This paper considers the relationship among three hierarchies in systemic functional linguistics, realisation, instantiation and individuation, focusing on how these can be used to interpret genre, intertextuality and ideology. The discussion considers four related war stories, especially with respect to appraisal analysis, and argues that a complementarity of hierarchies is needed to interpret their variously interested readings. The stories recount a fight to the death between a Japanese and Australian soldier in New Guinea in World War II.