

A Glossary of Traditional Symbols in Western Literature

Subject	Image	Possible Areas of Significance
Yearly Cycle	Spring	Birth, youth, fertility, rejuvenation
	Summer	Maturity, vigor, accomplishment
	Autumn	Fruition, fulfillment, aging, preparation for death
	Winter	Death, emptiness
Daily Cycle	Dawn	Birth, enlightenment, deliverance from fear, new beginning
	Morning	Youth, optimism
	Afternoon	Maturity, vigor, accomplishment
	Sunset	Death, moral glory
	Twilight	Death, departure, mystery
	Night	Death, the unknown, frightening, desolate, erotic
Direction	Up	Toward spiritual, intellectual, heaven
	Down	Toward material, carnal, hell
	East	Toward one's origin, beginnings
	South	Toward sensuality, freedom from restraint, lush antiquity
	West	Toward death, adventure, Manifest Destiny, expansion
	North	Toward wilderness, purity, moral repressiveness
Colors	White	Purity, innocence, spirituality, holiness, peace, hope, wisdom
	Black	Sorrow, evil, death, depression, judgment, evaluation, law, loneliness
	Gray	Mediocrity, sickness, industrialization, aging
	Red	Sexual passion, anger, healthy spontaneity, energy, life, blood, love, anger, bravery, strength, excitement
	Green	Youth, vigor, the natural, harmony, balance, growth, nature, gentleness, reliability, calmness, rebirth, jealousy, envy
	Yellow	Sickness, weakness, decay, fear
	Purple	Royalty, riches, spirituality, magic, inner-awareness, reformation, purification, trust, faith
	Blue	Coolness, calmness, idealism, truth, self-reliance, integrity, nobility, intellect
	Orange	Physical vitality, pride, enthusiasm, ambition, mentality, endurance
	Brown	Tradition, organization, solidarity, conventional ideas, earth, country, reliability
Celestial Bodies	Sun	Reason, enlightenment, success, elemental energy, life
	Moon	Mystery, the imagination
	Stars	The immutable laws of the universe
	Comets and Meteors	Unnaturalness, portents of disaster

Weather	Wind	The power of Nature, inspiration, power
	Storm clouds	The hostility of Nature
	Rain	Transformation, restoration, baptism, cleansing, gloom, promise/covenant, fertility
	Snow	Cessation of life, transformation, purity
	Fog	Uncertainty, mystery, obscurity
	Sky	Freedom
	Water	Quenching of thirst, death by drowning, purification, baptism
	Ice	Rigidity, death, compulsive symmetry
	Light	Reason, knowledge

Topography	Earth	Source of life, gross materiality
	Ocean	The ungovernable, the infinite, the unfathomable
	Forest	Natural chaos, freedom, spontaneity
	Mountain	Obstacle, mystical illumination, purity
	Desert	Sterility, impotence
	Running water	Life, purity, fertility
	River	Journey, fertility, voyage
	Cave	Lust, history, protection, ignorance
	Cliff	Crucial situation, inaccessibility
	Spring	Mysterious source of energy or inspiration

Animal Life	Quadrupeds	Spontaneous animalism
	Reptiles	Deceit, horror
	Horse	Masculinity
	Bull	Masculinity, violence
	Bee	Industriousness, conscientiousness, citizenship
	Ant	Industriousness, anonymity
	Grasshopper, cricket	Carefree improvidence
	Wild bird	Freedom
	Caged bird	Unjust imprisonment, violation of nature
	Rat, mouse	Secretiveness
	Lion, tiger	Predators
	Spider	Predators, calculation, artistry

Human's Environment and Tools	Home, house	A family, an inhabitant, a mother's body
	City, town	Rationality, order, restraint, anonymity, human fulfillment
	Road	The course of human life, journey, decisions,
	Hearth	Security, hospitality, warmth, family
	Knife	Violence
	Candle	Illumination, the "fire of life," passion, brevity
	Ship	Vehicle for transformation
	Theatrical stage	The human condition, men's "role playing," actors on the stage as a metaphor for life.