Symbolism

Compression device: each object/person/action is chosen for maximum effect

- Symbolism is the use of an object, character (name), action to convey a meaning that is figurative (idea)

Object = idea

(often a symbol helps to convey theme…)

1. Name symbolism: in literature, names are chosen carefully; often, a name is used as a label or to suggest something about the character. ex. Boo Radley When a character is not named, that is often significant as well. ex. “Identities”

2. Symbolic use of objects and actions: these types of symbols reinforce and add to the meaning of the story; in some cases, they carry the meaning

a) symbols must be established by and supported by the entire text; symbols nearly always signal their existence by emphasis, repetition, or position

b) to be called a symbol, an item must suggest a meaning different IN KIND from its literal meaning, but that meaning must be evident in the story

c) a symbol may have more than one meaning: ex. ladder/last rung – their childhood relationship, trust, crisis, despair

3. Archetypal symbols – universally known, part of our “collective unconsciousness” (Jung)

ex. rain – cleansing; winter – death; spring – rebirth; white – purity; red – blood/love

4. Common symbols

ex. cross – Christianity; dove – peace