

7th grade Literary Text

Symbolism in Literature

Symbolism in literature is anything that stands for something other than its literal meaning. For example, the dove often symbolizes peace. Here are a few other examples:

Other Symbols

- Shamrock – good luck



- Fist – anger, unity, strength



- Dove – peace, goodness



- Flag – patriotism, USA, liberty



Below is a poem named “Heart to Heart” by Rita Dove. After you finish reading the poem, explain what the symbol “heart” might represent. Be sure to include the reason why you think that.

It's neither red
nor sweet.
It doesn't melt
or turn over,

break or harden,
so it can't feel
pain,
yearning,
regret.

It doesn't have
a tip to spin on,
it isn't even
shapely—
just a thick clutch

of muscle,
lopsided,
mute. Still,
I feel it inside
its cage sounding

a dull tattoo:
I want, I want—
but I can't open it:
there's no key.
I can't wear it

on my sleeve,

or tell you from
the bottom of it
how I feel. Here,
it's all yours, now —

but you'll have
to take me,
too.

What does a heart symbolize in this poem? What is the significance of the title of the poem?