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Language



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sym·bol  (sĭm bəl)

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n.

1.

a. Something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object used to represent something invisible: *The lamb is a symbol of innocence.*

b. An instance that typifies a broader pattern or situation: *His striking out to end the rally was a symbol of everything that had gone wrong with the team over the past month.*

2. A printed or written sign used to represent an operation, element, quantity, quality, or relation, as in mathematics or music.

3. Psychology An object or image that an individual unconsciously uses to represent repressed thoughts, feelings, or impulses: *a phallic symbol.*

[Middle English *symbole*, creed, from Old French, from Latin *symbolum*, token, mark, from Greek *sumbolon*, token for identification (by comparison with a counterpart) : *sun-*, *syn-* + *ballein*, to throw; see **g^wela-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

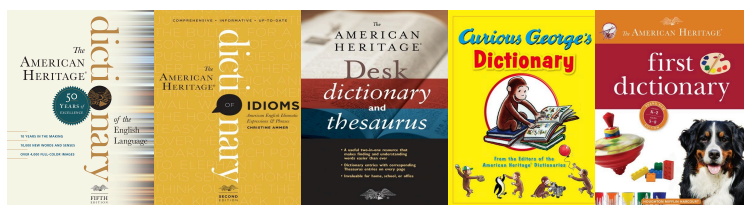
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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