



SYMBOL

A person, place, or thing that suggests meanings beyond its literal sense.

SYMBOL

- “An image that radiates meaning.”

--John Drury



- “A symbol is like a rock dropped into a pool: it sends out ripples in all directions, and the ripples are in motion.”

--John Ciardi

- A second look: “Ask Me” by William Stafford

SYMBOL

Identifying and interpreting symbols



- Invitation & Reward
- How symbolism enlarges meaning
- Universal vs. Particular
- Overdoing it (symbolitis)

- Specimen: *"The Road Not Taken"* by Robert Frost
- Specimen: *"Hands"* by Robinson Jeffers
- Specimen: *"Wild Geese"* by Mary Oliver

SYMBOL

Checklist: Symbolism



- Is the symbol a traditional one?
- If so, is it being used in the expected way? Or is the poet playing with its associations?
- What does the image seem to mean to the poem's speaker?
- What emotions are evoked by the image?
- If an image recurs in a poem, how does it change from one appearance to the next?
- Does the image radiate meaning beyond its literal sense? If not, it might not be intended as a symbol.