

Literary Theory of Symbolism

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Symbolism

the use of symbols or images to represent ideas, emotions, or qualities

How can the use of symbols help to provide a visual as well as create a multifaceted meaning within a story?

The literary device i will explore will be symbolism and how it is used in various ways to add depth or intrigue to a story. Symbolism is the use of symbols or images to represent ideas, emotions, or qualities. Throughout my journey as a reader, i have come across many different types of books. But they all have some form of symbolism that i appreciate because it adds to the mystery and makes the story more relatable. I think symbols can mean different things to different people and i love finding the hidden meanings in stories i have read. Therefore, my research question is, **How can the use of symbols help to provide a visual as well as create a multifaceted meaning within a story?**

Walk Two Moons

Sharon Creech

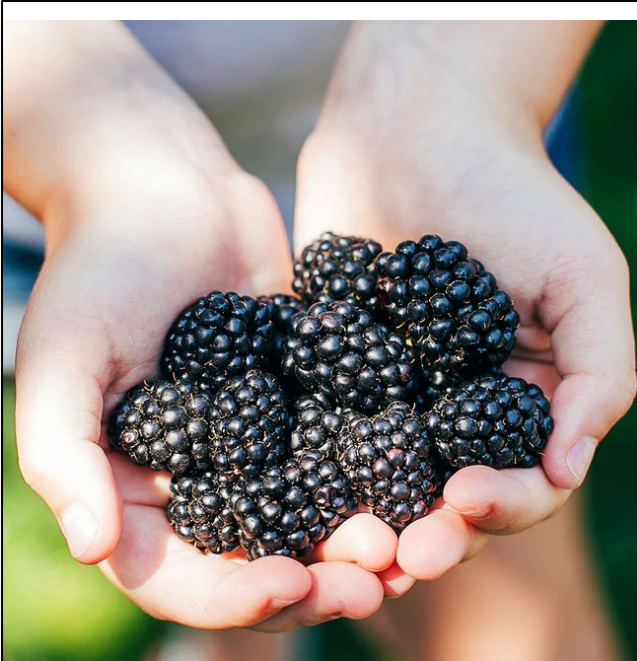
Blackberries
Trees
Secrets

Sal discovers the truth about her mother's death and goes to visit her grave on the road trip. There are flashbacks throughout that help tell the story of Sal's past. The story ends with Sal and her father returning to their home in Kentucky where she feels more at peace with everything she has discovered about herself and her family.

There are plenty of symbols that help tell the story and help the reader connect more to the characters. Specifically, I noticed blackberries and trees to be prominent symbols.

First,

This is a story i read when i was much younger and it has really stuck with me since. much because it was so different than other young adult novels I had read during middle school. This story is told from a young girl's point of view through stories of her past as the book progresses through her present life. Sal is taking a trip with her grandparents to visit her own mother while telling them the story of her friend Phoebe and her mother's disappearance. The two stories intertwine and turn out to have a lot of similarities since both mothers leave their families behind for reasons unknown. As Sal tells Phoebe's story, the truth about her own mother's story comes to light.



Blackberries

The story mentions blackberries multiple times throughout as a symbol for happiness in the main character's life. I loved the relationship Sal develops with her first crush, Ben and she describes their first kiss as tasting like blackberries. Towards the end of the book, Ben gives Sal a chicken and they name it Blackberry. Blackberries are something Sal connected with her mother on as well and they symbolize that connection.

N.d. (2022). [Kiowa Blackberry Bush] Fast Growing Trees.
<https://www.fast-growing-trees.com/products/kiowa-blackberry>

This symbol has so many different meanings and each reader might interpret the symbol of blackberries differently

The Paper Palace

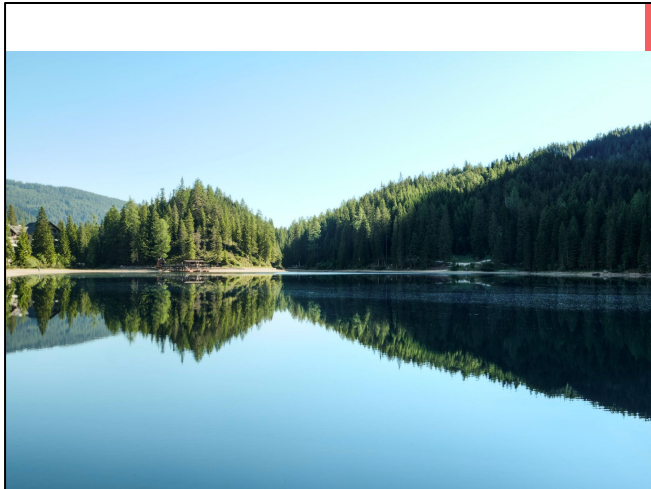
Miranda Cowley Heller

Water
Secrets

This is a story about a woman and her secrets that surround her family's lakehouse. Elle's grandfather named one cabin "the paper palace" which is in a way a symbol for her life. Elle feels like her present life is fragile because of what she has endured in her past, just as if it were made of paper. She hides things from her husband, Peter, but the biggest is that she still feels so strongly for Jonas, her childhood friend. She must make a decision on how to proceed with her life while visiting the paper palace as an adult.

There are a few symbols that define this book; water and secrets.

Next, I will review The Paper Palace, which is one of the most interesting books i have read that i might want tp read again someday. n



Grossgasteiger, E. (2017). Trees Near Body of Water. Pexels.
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/trees-near-body-of-water-518485/>

Water

One major symbol is water because it is a common theme throughout the book. Elle is swimming within the first few lines of the book and she grew up around water. The biggest plot twist occurs in water. Also, the final moments of the book discuss Elle going back into the water which could symbolize her deciding to go kill herself. It seems like a symbol for familiarity as well as unease.

This symbol helped to provide readers with a visual of where the paper palace actually was and it added to the mystery of the story.

Big Little Lies

Liane Moriarty

School
Secrets

This story is about a group of mothers and their children who all go to school together. They all have different backgrounds and secrets that they hide from one another which contribute to the mystery of the story. It takes place in Australia and mostly within the school. The story starts out by announcing that there has been a murder during the school's annual trivia night and the whole time the reader is trying to uncover who has been killed and why. Throughout the book, the different family's home dynamics are shown which leaves the reader to interpret who might have been involved with the murder.

The main symbols in this story are the school and the secrets within it.

The book Big Little Lies is more of a fun, yet dramatic story. >>

School

Everything that occurs in the story surrounds the school, from the children's antics to the parents' drama.

A school represents learning, progress, and success. The children learn and develop into individuals based on what they experience in the school which is not necessarily a positive thing. This also represents the secrets which occur within.



Hoover, K. (2018) Heathfield Primary School: Contemporary School Building with Red Brick Volume. Futurist Architecture.
<https://www.futuristarchitecture.com/42910-heathfield-primary-school-contemporary-school-building-with-red-brick-volume.html>

This symbol also gave a visual representation of where the main plot points take place. It also helps readers think of their own experiences with a school which might add to the symbolic nature of it within this story.

Fates and Furies

Lauren Groff

Marriage
Gender
Secrets

This story is about a marriage over the years told from two different perspectives that goes through various stages of love and grief. The structure of the story is symbolic in the way it is told from the husband's view (the fates) and the wife's view (the furies). The first part of the book tells the story of this marriage without exposing the full truth. The second part, as told through the wife's perspective makes you question everything you think you know about the couple.

The symbols I used to describe this story are wedding rings which symbolize marriage in general. Another symbol within the story is gender because of the idea of men being the fate and women being the fury of a relationship.

Fates and Furies was unlike anything i had read before, from the sentence structure to the content. It is ultimately a love story but told from two completely different perspectives. >>



Rings

The symbolism of wedding rings describes a commitment between two people in marriage. This commitment is tried dramatically throughout the book. The base of the story is the relationship between the two characters and how they define what marriage stands for.

N.d. (2021). [Holden Rings]. Insider Reviews.
<https://www.insider.com/guides/style/holden-wedding-rings-bands>

The symbols of rings, marriage, partnership, commitment can all be applied to this story because it really does mean different things to different people, depending on how you look at it. That is the whole theme of the story also, the idea that both people feel differently.

The Many Daughters of Afong Moy

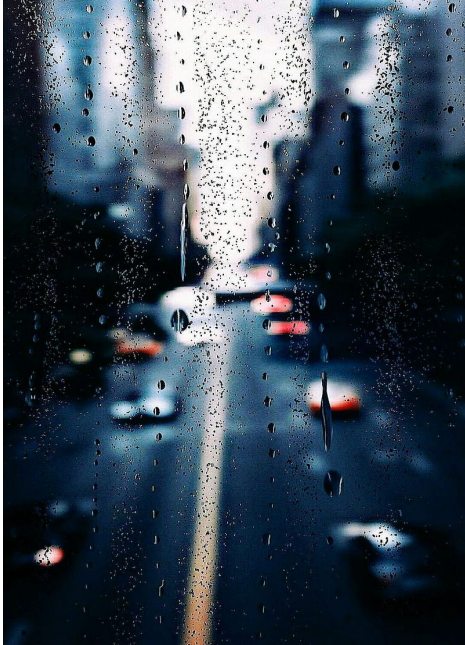
Jamie Ford

Rain
Connections
Trauma
Secrets

This book follows one woman in the future who is connected to all of these other women throughout history. Dorothy Moy starts having these dissociative episodes where she will remember events from the past but they are not necessarily her memories. Her daughter starts to display similar behavior and this leads Dorothy to undergo an experimental treatment which is designed to alleviate inherited trauma. Through this she is able to connect with ancestors from her past. It constantly goes back and forth between the various ancestors or 'daughters' going all the way back to the 1800s with Afong Moy's story; the first Chinese woman in America.

There are many symbols within this story, specifically the stormy weather that frequently occurs.

Next, i will look at the book, The Many Daughters of Afong Moy, which is a very complex story. >



(n.d). [Rain HD Phone Wallpaper]. Peakpx.
<https://www.peakpx.com/en/hd-wallpaper-desktop-kunqq>

Rain

Rainy weather is symbolic of the internal turmoil and struggle that Dorothy faces in the story. There are many typhoons or storms throughout the book. Each time it storms, she is going through more emotional distress which helps push her to seek help.

The symbol of rain helps give readers a visual of the stormy circumstances but also is a common symbol of change. Rain often means changes are coming and the characters in this story undergo many changes.

Macbeth

William Shakespeare

Blood
Visions
Weather
Secrets

The play Macbeth is essentially about a man who received a prophecy that he will be king of Scotland one day. Together, Macbeth and his wife do everything they can to ensure this happens, even when that means committing murder.

This play has many aspects of symbolism which help contribute to the story. These symbols specifically are blood, visions, and weather.

Finally, I recently reread Macbeth in class, which is something i had previously read in high school. This play has always stuck with me as a very modern story although it is from the 1600s. The plotting, secrets, and deceit are all common themes used in stories today, although Macbeth is far more bloody. >



(n.d.). [Blood Puddles] Special Effects Unlimited Hollywood.
Retrieved from
<https://www.specialeffectsunlimited.com/bloodpuddles/>

Blood

Blood symbolizes the guilt Macbeth and his wife feel over all of the events that take place with them being the cause. Specifically, Lady Macbeth claims she sees blood on her hands and starts to go crazy in Act 5, Scene 1. She is mainly responsible for Macbeth's murders because of her incessant pressure on him to achieve power. Therefore, her visions of blood on her hands are symbolic of her own guilt.

This symbol of blood makes readers feel uneasy and uncomfortable and adds to the darkness of the story.

Secrets

Each story ties together through their common symbol of secrets. This photo represents the secrets hidden in all of the stories and how they contribute to the symbolism throughout. Symbolism is significant to my reading journey because I tend to seek out books that have a common mysterious theme.



Tadder, T. (2020). Nothing To See. Forbes.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/amandalauren/2020/11/23/viral-photographer-tim-tadder-shares-the-secrets-to-buying-photography/?sh=4e4fbc4c2802>

The symbol of secrets is accounted for in each one of the stories i have reviewed. Each story all has an underlying secret which symbolises various things such as mystery, infidelity, trauma, abuse, or murder. While reading, each reader may interpret the symbols differently. But the secrets are all evident within each story, it just depends how the reader might feel while reading.

References

Hoover, K. (2018) Heathfield Primary School: Contemporary School Building with Red Brick Volume. Futurist Architecture. <https://www.futuristarchitecture.com/42910-heathfield-primary-school-contemporary-school-building-with-red-brick-volume.html>

(n.d). [Rain HD Phone Wallpaper]. Peakpx. <https://www.peakpx.com/en/hd-wallpaper-desktop-kunqq>

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(n.d.). [Blood Puddles] Special Effects Unlimited Hollywood. Retrieved from <https://www.specialeffectsunlimited.com/bloodpuddles/>

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Tadder, T. (2020). Nothing To See. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amandalauren/2020/11/23/viral-photographer-tim-tadder-shares-the-secrets-to-buying-photography/?sh=4e4fbc4c2802>