

Cultural Symbols are Cool

Summary

Symbols are much more than just pictures.

Time Frame

1 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Large Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

Materials

A symbol drawn on the board before students enter the room.

A piece of florist's wire or a pipe cleaner for each student.

Background for Teachers

Students will need to have had previous experience with modern symbols. Students should be familiar with the expository writing mode.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to recognize pioneer symbols and create a personal symbol .

Instructional Procedures

As students enter the room, silently point to a drawing on the board. (You may want a figure sitting with his arms folded, for example.) Students should be able to recognize the symbol and do the action it tells them to do. After the bell rings, comment on the students' actions, and their success in following the instructions of the symbol.

Discuss how the students read or misread the symbol on the board. Help the students recognize that sometimes pictures are more than what they seem to be. Sometimes a picture represents an action, idea, emotion, or even a state.

Discuss the word 'symbol' and why it is sometimes more effective to use pictures rather than words. Show the students several modern symbols, and have them identify them. (Some ideas are a stop sign, a handicap parking sign, the golden arches, the treble clef, Santa claus, etc.)

Ask the students for several more examples that they can think of.

Hold up a symbol that represents Utah. (The beehive might be a good choice.) Ask the students if they know what it represents. Explain that we have several different and important symbols that represent aspects of Utah's pioneer heritage. (See State Symbols link below)

Divide students into groups. Give each group a state symbol and have them discuss why that symbol represents Utah. Have the groups select a spokesperson to share group findings with the class.

Give each student a piece of wire. Ask students to create a personal symbol by twisting and turning the wire into a unique shape or design. Their shapes should in some way represent them and their personalities.

Next, instruct students to write an expository paragraph explaining why their wire is a personal

symbol, and in what ways it represents them. Wires and paragraphs might be shared aloud or displayed in the classroom.

Extensions

Students may wish to leave paragraphs anonymous and allow classmates to guess which symbol represents which student. Students may enrich their learning by researching each Utah symbol and presenting their reports to the class.

If any students are originally from a state other than Utah or a country other than the United States, he or she could share symbols representing that culture.

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