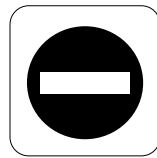


Worksheet 1 - Symbolism

What is a Symbol?

It is a **sign** that stands for something. We look at it and understand the meaning attached to it. We look at these symbols and decide what each one stands for or represents.



- ❖ **Exercise One: (10-15 mins)** Think of 3 other symbols that you would recognise immediately. Draw them on a piece of paper – check with the person sitting next to you to ensure they know what they indicate.

Signs are very useful as many are *universal*. This means that all over the world, no matter which country you are in or what language people speak, you will be able to recognise certain signs. Why is this useful?

If something is *symbolic*, it stands for or represents something else. In literature, symbolism is frequently used in poetry. Often one symbol will be used throughout a book to emphasise the central theme (main idea). For instance, in the *'Narnia Chronicles'*, the lion, Aslan, is representative of Jesus.

- ❖ **Exercise Two: (10-15 mins)** Imagine you were burying a time capsule that may only be found in thousands of years' time. The people who find it may not understand English and you are going to have to use signs or symbols to represent yourself.

Design your own personal shield showing the person you are.

1. Draw a shield.
2. Split the shield into quarters.
3. Top left – draw a symbol to show your nature.
E.g.: Heart = loving
4. Top right – draw a symbol to show what you enjoy.
E.g.: TV = love watching television
Hamburger = you love food
5. Bottom left – symbolic representation of what you want to be in the future.
E.g.: Computer = computer expert
Tiny stick people = mom or dad
6. Bottom right – symbolic representation of your home or country.
E.g.: London Eye = London
Dragon = Wales

Throughout history, certain things have been given symbolic meaning. The same is true of literature, which often relies on symbolism to convey important thematic concerns.

Some examples:

- An Oak tree - often a symbol of strength and endurance.
- A Crown - signifies authority and leadership.
- A Dove with an olive branch - sign of peace (this originated way back in the Old Testament with the story of Noah).



❖ ❄❄ **Exercise Three: (10-15 mins)**

See if you can match up the six symbolic items in the first box with what they represent in the second.

Sword	Light bulb	Moon
Owl	Pound sign (£)	Fox

Money	Cunning	War
Idea	Night	Wisdom

Who thought of the Alphabet?

The letters of the alphabet are actually just *sound signs*. English is based on the Roman alphabet (which originated some 2,500 years ago!). So, what happened before letters? People used pictures to record events and communicate.

Look at this picture:



It could mean – Good hunting ground, a lot of deer found here. Have you seen any cave paintings? What messages are conveyed by the drawings?

After a certain amount of time, picture writing made certain advances. Instead of just standing for the object being drawn, pictures began to represent an idea connected with the object drawn.

E.g.: An ear might indicate the verb “to hear” or “to listen”.

We call this *ideographic* or *idea* writing. A certain amount of confusion can ensue, however. Why might this be the case?

❖ ❄❄❄ **Exercise Four: Picture Messages (25-30 mins)**

Design a short message in symbols and write the translation underneath. Do not make it longer than one sentence.

E.g.:



I (EYE)



LOVE (HEART)



YOU (EWE)

Be creative. You could write anything from what you did this morning to a curse warning on an ancient Egyptian tomb...

❖ ❄❄ **Exercise Five: Picture Message Game (10-15 mins)**

Use your picture message from above and draw it on rough paper. Do not include the words and do not let your friends know what it is about. Swap messages and see if anyone can guess what your message says.

❖ **EXTENSION:** Try writing a longer message in symbols. Perhaps imagine you are in an ancient tribe and you want to do some cave paintings to tell the story of your day hunting.