

Lesson: Language Arts Grades 4-6 Elements of Character



Animals and Symbolism

*Each animal has its own individual strengths and adaptations that humans often admire.
In literature, animals often serve as symbols of these qualities.*

Introduction

Objective:

Students will learn to recognize the symbolic meaning of the animals in The Children's Theatre production of *The Jungle Book*.

Academic Content Standards:

- ❖ National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association Standards for English Language Arts: #1, and #2
 - *Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts: to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world to acquire new information...*
 - *Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g. philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.*
- ❖ Ohio Academic Content Standards for Language Arts #5 Reading Applications: Literary Text
 - *Students enhance their understanding of the human story by reading literary texts that represent a variety of authors, cultures and eras.*
 - *Students learn to apply the reading process to the various genres of literature, including fables, tales, short stories, novels, poetry and drama.*
 - *Students demonstrate their comprehension by describing and discussing the elements of literature (e.g., setting, character and plot), analyzing the author's use of language (e.g., word choice and figurative language), comparing and contrasting texts, inferring theme and meaning and responding to text in critical and creative ways.*
 - *Students learn to explain, analyze and critique literary text to achieve deep understanding.*
 - *Benchmarks: A and G (Grades 4th, 5th, and 6th Grades)*

Getting Started

Materials:

- Handout A

Vocabulary:

- Symbolism

Lesson

Orientation Activity:

Ask students to brainstorm a list of the animals that were characterized in the production, *The Jungle Book*, and record the names on *Handout A*. Next, beside each animal name, ask students to write words that describe the animal including shape, voice, color, and smell. On the third column, ask students to write words to describe the action and behavior of the animal characters. Often animals are used as symbols for concepts such as bravery, peace, and wisdom. Ask students to brainstorm, based on their prior knowledge, animals they perceive as having symbolic meaning.

Learning Activity:

Students will work in small groups to review the animal characters that were portrayed in the

production, *The Jungle Book*. The group members will brainstorm words that symbolize the animal characteristics listed on *Handout A*. The teacher will prompt students to think about the kind of things animals can do that people cannot. For example, monkeys are long, thin, and jump all around. They are also silly, playful and active. Using the information on *Handout A*, each group will generate one word that symbolizes the characteristics of a monkey. For example, a group may generate the word “mischievous.” If a person is described as “a monkey,” the interpretation may be that a person is mischievous, not necessarily that the person is a long, brown-haired animal with a tail.

Students will use this example to connect the concept of symbolism to *The Jungle Book* animals. The teacher will further ask about the story and production, “What did Mowgli’s visit with the monkeys represent in the story?” “Why did Mowgli choose to leave the monkeys?” “What was the tiger, Shere Khan’s, purpose in the story?” “What did he symbolize?”

The class will make a list of animal symbols that are prevalent in American culture. Some examples may include the names of sports teams, electronic devices (Roadrunner, mouse), political parties, and names of cars. After the discussion, the teacher will ask students to write a story about a person or an animal of their choice. The story will explain symbolic qualities of the person or animal as the plot develops. Students will also draw a picture that illustrates the symbolic qualities of their chosen person or animal.

Evaluation and Follow-Up

Assessment Tools and Methods:

Use the Ohio Proficiency Test Rubric to evaluate student’s writing. (View rubrics at the web site address, <http://www.lkwdpl.org/gr4test/wrirubr.htm>).

Interdisciplinary Connections:

Social Studies: A class discussion on how animal symbolism is used in politics, including the symbols for the political parties.

Social Studies: An investigation of how animal symbolism is important in Native American, Ancient Egyptian, Celtic societies and others.



Handout A

The Jungle Book Character Chart

Name _____

Name of animal character in <i>The Jungle Book</i>	What does this animal look like? Sound like?	How does the animal behave?	What word or words can be used that the animal symbolizes?