# Symbolism; some definitions

Authors often use symbolism to communicate a deeper idea than they actually write. Symbolism can be used by an author or illustrator to open doors of meaning. They use objects, actions, colours and characters to give more meaning to the thing itself. In literature, characters can symbolize something of a deeper meaning. Symbolism helps readers connect the story to other ideas.

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Some Symbolic Colours

**Red** can mean; immoral, blood, passion, emotion, danger, or daring

**Black**  can mean; death, ignorance, or evil; black hens are used in witchcraft as are black cats

**White** can mean innocence, life, light, purity, or enlightenment

**Green** can mean inexperience, hope and new life, it is the colour of plant life

**Yellow** can mean rotting, heat, decay, violence, old age, and the approach of death

**Blue** can mean cool, calm, peaceful

**Pink** can mean innocence, femininity

**Purple** can mean royalty, bruising or pain

**Brown** can represent the color of earth and ploughed land and soil, it can mean humility and poverty

The Symbolism of the Seasons

Spring: birth, new beginning

Summer: maturity, knowledge

Autumn: decline, nearing death, growing old

Winter: death, sleep, hibernation, or stagnation

Christmas season: birth, change for the better

Easter season: rebirth, enlightenment

Light: truth, safety, warmth, knowledge

Darkness: evil, ignorance, danger

Some Symbolic Trees

Apple: temptation, loss of innocence

Chestnut: foresight

Oak: strength, wisdom

Pear: blossoming, fleeting nature of life

Poplar: linked to the underworld, to pain, sacrifice, and grief, a funeral tree, symbolizes the regressive powers of nature

Sycamore: a sign of vanity and to climb it is to thrust in vain things

Pine: symbol of immortality because of its evergreen foliage

Water : washes away guilt, origin of life, regeneration, vehicle of cleansing

River : fluidity of life, stream of life and death

Moon : changing and returning shape, feminine symbol

Sun : source of light, heat and life; a masculine symbol

Mountain : places where heaven and earth meet; stability, safety, often symbolic of human pride

Rubies : represents good fortune; it was believed that they banished sorrow and warded off evil spirits

Sapphires : contemplation, purity

Silver : relates to the moon, to water and the female principle; it may also symbolize the object of all desires and the harm they cause

Gold : the perfect metal; a reflection of heavenly light

Pearl : associated with water, they may be regarded as symbols of knowledge and wealth.

**Symbols associated with Directions**

East : land of birth or rebirth; it is associated with renewal, youth, feasting, song and love

North : is the side which lies on the sun’s right hand and lies on either side of life; it symbolizes night sky and night wind and is the home of the Moon and the MilkyWay. North represents coldness, alienation, and hostility; it is the abode of death

South : is the side which lies on the Sun’s left hand and is the hand of fire; represents warmth

West: land of evening, old age, descending passage of the sun

Symbolic Weather

Snow : blanket which obscures, covers or even smothers

Fog/Mist : prevents clear vision or thinking; represents isolation; mist is often the symbol of the indeterminate phase in development when shapes have yet to be defined; they are preludes to important revelations or prologues to manifestations

Rain : sadness or despair or new life

Wind and Storms : violent human emotions

Lightning : indicates the spark of life and the powers of fertilization; it can be either life-giving or death dealing, so it is a sign of power and strength

Morning : the time of God’s blessings; the beginning of when all is still uncorrupted; symbol of purity and promise

Rainbows : also intermediaries and pathways between Heaven and Earth; mostly are generally heralds of good and are linked with cycles of rebirth

Symbolic Animals

Dove : peace, purity, simplicity

Fox : slyness, cleverness

Raven : death, destruction; they often play prophetic roles or function as a conductor of the soul

Lion : power, pride

Peacock : pride, vanity

Serpent/Snake : temptation, evil

Mouse : shyness, meekness

Hawk : sharp, keen eyesight

Owl : wisdom, rational knowledge; messenger of death

Salmon : instinct; sacred wisdom

Cats : are often viewed as serpents of the underworld; they also symbolize cunning, forethought, and ingenuity

Lamb : serves as a manifestation of the power of Spring and renewal, sacrificial element, the children of God

Cuckoo : jealousy and parasitism, it lays eggs in the nests of other birds; laziness.

**Symbolism in buildings**

Walls; barriers between people, both physical and mental; a barrier that shuts out the world

Windows: open or closed can mean the difference between a prison or a pathway to freedom.