

"Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allen Poe: A really weird Prince thinks he can keep out death.

Lesson Idea - Discuss the Bubonic Plague and other plagues in history.

Lesson Idea - Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" contains numerous symbols. Here's a good teaching symbolism lesson plan:

- Symbolism allows people to communicate beyond the limits of language.
- Humans use symbolism all the time. Words themselves are mere symbols for something else.
- A **symbol** is a person, place, or object that stands for something beyond itself.
- National, religious, and cultural symbols have standard interpretations as well as a personal significance for each individual. For example, the American flag symbolizes the United States of America. The personal significance, however, varies. A U.S. army veteran cherishes its meaning. A terrorist, on the other hand, finds it despicable. A green piece of paper with George Washington's picture on it symbolizes one dollar. A billionaire considers it chump change. A beggar considers it an elusive treasure.
- A literary symbol gains its meaning from the context of a literary work and often changes as the work develops.

## **Strategies and Procedures for Teaching Symbolism in Literature**

1. Strategy: Look for references to concrete objects and analyze whether they could be symbols. Pay special attention to objects named in the title.
  - Procedure: Make a two-column chart. In the left column, write down the concrete object. In the right column, write what it may symbolize.
2. Strategy: Pay special attention to objects or places accompanied by a lengthy description, repetition, or special placement.
  - Procedure: Analyze the title. List objects mentioned more than once. List objects that appear at crucial moments.
3. Determine whether a place, object, or character is essential to the theme of a literary work.
4. Extension Activity: Write a literary symbol analysis. It should include the following:
  - A topic sentence that names the literary work and the symbol.
  - Possible interpretations for the symbol.
  - The symbol's effect on the work as a whole.
  - The author's purpose in using the symbol.