

# Language of Film: Symbolism

**An excerpt from Frank Baker's "To Kill A Mockingbird" film study guide:**

"When we read with our students, we often point out all of the relevant and important symbols in a story or a novel...We assume that students cannot pick up on a symbol on the first read-through, and that may be true, since for a symbol to be truly a symbol, it must be repeated throughout a work, though students may have difficulty picking out symbols because they do not understand the purpose or the function of symbols...so we need to help students see how artists use various techniques to get the audience to recognize that something is, in fact, a symbol." (Source: Reading in The Dark-Using Film As A Tool In The English Classroom, pp. 82)

## **Symbolism/Meaning**

"After we have isolated a symbol, we must interpret it, that is, match the symbol with a meaning that has been previously learned. For example, we memorize the definitions of words and the conventions of grammar and expression to be able to read. From our experience listening to radio, we know that certain sounds signal the lead-in to news, certain voices convey humor or seriousness, certain sounds convey danger or silliness. With television or film, we learn the meaning of flashback, an extreme close-up on a character's face, character stereotypes, and what to expect in the unfolding sequence of a detective show. We have learned to connect certain symbols with certain meanings."

(Source: Media Literacy (2nd Ed.) , pp. 42)

## **Recommended Resources:**

- Analysis of Symbolism in Films
- 11 Classic Films With Amazing Symbolism You Didn't Notice

- Film Theory: Image Systems and Symbolism
- Symbolism in Film (Pinterest)
- Symbolism of Objects in Cinema
- To Kill A Mockingbird, Symbolism

