

PART 4

Sign and Symbol

LESSON 100 Signs and Symbols

GROUNDWORK

In this lesson we plan to:

- explore the place of sign and symbol in everyday life.

DIGGING DEEPER

What role do signs and symbols play in my life?



Key Concepts

Sign/Symbol/Communicating experience

Signs

A **sign** can be a word, a drawing or an action that provides information, for example, a road sign may tell us the direction we are travelling in and that the next town or our destination is a certain number of kilometres/miles away. Signs should be easy to recognise and their meaning should be obvious.

KNOW HOW

Draw signs to indicate:

- a narrow bridge ahead
- a one-way street
- a 'no smoking' zone



Now look again at your drawings.

Are they easy to recognise? Would a person be able to understand their message? Would you like to change or add anything to your signs to make them more understandable? Why are signs important?



Symbols

Symbols are more powerful than signs because they affect the way we feel. They touch us on many different levels and give us ways of expressing ourselves in more than just words. Symbols **communicate experience** where words are often not adequate. Unlike signs, which are easy to create, we don't usually just decide that something will be a symbol; it has to work for many people and draw a response from them because of the meaning it holds. Also, for a symbol to have any effect, its meaning must be understood. There would be little point in giving a red rose to someone you loved if they did not understand what it stood for.

When faced with strong symbols, we discover new meanings in life. They give us fresh energy and make us more sensitive to what matters in life. Through them, we are able to express deep experiences like love, joy, peace, faith and trust. For example, the dictionary defines a flower as 'the coloured (not green) part of a plant'. But that definition is far from the mind of someone buying flowers as a gift. When used as a symbol, a flower has a deeper meaning.

Signs or Symbols?

Identify whether each of the following pictures is a sign or a symbol. In your Religion folder, write out what it is that they signify or symbolise.



This spiral pattern is one of the oldest symbols in Irish history. It symbolises eternity because, if there was enough space to keep drawing, it could go on for ever.