

Signs and symbols

Objective

To use signs and symbols to convey meaning.

Background knowledge

We use symbols instead of words to communicate when spoken or written words are not practical, for example, at an airport where there might be speakers of other languages. It is important that signs and symbols are easily understood.

Onomatopoeia is the term used for words that convey the sound of the thing it refers to, such as *splash*.

Sign language is another way of communicating without words. Hand movements can convey the meaning of whole words or phrases, fingers can be used to represent each letter of the alphabet, and body movements and facial expressions also play a role. Different countries use different sign languages. Although English is spoken in the USA and UK, American Sign Language and British Sign Language are quite different and not mutually intelligible.

Activities

These activities encourage the children to recognise symbols and signs as a means of communication. They also look at onomatopoeia and explore how this takes sound into a written form.

● Photocopiable page 105 'Symbols'

Show the children a symbol that is not on the photocopiable sheet, such as a road sign warning of the danger of falling rocks. Think of a list of related adjectives, describing how they look, feel, sound and so on. The children complete the photocopiable sheet and discuss their answers with a partner. Ask the children to identify synonyms and antonyms in the list. As a plenary activity, invite the children to read out their adjectives for

a symbol. Can the others work out which symbol they relate to?

● Photocopiable page 106 'Onomatopoeia'

Read the poem 'The Sound Collector' by Roger McGough to the children. Ask them to identify the words that describe sounds. Invite the children to read the poem independently. Ask them to note all the onomatopoeic words in the poem. Challenge them to think of other words to describe the sounds as well as making up their own.

● Photocopiable page 107 'Sign language'

Explain that sign language is a way to communicate using signs instead of sounds. It helps people who cannot hear to communicate using hand gestures, body movements and facial expressions. Fingerspelling is when the fingers and hands are used to make shapes to represent the letters of the alphabet. Provide the children with three-, four- and five-letter word cards of vocabulary from a recent topic. In pairs, let the children take turns to spell words from the cards for their partner to read using the sign language alphabet. Can the children spell out longer words from the topic?

Further ideas

- **What does it mean?:** Invite the children to invent signs and symbols for school rules, advice or warnings.
- **All quiet:** Use the poem 'The Sound Collector' by Roger McGough as a model for writing a similar poem in a different setting, such as the playground.



What's on the CD-ROM

On the CD-ROM you will find:

- Printable versions of all three photocopiable pages.
- Interactive versions of 'Symbols' and 'Onomatopoeia'.