

Sample Lesson Plan for Teaching Elements of Syllabus Section E THE CELEBRATION OF FAITH
Part 4: SIGN AND SYMBOL

Syllabus Aim	To identify how communities of faith express their day- to – day concerns in various forms of ritual
Syllabus Objectives	As a result of studying this section, the students should: 1. be aware of the place of sign and symbol in human life and in religious traditions
Key Concepts	sign, symbol, icon, communicating experience.
Description of Content	1. Identifying the elements of sign in everyday life 2. Identifying the elements of symbol and the presence of symbol in everyday life 3. The purpose of symbols in human and religious life 4. Encountering some religious symbols and their meaning
Methodology	A variety of methodologies are used including simulation game, interpretation of data, research, discussion, concept formation and case study. These methodologies were used so as to give students an opportunity to identify, explore and clarify the concepts and to structure and elaborate on their existing knowledge and understanding of the content.

Procedure

Introduction – sign

Simulation Game – Charades: The purpose of this activity is to provide students with the concrete experience of trying, on one hand, to communicate through the use of signs, and on the other to interpret the signs that are used. Give 3 titles of a popular film, T.V. programme or book. Establish signs to indicate whether the title is of a book, film or T.V. programme. Ask for a volunteer to mime the title. As it is being mimed give students time to identify what is being mimed. The first to identify the title wins.

Discuss: Did you find it easy or difficult to interpret what was being mimed?
What sign did you find easiest to interpret? Why?
What other signs could have been used?

Or ask students to identify how they could communicate the following in sign: “Come here”; “Silence”; “Yes”; “No” etc. Take feedback from the students and conclude that signs communicate meaning.

Identifying the elements of sign in everyday life

Brainstorm students on: What is a sign? Why are signs important?

Take feedback and explain that a sign can be a word, a drawing, an object or an action, which communicates a piece of information. A sign conveys a simple, agreed message or meaning. We experience signs everyday. When people see a sign and recognise it’s meaning they can decide whether to act on the information the sign has given or not. e.g A sign for a restaurant can be ignored, either because we are not hungry or because we do not want to eat in that restaurant, where as there can be disastrous consequences if we ignore a stop sign.

Present students with examples of signs in everyday life e.g. stop; yield right of way; no smoking etc.

Discuss: What does each sign communicate?
What happens if the sign is ignored?

Written Assignment:

A sign usually conveys one simple, agreed message or meaning - Give two examples of signs in everyday life and write a sentence explaining how each conveys one simple, agreed message or meaning.

Take feedback and conclude by identifying from the examples given how a sign can be a word, a drawing, an object or an action, which communicates a piece of information. A sign usually conveys a simple, agreed message or meaning.

Identifying the elements of symbol and the presence of symbol in everyday life

Ask each student to bring in *or* draw an object which holds a special meaning for them such as a book, a seashell, a ring, a medal etc. and write what that object means for them.

- Record student answers on the board or overhead.
- Ask students to write one sentence explaining the meaning that object holds for him or her.
- Students report their answers to the class.

Take feedback and record student answers on the board or overhead e.g.

Objects: *Book Ring Medal Red Rose Birthday card*
Meaning:

Discuss: What is there about the object that gives it the ability to express this meaning?
Which objects have more than one meaning?
Why do people use symbols?

Written Assignment:

Choose one object and describe how it could have different meaning for different people?
Identify an action or gesture that could communicate the same meaning.

Take feedback

Or

Brainstorm students on: What is a symbol? Why are symbol important?

Take feedback and explain that a symbol is an object, gesture or action that helps people express something abstract such as feelings or ideas that are difficult to put into words - a handshake, a rose, a wink may help people to communicate feelings or ideas such as friendship, love, sympathy, understanding etc. Symbols have the power to produce a reaction in a person. A symbol can have more than one meaning. For people living in countries affected by drought, water is a symbol of life. On the other hand, for people living in countries where there is flooding, water is a symbol of destruction.

Present students with examples of symbols and ask them to identify its meaning e.g. Handshake; Stars and Stripes; Wedding Ring; Santa Claus; Water; Praying Hands; Horseshoe; Harp / Shamrock.

Take feedback from students and discuss: How is a symbol different from a sign?
Why do people use symbols?

How could one symbol convey a different meaning for different people?

Present students with the following situation:

A baby is taken very ill. He has to be moved to hospital. All day long in school his brother finds it difficult to concentrate on what's going on. "Will he be all right?" he worries. "The doctor said it was really serious". As soon as school is finished he jumps on his bicycle and cycles as fast as he can through the town to the hospital. As he parks his bike against the railing, his father walks through the door with a big smile on his face.

Discuss: What do you think the father's smile means?
What effect would it have in this situation?
How is the smile an example of a symbol?

Take feedback and conclude by identifying from the examples given how a symbols is an object, gesture or action that helps people express something abstract such as feelings or ideas that are difficult to put into words. While a sign usually has only one meaning, a symbol can have more than one meaning. Symbols have the power to produce a reaction in a person.

Written Assignment:

If water is a symbol of life because it is necessary for plants to grow

Complete the following sentence:

..... is a symbol of
because it

The purpose of symbols in human and religious life

Read IN MEMORIAM from Love One Another, Veritas, page 47 & 48.

Discuss:

1. Why did Mrs Farrell look for the child?
2. Why is the bulky prayer book special for the dying woman?
3. What was she saying to her grandson with this parting gift?
4. What do you think was the hidden meaning behind the giving of this gift?
5. How is the prayer book a symbol, for Mrs Farrell and for her grandson?
6. What does this story tell us about the purpose of religious symbols?

Brainstorm students on: What are religious symbols? Why are religious symbols important?

Take feedback and explain that a religious symbol is an object, gesture or action that helps people to give expression to their religious beliefs.

Present students with religious symbols from different traditions such as Star of David; Cross; Altar etc. and give them time to research their meaning.

Take feedback by having students present a report on the meaning of the religious symbols they have researched.

Discuss: How do these religious symbols help people give expression to their religious beliefs?

Take feedback and conclude by identifying from the examples given how religious symbol help people give expression to their beliefs.

Encountering some religious symbols and their meaning-- icon

Present students with a picture of an icon e.g.

- The Icon Of Vladimir - A Time to Live, The New Christian Way Series 3 pages 140-142
- Roublev’s Icon of the Trinity - A Time to Live, The New Christian Way Series 3 back cover

Written Assignment:

Tick the correct answer

Are the figure(s) in the icon:	
Lively and full of energy?	
Quiet and peaceful?	
Are the figure(s) in the icon painted in:	
A style that is flat, and not true to life?	
A style that is round, and very true to life?	
Do the figure(s) in the icon:	
Look real and life-like?	
Look unreal and mysterious?	

Give students time to study the figure(s) in the icon, complete the written assignment and discuss:

Who is the figure(s) looking at?

What is the relationship between the figure(s) in the icon?

How would you know the figure of Jesus in the icon?

Option A Give the students time to research Icons by contacting: The National Gallery of Ireland; The Chester Beatty Library; The Association of Iconographers of Ireland;

Websites: WWW.heavenlyvisions.com/icons.html & WWW.religions-icons.com/tour/tour2.html

Take feedback from the students’ research and discuss the following questions:

1. What is an icon?
2. What process is involved in writing an icon?
3. Why does the iconographer regard his/her task as sacred?

Written Assignment:

Imagine you are a reporter sent to interview an icon painter. Write a paragraph for a local paper describing the work of an iconographer with a view to informing the public on the meaning and significance of icons.

or

Option B Read an article on icons and complete the questions and cloze test.

- Discuss:
- What is an icon?
 - Why do Orthodox Christians use icons?
 - How do Orthodox Christians pray in front of an icon?
 - What is an icon artist called?
 - What preparations does an icon artist make before painting an icon?

Written Assignment: Complete the following:

An _____ is a holy picture or _____. The word icon means _____. When Orthodox _____ want to pray they light a _____ in front of the _____, make the _____ and kiss the icon with respect. Icons help the person come closer to _____. Icon painters believe their work is _____. This type of painter is called an _____. They prepare for painting by _____ and _____ and receiving the sacraments of _____ and _____. The painting is _____ when it is finished.

Resources which teachers have suggested include:

- A Time To Live - New Christian Way Series 3 Veritas, pages 140– 142.
- All About Faith 2 - Gill & Macmillan, pages 113 – 119; 121; 124 – 125; 132 – 155.
- Community of Faith – Veritas pages 115 – 117; 119 – 128.
- Community of Hope -Veritas pages 115–129; 150–156.
- Cyberclass Manual Scholastech Disk 3
- Logos
- Love One Another New Christian Way Series 1 Veritas, pages 42– 48; 56– 76; 145; 167 – 174.
- Show Us The Way - New Christian Way Series 2 Veritas pages 100 – 115; 205 – 223.