



GRAPHIC DESIGN – Semiotics, Symbol, Icon

Students explore semiotics (the study of signs) and use coloured pencils to design a poster that communicates a message without words.

Required Time

75 Minutes

Grade Level

Grade 7 to Grade 10

Subject

Language Arts
Visual Arts
Media Literacy

Vocabulary

colour
graphic design
icon
semiotics
shape
sign
symbol

Materials

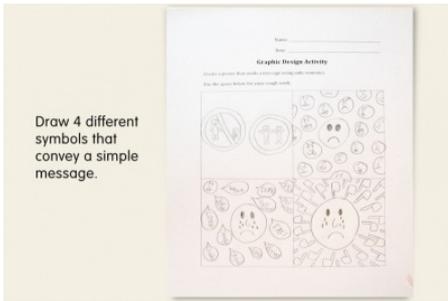
Crayola Coloured Pencils - 24 Count

Crayola Fine Line Markers - 12 Count

Photocopied Handout (Downloads)

Shop Crayola
Products

Steps



Step One

1. Use the provided worksheet to research and draw four different symbols that convey a simple message. (Downloads - GRAPHIC_worksheet.pdf)



Step Two

1. Pick your most effective rough sketch to expand on for your final drawing.
 2. Use the provided worksheet to draw your final copy.
 3. Make sure your colour choice helps to convey your message.
 4. Remember to keep your semiotic design simple and easy to understand.
-

Learning Goals

Student will be able to:

- describe 3 characteristics of graphic design;
- explain how symbols are used to communicate a message;
- identify 4 guidelines used by graphic designers;
- design a poster that uses simple symbols to convey a message without words;
- demonstrate technical accomplishment and creativity.

Extensions

Have students:

- find an image of a movie poster or other advertisement to analyse;
- answer the following questions about the image:
 - *What is the technique used to attract my attention?*
 - *How is symbolism used?*
 - *What kinds of emotional appeals are used?*
 - *What else could it symbolize?*
 - *How might different people understand this message differently?*
 - *What does this advertisement want me to do?*
- share their work in small groups;
- compare their analyses and interpretations.

Prepare

1. Prior to the lesson introduce or review the idea of symbols and icons and have your students collect five symbols or logos that interest them.
2. Download and display the *Principles of Design poster* available on this website.
3. Review the principles and elements of design. You may want to use the lesson plans available on this website.
Elements of Design
Principles of Design
4. Have students explore the school environment in and out of the classroom for common symbols used around the world.
5. Download graphic design posters from the Internet, for example,
Best Poster
Japanese Poster
Russian Poster
Haida Poster
Egon Schiele
NASA
MTA Poster
Design
6. Download and photocopy the 'Graphic Design Worksheet' enough for each student to have one. (Downloads - Graphic_worksheet.pdf)

Introduction

1. Ask students to form small groups in order to discuss the symbol/ logo examples that they brought in.
2. Ask students to record their findings while discussing the following questions.
 - *Is the symbol/ logo recognized around the world?*
 - *How do the colours affect the meaning of the symbol/ logo?*
 - *How are the elements and principles of design used?*
 - *Is the symbol/ logo effective? What do you see that makes you say that?*
 - *What does the symbol mean?*
3. Ask each group to share one or more group examples.
4. Give students 3 seconds to draw the following:
 - house
 - tree
 - apple
 - girl
 - love
5. Share examples of the student drawings and compare them. Point out that the images are of specific things, but they have additional hidden or deeper meanings as well. Discuss possible hidden meanings for the various words/images.
6. Draw attention to how many people used a similar symbol to express the emotion of love.
7. Have students consider the heart.
 - list words and ideas associated with a heart
 - sort the words into 2 categories, literal meaning and hidden or deeper meaning, for example, muscle, blood, beat
 - love, romance, passion
 - literal meaning is called Denotative
 - hidden or deeper meaning is called Connotative
8. Explain that semiotics is *the study of signs and symbols as elements of communication*.

- Signs and symbols help designers convey unique messages and are one of the most effective tools used in communication. Point out that we 'read' symbols everywhere without even realizing it. For example, we respond to the red octagon symbol for 'stop' even if the words are not there. Red and the shape are universal symbols telling us to stop no matter what country we are in.
 - Symbols have a literal meaning and a hidden meaning. Designers tap into the hidden meaning to get a message across.
 - Culture, age, gender and life experience of the intended audience are factors designers take into consideration when choosing visual symbols to communicate a message.
9. View some of the poster images to introduce and discuss the meaning of graphic design.
 - a method of visual communication that is created on behalf of a paying client with specific needs
 - it has clearly defined goals and measurable results
 - it can be used to persuade and influence public opinion
 - it can be used to instruct people
 - when properly executed graphic design identifies, informs, instructs, interprets and even persuades viewers to do something
 10. While viewing the images ask the following questions:
 - What is the technique used to attract your attention?
 - How is symbolism used?
 - What kinds of emotional appeals are used?
 - What else could it symbolize?
 - How might different people understand this message differently?
 - What does this poster want you to do?
 11. Introduce 4 guidelines used by designers. AIDA
 - ATTENTION - effective design must grab the viewer's attention amongst millions of competing images
 - INTEREST - effective design must create an interest in viewers to want to know more about its message
 - DESIRE - effective design must produce the desire within the viewer to go ahead and learn more
 - ACTION - effective design must compel the viewer to take action, for example, buy the product, donate time or money, make a change
 12. Introduce the challenge.

Activities

The Challenge

1. Describe 3 characteristics of graphic design.
2. Explain how symbols are used to communicate a message.
3. Identify 4 guidelines used by graphic designers.
4. Design a poster that uses simple symbols to convey a message without words.
5. Demonstrate technical accomplishment and creativity.

The Process

1. Ensure that everyone understands the challenge.
2. Establish success criteria for the poster with your students. For example,
 - recognizable symbol is created
 - design is thought-provoking and intelligent
 - colour choices help communicate the message
 - message is easy to understand
 - message is simplified through a symbol
 - design uses 2 different factors, e.g., culture, age, life experience, that are appropriate for the intended audience
 - paper in good condition
3. Guide the students through the steps outlined in this lesson plan.
4. Observe the students as they work.
5. Provide individual assistance and encouragement.

Sharing

1. Once the drawings are complete ask the students to share them in small groups.
 - Ask them to:
 - Look closely to determine whether they fit the requirements of graphic design and semiotics.
 - Share thoughts and opinions about what works and what can be improved.
 - Talk about how shape and colour contribute to the overall effectiveness of the image.
 - Talk about what is being communicated through the symbol
2. Ask some of the students to share their ideas with the whole class.
3. Display the images in and around the classroom and school so students can view them as a body of work throughout the next few weeks.

Assessment

1. Observe students as they work - attention to detail, transfer of knowledge from lesson to activity, collaboration with classmates.
2. Observe students as they discuss their work - active listening, insightful contributions, supporting ideas with evidence found in the work and from personal experience.
3. Use checklist to track progress. (Downloads - Graphic_tracking.pdf)

4. Have students use the self-assessment form to evaluate their work. (Downloads - Graphic_self-assessment.pdf)
5. Have students write a 250 word reflection report. (Downloads - Graphic_report.pdf)