**Reading Symbols**

After completing this activity you will be able to:

* State characteristics of an effective symbol

**Background**

*From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbol*

A symbol is an object that represents, stands for, or suggests an idea, visual image, belief, action, or material entity. Symbols take the form of words, sounds, gestures, or visual images and are used to convey ideas and beliefs. For example, a red octagon may be a symbol for "STOP". […]

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and signification as communicative behavior. Semiotics studies focus on the relationship of the signifier and the signified, also taking into account interpretation of visual cues, body language, sound, and other contextual clues. Semiotics is linked with both linguistics and psychology. Semioticians thus not only study what a symbol implies, but also how it got its meaning and how it functions to make meaning in society.

**Step 1: Form 10 teams (2-3 people each)**

My Team Number is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . You must have at least one person who has a device capable of taking photographs and emailing them to the professor.

**Step 2: Field Trip**

As a team, look around Alter and Speakman Halls (inside or outside) for a variety of symbols (8-10) and take a photo of each. For each symbol document the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Symbol | Context | Meaning |
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Return to the classroom promptly by the agreed upon time of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 3: Return and Discuss**

After reviewing your choices, pick the ones that best meet these criteria:

1. Which symbol is most context-specific? That is, the meaning of the symbol would change if it appeared in a different context.
2. Which symbol is most universal? That is, it is most likely to be understood (with similar meaning) by a wide variety of people, context, and situations.
3. Which symbol is most effective? That is, it a simple symbol yet conveys an unequivocal meaning.

**Step 4: Submit**

Once you have made your selections in Step 3, email your photo to the professor with a subject line of “Team XX – Photo #” where XX is your team number and # corresponds with the question #.

**Step 5: Discuss as a class.**

**Step 6: Answer individually**

1. What kinds of visual metaphors are the most effective? Which are least effective?

2. What is something you learned in this activity?

**Step 7: Rate this activity (individually)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ratings** | 1 Completely Disagree | 2 Somewhat Disagree | 3 Neutral | 4 Somewhat Agree | 5 Completely Agree |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statement** | Rating (1 to 5) |
| This is an engaging activity. |  |
| I learned a lot completing this activity. |  |
| This activity should be included in future classes. |  |
| Anything else you want the instructor to know? | |

**Step 7: Save this file with your first and last name in the title and email from your Temple to account upload.Unit\_2\_.i3k1dll2lf@u.box.com**