

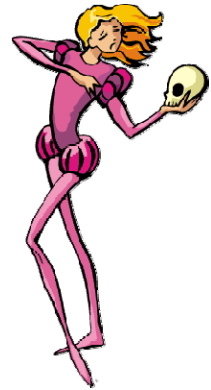
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## Symbolism

# Common Symbolism in Literature

A symbol is a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object that represents something abstract. Symbolism is a type of figurative language. Like a metaphor, a symbol is identified with something that is very different but shares some of the same qualities. When trying to determine whether or not something is a symbol, ask yourself: "Does this character, object, or event stand for something?"

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the passages below. Can you identify the symbols? What do they mean?



1. "All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
they have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,"  
(William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*)

**SYMBOL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MEANING:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SYMBOL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MEANING:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. To be, or not to be? That is the question—  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And, by opposing, end them?  
(William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

**SYMBOL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MEANING:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SYMBOL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MEANING:** \_\_\_\_\_