

Symbolism



"In the spring I asked the daisies
If his words were true.
And the clever, clear-eyed daisies
Always knew."

In Sara Teasdale's "Wild Assters" spring and daisies symbolise youth. Brown fields and autumn symbolise advancing age and the approach of winter (death).

What is it?

Symbolism refers to when an **object, item, word, symbol** has a **deeper meaning** most often symbolising or representing something else (i.e. **ideas** or **qualities**). For example, the use of a dove in literature can symbolise the notion of peace or something else (e.g. *love* or *purity*).

Symbols are **even more powerful than words** because they represent **rich meanings**, ideas, emotions and events throughout history and within peoples' lives. They can also be **universal**, recognised by all cultures, or **local**, only recognisable to people within a particular group (i.e. the rose signifies love in Western culture)

Examples of symbols and their *possible* meanings within Western culture:

Symbol	Meaning	Symbol	Meaning
<i>broken heart</i>	emotional pain	<i>donkey</i>	obstinate
<i>apple</i>	temptation	<i>fox</i>	unreliable
<i>pitchfork</i>	hard work	<i>rat</i>	thief
<i>rainbow</i>	hope	<i>scale</i>	justice
<i>horse</i>	reliability	<i>eagle</i>	freedom
<i>Mars</i>	aggression, war	<i>Iron/steel</i>	strength, invulnerability
<i>White</i>	innocence/purity	<i>Black</i>	evil/death
<i>Ring (band of gold)</i>	faithfulness/fidelity	<i>Moon</i>	loneliness, unrequited love

Symbolism question card

Now that you have read the information card on **Symbolism**, it is time to practice what you have learnt.

- 1 Copy the following table and write each **symbol's** intended meaning.

Symbol	Meaning	Symbol	Meaning
<i>Snake</i>		<i>Chain</i>	
<i>Broken mirror</i>		<i>Forest</i>	
<i>Light</i>		<i>Sunflower</i>	

- 2 Read the following poem and write an interpretation of each of the following **symbols**: *Rose*, *worm*, *storm*, *night* and *bed*.

"The sick rose"
O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.