

Symbolic Representation

Vocab activity #1

Vocabulary Collectors

symbolism (*noun*) — the use of *symbols* to represent ideas or qualities.

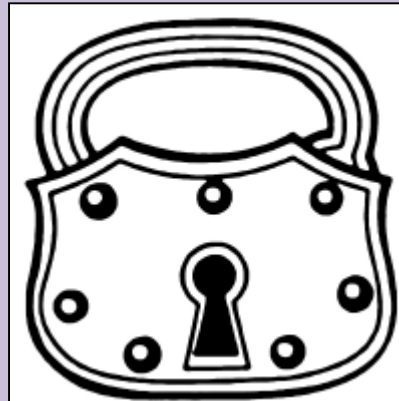
symbol (*noun*) — a thing that represents or stands for something else, esp. a material object representing something abstract.

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symbolism (noun) — the use of objects to represent ideas or qualities (often abstract).

What might these 4 material objects (touchable) represent that can't be physically touched? Click to start.



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We Wear the Mask

by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!

Poets use symbolism...as seen here.

From your own perspective, what does the mask here represent symbolically? How about the vile (unpleasant) clay beneath our feet?

Re-read the poem knowing this: Paul Laurence Dunbar was an African-American poet. This poem was published in 1896 at a point in history when equality was still very questionable. Thinking from his perspective, what do you think the mask symbolizes?



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Time to collect some vocabulary words!

guile (*noun*) — sly or crafty
intelligence; skillful trickery.

transitive verb form: (*to*) *beguile*

adjective form: *guiling* or *beguiling*

If you were to symbolically represent this abstract noun (guile *can't* be touched, after all) with a concrete noun (which *can* be touched, like a mask), what noun would you choose? Come up with three different ideas by talking with a partner.

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What do you think of my explanation?

guile (noun) — sly or crafty
intelligence; skillful trickery.

transitive verb form: (to) *beguile*

adjective form: *guiling* or *beguiling*

My Symbolic Representation:

I went with a magician's
hat for this word
because when tricks
beguile me, I frustrate
really easily. Magicians
are definitely sly and
crafty.



Image found at
<http://www.wpclipart.com>

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Let's try another vocabulary word!

myriad (*adjective*) — describing something countless or extremely great in number.

noun form: also *myriad*, as in *a myriad of stars in the sky*.

If you were to represent this abstract adjective/noun with something concrete, what would you choose? Come up with your most original idea (not *stars*!) by talking with a partner. Then create a smart two- or three-sentence explanation of your choice.

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Symbolic Representation Vocabulary Rubric:

4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
The representation does all of these:	The representation does three of these:	The representation does two of these:	The representation does one of these:
The symbol is original, not cliché.	The symbol is original, not cliché.	The symbol is original, not cliché.	The symbol is original, not cliché.
The description is at least 2 sentences that contain no spelling errors.	The description is at least 2 sentences that contain no spelling errors.	The description is at least 2 sentences that contain no spelling errors.	The description is at least 2 sentences that contain no spelling errors.
The description is very clear on the <i>why</i> behind the chosen symbol.	The description is very clear on the <i>why</i> behind the chosen symbol.	The description is very clear on the <i>why</i> behind the chosen symbol.	The description is very clear on the <i>why</i> behind the chosen symbol.
The representation is presented in a neat and colorful way.	The representation is presented in a neat and colorful way.	The representation is presented in a neat and colorful way.	The representation is presented in a neat and colorful way.

Click [here](#) for a printable version of this rubric for your students.

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Symbolic Representation Rubric:

4 points	3 points
The representation does all of these:	The representation does three of these:
• The symbol is original, not cliché. • The description is at least 2 sentences that contain no spelling errors. • The description is very clear on the <i>why</i> behind the chosen symbol. • The representation is presented in a neat and colorful way.	• The symbol is original, not cliché. • The description is at least 2 sentences that contain no spelling errors. • The description is very clear on the <i>why</i> behind the chosen symbol. • The representation is presented in a neat and colorful way.

Check out the following student samples.
Decide if they should earn a 3 or a 4:

Online Student Samples to Analyze:

[Sample #1 - Aidan](#)

[Sample #2 - Shea](#)

[Sample #3 - Lynn](#)

[Sample #4 - Matt](#)

[Sample #5 - Jolie](#)

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Symbolic Representation Success Criteria:

I will...

- include a well thought-out symbol to represent the word's meaning
- include a sentence(s) explaining why I have chose that symbol
- include a sentence(s) using the word that relates to the symbol I choose
- make sure I have included all the elements needed in a vocab writing task
- be neat and demonstrate effort in my task