Symbolism

Symbols pop up in literature, often making the reader work on a higher level to make connections. Symbols are objects, colors, words, and actions that maintain their literal meaning while representing some larger concept.

I’d like to do a little exercise with symbolism. Take out a piece of notebook paper.

Use your imagination to take a short journey with me.

Imagine a character walking down a road—you create this character. It is important that you create a new character. *This is not you or a person you know*, but a character you’ve created in your mind. **Describe the road from the character’s point of view—**describe this road in fine detail. The type of road is completely up to you.

As your character walks down this road, they come upon a key lying off to the side of the road. **Describe the key in detail and tell what the character does when they come upon it.**

Next the character comes to a coin in the road. **Describe the coin and tell what the character does when he or she sees it.**

Next the character comes to a body of water. **Again, describe it and tell what the character does as he or she approaches it.**

Finally, the character comes to a fence. **Describe the fence in detail and tell what the character does when the reach the fence.**

DON’T PEEK PASSED THE LINE!!!

Now you’re going to interpret your character’s actions, almost as if you were interpreting a dream. It is important to remember that this trip was taken by a fictional character…not you. This is in no way indicative of you. Only your character.

Each station on the trip is meant to symbolize something different. Interpret what you’ve learned about your character based on the following symbols:

How the character sees the road is indicative of how the character feels about life in general. (Ex: A smooth road indicates a happy, easy life.)

The key and how it is perceived is meant to provide insight into the character's view of education. (Ex: A large, defined key indicates great value on education or possibly a hope to pursue higher education.)

The coin is an obvious symbol of wealth and property. (Ex: A coin of great value may symbolize higher wealth; a character ignoring the coin may symbolize that wealth is not of importance to him or her.)

The body of water is a symbol of love. (Ex: A small body may represent few true loving relationships in the character’s life. A character jumping in the body of water may indicate that character wants to embrace love.

The fence in the road is a symbol of death. (Ex: A rickety, old fence may symbolize your character dying at an old age. The character walking passed it without much notice may indicate the character does not worry about this.