



Symbolism

Symbols are an inherent part of our lives and our culture. In literature, they are important in enhancing the author's message and making the writing more thought-provoking. The ability to recognize the meaning of symbols on a day-to-day basis is essential.

Kentucky English and Language Arts: Arts and Humanities
Reading (1.2) Arts and Humanities (2.24, 2.25) Grades 4-6
Academic Expectations:

- 1.2 Students make sense of the variety of materials they read.
- 2.24 Students have knowledge of major works of art, music, and literature and appreciate creativity and the contributions of the arts and humanities.

Ohio: Language Arts > Reading Applications > Literary Text Standard
Benchmark(s) Grade 4

- A. Compare and contrast plot across literary works.
- C. Recognize the defining characteristics and features of different types of literary forms and genre.

Grades 5-6

- E. Demonstrate comprehension by inferring themes, patterns and symbols.

Objective

Students will:

- Recognize symbols and interpret them in stories.

Assessment

Students will be able to:

- Identify the defining characteristics of stories, and their purpose in global cultures.

Sample selected response items to gauge student understanding:

1. Define "symbolic representation."

Answer: Something—word, image, sound or object, chosen to stand for or represent something else.

2. The following objects are used for symbolic representation. What is the meaning of each?
 - a. Horseshoe
 - b. Skull and crossbones
 - c. Dove

Answer: Horseshoe=good luck. Skull and crossbones=poison, danger, death of piracy. Dove= peace or love.

3. To create is to produce something of one's own thought and imagination. How does the use of symbols help in the creation of literature? Explain below

Answer: Individual student response. Emphasis on how symbols aid with making abstract concepts more concrete and universal.

Vocabulary

- Symbol
- Symbolic representation
- Symbolism

Material

- Literature related to the topic of symbols

Activity

Just a Plain, Old Symbol

Teacher will:

1. Introduce the concepts of "symbol" and "symbolic representation."
2. Illustrate the use of symbols in literature through reading aloud to students of a book about symbols (e.g., Signs and Symbols throughout the World by Elizabeth Helfman or The American Eagle: The Symbol of America by Jon Wilson).
3. Have students share their familiarity with symbols and those they know well. Students will also explain the meaning(s) associated with the symbol(s).
4. Have students reflect upon and share familiar symbols they recognized in The Children's Theatre of Cincinnati's production of *Noah's Ark*. Create a list on the board of the symbols and their meanings for whole class viewing (e.g., the playwright's use of thunder and loud booming sound to represent anger).
5. Explain to students the use of these techniques—e.g., thunder and loud music—as devices of "symbolism"—something used to represent something else.
6. Have students brainstorm and reflect on stories where symbolism, in the form of words or images, is utilized. Discuss how symbolism enhances the writing and storytelling.
7. Have students brainstorm and list ten common symbols and explain the meaning of each. Extend the activity through student classification of the symbols into groups--political, religious, patriotic, mathematical, cultural, and artistic.
8. Have students write an original story that incorporates the use of at least three of the symbols.
9. Facilitate student discussion for their opinion on possible decision-making criteria used by the playwright regarding specific selection of symbols and symbolic representation in the production of *Noah's Ark*.