

MEANING IS IN PEOPLE



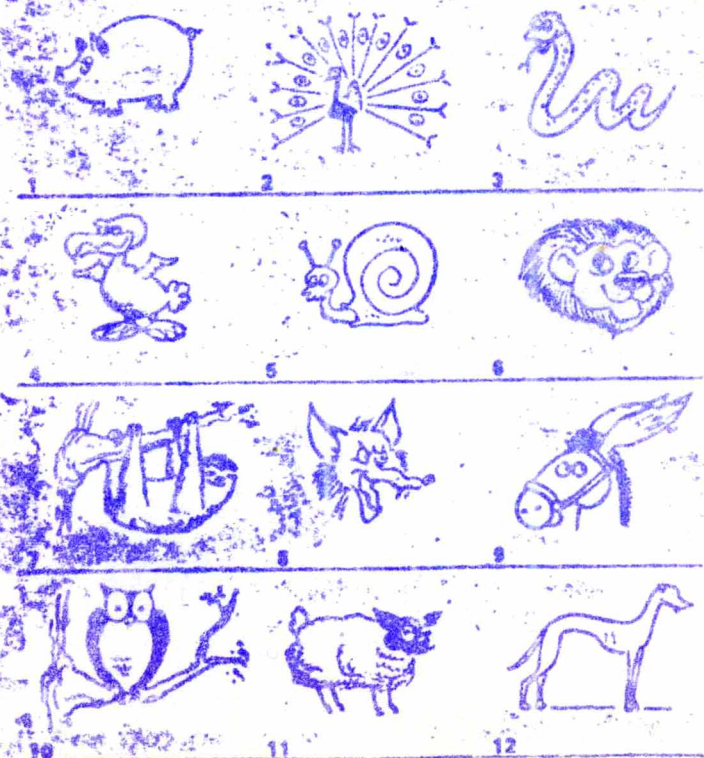
MEANING is not "in" symbols. The meaning of symbols is in people, and whatever meaning symbols have is assigned by people. The "right" meaning of a symbol is the one we agree on.

For example, the row at the top of this page simply shows two straight lines arranged in different patterns. But as you can see, these different arrangements can have a number of symbolic meanings—meanings that we as humans have assigned to them.

AS HAPPY AS A CLAM

Certain things are often chosen as symbols because they have qualities that stand out. Certain animals, for instance, make good symbols. Write on the line what each animal symbolizes. Select your ideas from the following list. (Answers on p. 31)

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| GREED | LAZINESS |
| EVIL | MEEKNESS |
| STUPIDITY | SLOWNESS |
| SWIFTNES | CLEVERNESS |
| COURAGE | PRIDE |
| STUBBORNNESS | WISDOM |



"Dad, why did you sign my report card with an 'X' instead of your name?"

"I didn't want your teacher to think that anyone with your marks has parents who can read or write."

A PRICELESS SYMBOL

A piece of cloth of a certain shape, design, and color becomes accepted by a national group as a flag—a symbol for that nationality. A bit of metal of a certain shape becomes a symbol for membership in a police force or fire department. A particular animal becomes a symbol of an athletic team.

None of these—a flag, a badge, an animal—is especially important in itself. The cloth may be tattered and faded. The picture of the animal may be crude. The badge may be of common metal. The value or meaning is not inside the symbol. The value grows from our attitudes toward what the symbol stands for.

The Stars and Stripes has a deep meaning for Americans because it is a symbol of the things we believe in—freedom, the Bill of Rights, our democracy itself. The value of this symbol is even expressed in our laws:

Desecration of the Flag Now Is Federal Offense

WASHINGTON (UPI)—The President today signed a bill making it a federal offense for demonstrators to burn or desecrate the American flag.

The President acted more than a year after a series of incidents that saw Vietnam war protesters burn, trample and spit upon the flag.

An angry House passed the bill in a tide of patriotic debate, and the Senate finally approved it last month.

The bill states, "Whoever knowingly casts contempt upon any flag of the United States by publicly mutilating, defacing, defiling, burning, or trampling upon it shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both."

The measure also covers a picture or a representation of a flag. It does not prohibit speech or protest, does not cover "accidental or inadvertent" desecration, and does not prevent burning old and worn flags to dispose of them.

Supporters of the law argued that the flag was a priceless symbol deserving protection as the property of all the people.