follows function" approach, in which the design of an object is based purely on its purpose. Characteristics are clean lines, smooth surfaces, abstract motifs, and a lack of ornamentation or clutter.

serif / sans serif – A serif is a stroke or fine line projecting from the beginning or end of one of the main strokes of a letter. Sans serif is a style of type with no serifs.

Helvetica Movie worksheet

1. Describe the personality of Helvetica _____

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2. Describe the historical development of Helvetica._____

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3. How important is legibility in a typeface? _____

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4. In your opinion, should a typeface communicate meaning, or should a typeface simply communicate the word? _____

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5. Do you believe Helvetica is the official font of capitalism or socialism? _____

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Capitalism: an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

Socialism: a political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole (share the weath). a transitional social state between the overthrow of capitalism and the realization of Communism.