

Symbol and Symbolism

Review: A **symbol** is a person, place, object, or action that stands for something beyond itself. Symbols quickly communicate rich ideas. The use of symbols in literature or other art forms is called **symbolism**.

Directions: First, **read** the boxed fable. Use the reading to **write** an answer to each question.

One day a proud and mighty oak tree looked down upon a slender reed that swayed and bent in the wind.

“You poor, pathetic little thing,” the oak sneered. “Look at how you tremble and bow to every little breeze that comes along, while my mighty trunk never gives even the tiniest fraction of an inch, but remains strong and unbending no matter what comes along. It’s too bad you didn’t spring up under my sheltering arms, where you would be protected.”

The little reed spoke up modestly. “Thank you for your kind concern, oh mighty friend, but do not fear for me. I bend and sway, but I’ve survived many a terrible gale in my time. Take care for yourself, for you never know who will withstand the wind in the end.”

The next day, a terrible tornado came thrashing through the woods. The flexible little reed bent and swayed in the gale, but it did not break. Nearby, a thunderous crack resounded through the forest, as the rigid trunk of the oak tree snapped in two, and the mighty tree came crashing down to its death.

1. What details describe the reed?

2. What details describe the oak?

3. Why does the reed survive the tornado, while the oak is destroyed?

4. What lesson about life do you think the fates of the oak and the reed symbolize?
