

**Title of Session:** Arts and Literacy - Literacy and Symbols

**Moderator:** BJ Berquist

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Room: ArtsSites Group

**BJB2:** we start all Tapped In discussions with introductions. Can you please tell me where you are located and what you teach?

**RaulRe:** My name is Raul, I am located at Kingsville, Texas, and i am currently a student at Texas A&M University at Kingsville.

**BJB2:** I teach communication in Pennsylvania

**SharenW:** I live in Vista, California. Teach in Mission Viejo. 6th grade English and Social Studies.

**BJB2:** what do you hope to teach, Raul?

**BJB2:** thanks, Sharen

**MaureenB:** Maureen I teach 4th grade in Putnam County NY

**RaulRe:** Music

**BJB2:** wonderful...do you know about the festival and the podcast contest, Raul?

**RaulRe:** I've heard about the festival, but not the podcast contest

**MaureenB:** I would love to know about the contest.

**BJB2:** remind me to tell you all at the end of the discussion

**MaureenB:** k

**RaulRe:** k

**SharenW:** I'm embarrassed, but what does . o 0 mean?

**MaureenB:** thinking

**BJB2:** those are thought bubbles like in a cartoon, Sharen ;-)

**BJB2** . o O ( we're deep thinkers in tapped In )

**RaulRe:** it's like the little clouds that appear when a cartoon character thinks

**JenniferAr:** My name is Jennifer and I am from South Texas and I am currently a pre-kinder aide and attending college

**BJB2:** to think start the line with /th followed by a thought

**BJB2:** so, are you all ready to rock and roll?!

**RaulRe . o O ( I'm thinking... )**

**BJB2:** the topic for this month's ArtsSites Arts and Literacy discussion is Literacy and Symbols

**BJB2:** any definitions of what a symbol is?

**SharenW:** an idea or an image that stands for much more

**BJB2:** good, Sharen.

**BJB2:** can anyone add anything to that?

**RaulRe:** a representation of something deep -all encompassed by a literal object?

**BJB2:** oh, you are good!

**BJB2:** this is the definition I got off the first page I'm going to show you: Symbol  
Something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention.  
Something visible representing something invisible. A symbol can be imbued with rich layers of meanings.

**SharenW:** cool! usually it's easier to understand the literal symbol than the figurative

**RaulRe:** true

**BJB2:** symbols are an important part of being able to communicate

**BJB2:** so what I'm going to do is show you some examples of a variety of symbols.

**CarlaAG:** k

**BJB2:** the first url I'm going to share is a mega site...

**BJB2:** you don't have to bookmark...all urls will be in your transcript and I'll give you a track at the end of the discussion

**SharenW:** Do I need to know what a mega site is, or just go there? :)

**BJB2:** just go there and spend about 3 minutes looking...

**BJB2:** then come back and we'll continue, ok?

**RaulRe:** ok

**BJB2:** <http://www.symbols.net/>

**RaulRe:** is there anything in specific that you want us to look at, BJB?

**BJB2:** take a couple minutes to scroll down the menu on the left side of the page

**BJB2** . o O ( that extensive menu is why I called it a mega site... )

**RaulRe:** wow...you weren't kidding

**CarlaAG:** yeah it's good

**BJB2:** but please keep in mind it's a .com site so some of the stuff is pretty commercial and may not be factually accurate

**JenniferAr:** interesting

**BJB2:** The next site is a bit more specific to art. Symbols have been important to artists from the very earliest times.

**RaulRe:** that's a lot of symbols

**BJB2:** <http://www.schoolsliaison.org.uk/aliens/access/signsSym/signsSym.htm>

**SharenW:** My first thought, given so MANY culturally specific symbols, is how easily the symbolism may be missed.

**JenniferAr:** symbols say a lot about people

**RaulRe:** is the color supposed to be the symbol?

**BJB2:** yes, color can be very symbolic

**CarlaAG:** that's cool

**BJB2** . o O ( what color do you wear when you mourn? )

**CathySc:** I wear black all of the time

**JenniferAr:** black

**BJB2:** color can also be very culturally specific

**SharenW:** Again, though, the symbolism of the color is culturally specific?

**BJB2:** some cultures wear white as a symbol of mourning

**RaulRe:** white can also be used to mourn though...

**RaulRe:** yeah

**BJB2** nods

**RaulRe:** I agree with Sharen

**JenniferAr:** wow I didn't know that

**CathySc:** my mom wears a floral print

**RaulRe:** purple also

**RaulRe:** but like dark purple

**SharenW:** grey?

**JenniferAr:** probably anything dark

**JenniferAr:** could mean mourning

**BJB2:** purple can be associated with royalty

**JenniferAr:** I agree

**RaulRe:** I agree as well..

**PatMu:** true

**CathySc:** that's right

**JenniferAr:** red can be associated with roses

**RaulRe:** red can also be associated with anger

**BJB2:** anyone seeing how this information about symbols can be of use to you in your classroom?

**SharenW:** red and purple can also be associated with crazy old ladies :) said fondly by an old lady

**JenniferAr:** and love because of the heart

**JenniferAr:** I like that one

**RaulRe:** and blood because of the heart

**CathySc:** I'm thinking about red and Santa's suit?

**BJB2:** yes, be very careful with color. A good book to read, even to middle school students, is My Many Colored Days by Dr. Seuss...

**JenniferAr:** good thinking

**SharenW:** Well in the use of art, the symbolism of color can be taught so students can use color to express themselves.

**BJB2:** it has a video with it that is perfect for your music stuff, Raul

**JenniferAr:** go read it Raul

**RaulRe:** a color scheme could be used in the classroom to give the student an idea of what you will be covering in class on that day...with the 4th of July coming up, you could use red, white, and blue around the room

**BJB2 .** o O ( the video is notes alive! )

**RaulRe:** oh..ok

**CathySc:** I use to read that to my Kind. Now I'm thinking it is a great kick-off for writing

**BJB2 .** o O ( if you teach inner city kids, be VERY careful with color because they can be associated with gangs )

**CathySc:** that's true. my kids won't wear red

**JenniferAr:** I have heard about that

**SharenW:** When I teach core novels, there are many examples of symbols in the books that I explain to students. It's also easy to find symbols in poetry.

**BJB2:** sounds like we need to move on to the next url...

**JenniferAr:** let's move

**SharenW:** Santa himself is a symbol, no?

**BJB2:** This is from the next page I'm going to show you...In the years just prior to the Civil War, the Underground Railroad helped thousands of escaping slaves find their freedom. Because these travelers needed to be invisible to authorities and informants, secrecy and signaling systems were critical to making this "railroad" function. Not surprisingly, many of these signals were carried using familiar cultural items: quilts and songs.

**CathySc:** Yes, you are right

**BJB2:**

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/share/ugrr/index.html?CFID=746017&CFTOKEN=69424248>

**BJB2** humms and taps her toes

**CathySc:** BJ, since I was late, I'm not sure if I'm suppose to open the url. I'm thinking yes but I don't want to get lost

**SharenW** hums, toes don't reach the floor today.

**BJB2:** yes, Cathy, hold down the ctrl key when you click on the url

**BJB2:** visit the site for a few minutes and then come back to the chat

**BJB2:** the topic for today's discussion is literacy and symbols

**SharenW:** I've looked around. Great lesson plan. Can't find what the actual geometric quilt patterns stand for. Is it there or is the symbolism lost today?

**SharenW:** I guess if it was secret, we don't know for sure.

**RaulRe:** I wonder what the quilts stood for.

**BJB2** nods to Sharen.

**BJB2:** just a sec and I'll get you the title of another quilt book that is very good...

**RaulRe:** I'd heard about spirituals that they used to sing

**RaulRe:** but not quilts.

**FadraH:** Sounds great! could be done with paper or actual stitching

**BJB2:** ShowWay by Jacqueline Woodson

**RaulRe:** yeah

**OmarR:** I believe that every quilt has a story behind it.

**SharenW:** I'm forgetting the bigger symbol: The railroad!

**CathySc:** Wow!! Great lesson plan and interesting story behind the quilt

**BJB2:** great book. Yes, Omar. That is kind of what those books all pretty much communicate

**JenniferAr:** most of them do

**BJB2:** Patricia Polanco has some great story quilt books...

**SharenW:** Off topic, but I always wanted to make a quilt...

**CarlaAG:** my mom makes quilts

**JenniferAr:** for children or upper grade levels

**RaulRe:** quilts are warm

**CarlaAG:** oh yeah

**BJB2:** and of course there's Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold

**CathySc:** our art teacher makes them with the classes and donates them. always beautiful to look at

**BJB2:** all levels can use the quilt topic...even adults

**SharenW:** Back to the railroad symbol, one of my 6th graders did a report on the underground railroad and thought it was a real train.

**BJB2:** . o O ( or especially adults? )

**CarlaAG:** that's cool

**BJB2:** better get moving or we'll not have time to share all the sites

**CathySc:** sounds good

**OmarR :** I guess every culture has some story behind the quilts that they made.

**BJB2:** The Magic of Signs and Patterns in North African Art

**JenniferAr:** I know we use one for our pre-k students but I cant recall the name of it

**BJB2:** [http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/nasp/hd\\_nasp.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/nasp/hd_nasp.htm)

**SharenW:** ooohh I wonder what the eye symbolizes

**BJB2:** might be a lot of things, Sharen...would make a good research topic or a journal prompt for your students

**OmarR :** that picture is very interesting

**CarlaAG:** yeah I like it

**JenniferAr:** very different

**CarlaAG:** yup

**BJB2:** good for teaching cultural diversity

**RaulRe:** very colourful

**SharenW:** I'm going to do more research on the evil eye and its symbolism. Cool.

**BJB2:** the next site is very fine arts specific

**CathySc:** so much to look at and ideas to come from the symbols

**BJB2:** [http://www.allentownartmuseum.org/teachers/teach\\_g5\\_signs.html](http://www.allentownartmuseum.org/teachers/teach_g5_signs.html)

**BJB2** agrees with Cathy

**FadraH:** yeay- fine arts specific!

**JenniferAr:** you really could get some great work from those pieces

**BJB2:** certainly makes me look at everything in a different way!

**BJB2:** here's one that you're all probably familiar with at least a little...



**BJB2:** <http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/>

**SharenW:** Looking at Allen Town Art Museum, no?

**OmarR :** art can be so easy to view but yet very complicated to understand

**BJB2:** just showed the next url, Sharen. Yes, the previous one was Allentown Art Museum

**BJB2** agrees with Omar.

**SharenW:** Ok, what are we looking at at lifeprint?

**JenniferAr:** I agree Omar

**BJB2:** lifeprint is American Sign Language

**BJB2 . o O** ( that specific site is a lesson on learning ASL )

**CathySc:** Like some poetry is lovely to read but complicated to find meaning

**CarlaAG:** me too

**JenniferAr:** that's a good site very interesting

**RaulRe:** yeah

**BJB2:** please don't forget that we ALL insert our own prior knowledge and experiences into anything we see

**OmarR :** never heard of sign language called lifeprint, interesting

**BJB2:** what we see and what our children see are very different

**CarlaAG:** true

**RaulRe:** true

**JenniferAr:** yeah really

**CathySc:** very true

**SharenW:** yep

**OmarR :** yeah

**SharenW** smiles It's nice to be in agreeable company!

**CathySc**: they sometimes hear what we say a little differently too

**BJB2**: Omar, the lifeprint site is just an online curriculum resource for learning ASL

**FadraH**: I love it when they see something more or differently than I do when looking at art!

**BJB2** grins...yes, about the hearing!

**BJB2** . o O ( we sound like our parents? )

**SharenW**: Fadra, yes, same with literature. I love just hearing what they think about it.

**OmarR** : thanks for the info BJ

**CathySc**: Yes, that is one of the beauties of teaching....what the kids bring to the table

**FadraH**: It's incredible and refreshing when they come up with insights you weren't sure they were capable of-

**BJB2**: but, that is the job of teachers...to provide prior knowledge and guide the learning experience

**JenniferAr**: so true

**SharenW**: Well put!

**CathySc**: I agree

**BJB2** . o O ( help children construct meaning...symbols are the building blocks from which they do that construction )

**CarlaAG**: me too

**SharenW**: This is fun. Best conference session ever!

**BJB2**: ok...next site...

**RaulRe**: ok

**SharenW**: k

**JenniferAr**: that was a good site

**CathySc:** ok

**BJB2:** our always popular discussion about religion ;-)

**OmarR :** ok, let's go

**BJB2:** <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/religion/rel3a/>

**RaulRe:** all of these symbols are so overwhelming

**BJB2** nods to Raul. I agree

**BJB2:** thank goodness for the transcripts so we can go back over our discussion

**RaulRe:** haha

**RaulRe:** all of these things kinda left me speechless

**SharenW:** who is the author of this site?

**RaulRe:** because there is so many things that one can think about

**JenniferAr:** great site

**BJB2:** not sure...it's from the UK

**SharenW:** By that, I mean is it public education or religious?

**FadraH:** great questions!!!

**BJB2:** I don't see why it can't be public ed

**FadraH:** The questions can be tweaked or used for almost any intro. on symbolism

**BJB2:** I think being aware of symbolism in different religions makes you more respectful of other faiths

**JenniferAr:** agree

**CathySc:** Oh, I like this. There's great meaning in symbols and how they help us remember events regardless of religion

**BJB2** smiles...perfect, Cathy

**CathySc:** I don't know why it can't be in public ed either.....(too many rules)

**SharenW:** I'm often surprised, again, at the lack of background knowledge. Many of my students do not have much religious training. Some do. I encourage them to share..

**OmarR :** I agree with Cathy, in some situations people don't discuss these topics due to their religion.

**SharenW:** I was just curious about "where" it comes from.

**JenniferAr:** that's why we need a little religion in schools

**CarlaAG:** I agree with Jennifer

**RaulRe:** it's ok to talk about religion, as long as you don't impose one on the student in a "student-teacher" environment

**OmarR :** I agree Carla, a least the children will have some type of direction

**BJB2:** Sharen, this is the home page: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/>

**CarlaAG:** yeah..

**CathySc:** I had a good group of girls studying Hebrew this year and they were wonderful about sharing history

**CarlaAG:** that's cool..

**JenniferAr:** cool

**CarlaAG:** some student don't really like to talk..

**JenniferAr:** and that's ok

**BJB2:** Our time is about up...if you have time and would like to stay, I'll continue.

**FadraH:** it would be great fun to compare/contrast diff. religions' symbols for similar ideas!

**RaulRe:** yes

**OmarR :** that's good, but did the other students have a problem with that

**CathySc:** It was very cool. Many of the others learned about tolerance and respect because of that little group. And no. No problems if anything respect and curiosity

**OmarR :** what grade level was that Cathy

**BJB2:** think about the Native Americans and their protests about symbols being used by sports teams...

**CathySc:** 6th grade

**SharenW:** I've enjoyed it! Are there other sites we didn't get to?

**OmarR :** that is fantastic

**JenniferAr:** that must have been a good discussion Cathy

**BJB2:** sometimes you can be very disrespectful to a culture and not mean to be just through ignorance

**FadraH:** Jaune Quick-to-See Smith- great example of Native Am. symbolism in modern society- she includes text, too

**JenniferAr:** agree

**SharenW:** San Diego State University and the Aztec warrior.

**BJB2:** I have 4 more sites to share

**BJB2:** up to you all

**JenniferAr:** smiles

**RaulRe:** maybe next time...

**OmarR :** yes

**JenniferAr:** it has been a great session

**SharenW:** Maybe you can host a part II another day?

**BJB2:** then come back to this room...

**BJB2:** and look under featured items: trackstar folder

**BJB2:** there is a track on Literacy and Symbols

**BJB2:** Raul, when your chat is attached, scroll down on the welcome note to This is the group room for ArtsSites

**BJB2:** click on the green i next to ArtsSites

**BJB2:** and join the group

**JenniferAr:** everyone have a great night, I have to go my son is playing in an all star game right now

**BJB2** waves bye to anyone who has to leave.

**BJB2:** <http://trackstar.4teachers.org/trackstar/ts/viewTrack.do?number=323294>

**BJB2** . o O ( that's the url for the track )

**SharenW:** Thank you BJ. You have taught me so much today.

**BJB2:** Glad you could join the discussion, Sharen

**BJB2:** This was an especially good group :-)

**FadraH:** have a good evening all, bye!

**OmarR :** I enjoyed the chat, it was my first time, thanks bj

**BJB2:** Glad you could join us, Omar.

**CathySc:** I was a little nervous about this but really feel the benefit. Thanks

**BJB2:** this group meets once a month [Ed. Note: first Monday of the month]

**BJB2:** come back to this room any time...lots of resources here for you