

Symbolism Handout

Name _____

Date _____

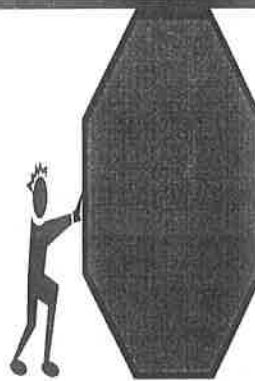
Period _____

Directions: Use the following images as examples of symbolism. In the box next to the image, write what each symbol **represents**. Don't tell me what the picture is. Rather, tell me what the picture **REPRESENTS!** Use adjectives (describing words) and nouns (person/place/ thing) to tell what it represents.

















Symbolism in Writing

In literature, symbolism is used to provide meaning to the writing beyond what is actually being described. The plot and action that take place in a story can be thought of as one level, while the symbolism of certain things in the writing act on another level to enhance the story.

Symbolism can take place by having the theme of a story represented on a physical level. A simple example might be the occurrence of a storm at a critical point, when there is conflict or high emotions. The storm might symbolize these. Similarly a transition from day to night, or spring to winter, could symbolize a move from goodness to evil, or hope to despair. A river in a scene could represent the flow of life, from birth to death. Flowers can symbolize youth or beauty.

Not everything in a story is necessarily symbolic. A garden landscape is just a garden ... until it is contrasted with a bustling city, at which point the garden could symbolize tranquility, peace, or escape.

Let's look at some actual examples of symbolism used in literature and other media, with which you might be familiar.

- In *Snow White*, the apple that the witch gives Snow White is a symbol of evil and deception. The apple has a biblical reference to when the devil, disguised as a serpent, tricks Eve into eating fruit from a forbidden tree.
- The movie series *Star Wars* has been described as symbolic of faith and religion in our world overcoming evil.
- In *Beauty and the Beast*, the rose symbolizes the fate of the beast. If he can break the spell and learn to love, he will return to a man. If he cannot, he will remain a beast forever. Since the Beast needs to learn to love by his 21st birthday, the petals are falling off the rose, symbolizing that his fate is soon to be determined.
- The song "I Hope You Dance" by Lee Ann Womack is full of symbolism. The song isn't really about dancing at all ... dancing is a symbol for getting the most out of life. When she sings "I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance", the mountains symbolize our fears about the future, or obstacles in life we must overcome.
- The **Harry Potter** books by J. K. Rowling could be seen as containing a lot of symbolism, although there are as many interpretations as there are creatures in the books! (The author isn't saying). One clear example is a commonly used one; the use of a snake to represent evil. It is no coincidence that the symbol of Slytherin House is a serpent.
- In the novel **Animal Farm**, the entire story is a symbol for the evils of communism, with the main animal characters representing key figures in the Russian revolution. The novel can be read entirely as a children's story, but when you come to realize what the various elements and characters in the story symbolize, the novel takes on a whole new meaning. That's why this particular work has become such a classic. This kind of story is called an *allegory*.

Name: _____

Interpreting Symbolism

<p>What I think is symbolic: Image, event, character, action, object, name, places</p>	<p>Quotes from the text. (Include the page number) Find two or three different quotes.</p>	<p>Associations I can make with the image, event, character, action, object, name, or place (SCHEMA)</p>	<p>What do the words in the text and the associations I make lead me to think about what the symbol represents/stands for/means?</p>
<p>FIRE</p>	<p>“ I want the audience to recognize you when you are in the arena. Katniss, the girl who was on fire” (67).</p> <p>“It’s not real flame of course, just a little synthetic fire Portia and I came up with” (67).</p> <p>“ I sit on the ground, a few yards away from the blaze set off by the fireball. My calf is screaming, my hands covered in red welts...’Katniss, the girl who was on fire’ What a good laugh the Gamemakers must be having over that one” (176-177).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangerous • Can be a single flame or full-fledged and out of control • It spreads fast • It destroys • Explosive • Bright • Hot • Inflicts pain 	<p>Fire, much like Katniss, is <u>bright</u> and <u>hot</u>, especially when she is wearing her outfits that are literally on fire.</p> <p>Fire is symbolic of Katniss because she is very <u>dangerous</u> to the Capitol because her anger and hatred is “<u>hot</u>.” Her rebellious spirit has <u>spread</u> into many of the districts, which could have the potential to <u>destroy</u> the Capitol.</p>

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<p>FLOWERS</p>			

<p>What I think is symbolic: Image, event, character, action, object, name, places</p>	<p>Quotes from the text. (Include the page number) Find two or three different quotes.</p>	<p>Associations I can make with the image, event, character, action, object, name, or place (SCHEMA)</p>	<p>What do the words in the text and the associations I make lead me to think about what the symbol represents/stands for/means?</p>
<p>MOCKINGJAY</p>			

<p>What I think is symbolic: Image, event, character, action, object, name, places</p>	<p>Quotes from the text. (Include the page number) Find two or three different quotes.</p>	<p>Associations I can make with the image, event, character, action, object, name, or place (SCHEMA)</p>	<p>What do the words in the text and the associations I make lead me to think about what the symbol represents/stands for/means?</p>
<p>BREAD</p>			

NAME _____

EXTENDED RESPONSE: In your response, include a claim about what your symbol is representing and cite several pieces of textual evidence to support your claim.

SAMPLE EXTENDED RESPONSE FOR FIRE:

In *The Hunger Games*, fire is a symbol of Katniss. In the text Cinna says to Katniss, “ I want the audience to recognize you when you are in the arena. Katniss, the girl who was on fire” (67). This statement directly connects fire to Katniss and vice-versa. A fire can begin as a single flame and spread quickly, and Katniss is the single flame that spreads and seeks to destroy the Capitol and all its power. Fire causes pain, as evidenced when Katniss’s calf is “screaming” and red welts are all over it. Since fire symbolizes Katniss, it implies that she has the ability to inflict pain and damage too, most likely upon the Capitol. Katniss is very “hot” about the whole concept of the hunger games, and her influence quickly spreads, much like a fire’s flames can quickly spread, to many other districts, sparking rebellion. This “girl on fire” seems to have the ability, much like a fire does, to destroy anything in its path, and Katniss has the potential to destroy a tradition that no one has ever been able to put an end to.

