IDENTIFYING SYMBOLS

LESSON PLAN

Teacher Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Learning Area</th>
<th>Strands</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3 & 4  | Humanities: History | • Historical knowledge: Community, Remembrance and Celebration  
• Historical concepts and skills | Identifying Symbols |

Overview

The aim of this lesson plan is to give teachers a range of ideas and activities to:

- facilitate student understanding of the importance and significance of symbols and emblems in our community
- encourage student engagement with Parliament of Victoria through describing some symbols used by the parliament and understanding their importance in our system of democracy.

Curriculum Links

Victorian Curriculum F-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Learning Area</th>
<th>Strands</th>
<th>Curriculum Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3 & 4  | Humanities: History | • Historical knowledge: Community, Remembrance and Celebration  
- The importance of symbols and emblems | VCHHK076 |
|        |                     | • Historical concepts and skills              | VCHHC071               |
|        |                     | - Describe the significance of Australian celebrations, symbols and emblems |                      |
| Capabilities | Strand                  | Meta-Cognition                      | VCCTM018               |
|  Critical and creative thinking |                  | - Consider concrete and pictorial models to facilitate thinking, including a range of visualisation strategies |                      |

Learning Goals

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of the words symbols and emblems
- Identity some symbols from their school
- Describe some symbols and emblems from the Parliament of Victoria and understand their importance.
Resources and Materials

Included for this lesson plan are:

• Teacher guide
• Teacher instructions: learning activities
• Prompt card
• Symbol Treasure Hunt Worksheet + Symbols Handout
• Powerpoint: Symbols of Parliament
• Teacher notes and copy of the PowerPoint, included in the materials for teachers reference
• Symbols of Parliament diagram, Images: Coat of Arms, Mace, Black Rod
  www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/the-parliamentary-system/symbols

For the extension activity you will need:

• Material to construct an object (eg toilet rolls, tinfoil, string, paper, cardboard, textas, pipe cleaners, balloons, cotton wool, glue, scissors)
• A coat of arms template (readily available online through Google Images)

Learning Activities Summary

These activities meet the needs of students working towards attainment of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 in Levels 3-4 in History.

This lesson plan contains the following learning activities and resources:

1. Warm-up: three symbols
2. Think / Pair / Share analysing three symbols
3. Class discussion: why do we use symbols?
4. Define 'symbol'
5. School Symbol Treasure Hunt or Symbol Worksheet
6. Powerpoint: Symbols of Parliament
7. Label Symbols diagram
8. Extension activity: Make your own symbol

Achievement Standard

By the end of these lessons students will meet the achievement standards in Levels 3 and 4 in History by being able to:

• Understand some of the key symbols and emblems of their school and of the Parliament of Victoria
• Understand the importance of these symbols and emblems to our history and democracy
1. WARM-UP BRAINSTORM: 3 SYMBOLS

Start by drawing three easily identifiable symbols on the whiteboard (or use google images):

- A stop sign
- A recycle symbol
- A heart

Go through each symbol and ask the class: 'What does this picture mean?' (Don’t use the word symbol). Write down responses as a class brainstorm next to each picture.

Examples below:

- **Stop sign**: stop, danger, don’t go any further
- **Recycle symbol**: recycle, put things that can be recycled here, this is recyclable
- **Love heart**: love, romance, passion, connection

Ask students to guess the word (starting with s!) that we could use to describe these pictures. Hint: it means using a picture of something as a short-cut instead of writing out all the words or ideas that the picture represents. Answer: (write on board) **SYMBOL**

2. THINK / PAIR / SHARE: 3 SYMBOLS

For the following four questions, use a Think / Pair / Share technique (students think about their own ideas first, then they have 30 seconds to share their ideas with the person sitting next to them, then the teacher chooses some pairs to report back to the class about what they discussed). Stress that there are no ‘correct’ answers. If some pairs appear to be struggling, use the prompts below.

- **Why do you think the colour red used in a stop symbol?**
  
  Possible responses: red is the colour of blood, red is the colour of danger, red stands out and is obvious, red is the colour of the stop traffic light, red is bright, it’s the colour of fire engines

- **Why do you think arrows are used in a recycle symbol?**
  
  Possible responses: bottles and things that are recycled go through lots of stages, arrows mean moving forward, arrows show steps, arrows show direction, arrows show movement

- **Why do you think a heart is used as a symbol of love?**
  
  Possible responses: the heart is associated with emotions, people die of broken hearts when they fall out of love, it has two halves – like two people, feelings come from the heart, thoughts come from the head

3. CLASS DISCUSSION: WHY DO WE USE SYMBOLS?

Have a class discussion around the question: Why do we use symbols? Collate ideas on the whiteboard. Prompts:

- They are a short-cut
- It would be tricky to write “stop, danger, don’t go further” on a street sign
- They give lots of complicated ideas in a quick a simple way
- They help us understand big ideas in a simple way
- They make things easier
- They take up less room (e.g. symbols on maps)
4. DEFINING ‘SYMBOL’

Pose the question: What does the word symbol mean? A good way for students to think about this might be: If an alien arrived from outer space, how would you explain the word symbol to them?

Example definition: A symbol is a thing that represents or stands for something else. For example, a picture or an object that represents a concept or an idea.

Students might like to write a definition in their workbooks or summarise the notes from the class discussion.

5. SCHOOL SYMBOLS TREASURE HUNT (OR WORKSHEET)

Option One
Give students the attached Symbols Treasure Hunt worksheet. Tell the students that working in pairs, they are to go on a Symbols Treasure Hunt around the school. Their task is to find five symbols around the school. They should fill in the sheet by drawing the symbol in the first column, then writing what they think the symbol means in the second column.

Option Two
Give students the Symbols Treasure Hunt worksheet. Working in pairs, they are going to choose five symbols from the Symbol Samples Handout and use these to fill in their Treasure Hunt worksheet. They should fill in the sheet by drawing the symbol in the first column, then writing what they think the symbol means in the second column.

6. POWERPOINT: SYMBOLS OF PARLIAMENT

Explain that symbols are used in many parts of life, including at Parliament House, which is where the Government of Victoria meets. Explain that we are going to go on a Symbols Treasure Hunt, but this time at Parliament House.

Open the PowerPoint that explains three important symbols from Parliament House: The Mace, The Black Rod, The Victorian Parliament Coat of Arms (notes about what each of these symbols means are in the notes section of the PowerPoint).

7. DIAGRAMS: SYMBOLS OF PARLIAMENT

Hand out the ‘Three Symbols of Parliament’ diagrams. Students can label the diagrams with information from the PowerPoint/Springboard. For example, they could include: A definition of ‘Symbol’. What does this object symbolise? What is its history? Fun facts about the actual object.

These can be displayed around the room.

8. EXTENSION: MAKE YOUR OWN SYMBOLS

Option One
Using found objects (e.g. toilet rolls, tinfoil, string, paper, cardboard, textas, pipe cleaners), students should construct an object that symbolises them as a person. They should write some sentences to explain how the object symbolises different aspects of their personality.

Examples: The bright colours show I am happy. The solid structure shows I am reliable.

Option Two
Find a coat of arms template on the Internet. Students should design a coat of arms that symbolises them as a person. They should write some sentences to explain how the coat of arms symbolises different aspects of their interests or personality.

Examples: I have included a football because I am very sporty. I have included a love heart with four people in front of it because my family is very close and important to me.
What is a symbol?

Symbols are all around us. What does ‘symbol’ mean anyway? What are the symbols of the Parliament of Victoria?

What are symbols and why are they used? Well, symbols are usually objects that carry a meaning beyond the object itself. For example, a red stop sign is more than just a piece of flat red metal on top of a metal pole. It is a symbol of caution, danger and sends a message to STOP! Sometimes we understand that an object has a deeper meaning, like when we see an umbrella we might think of rain, bad weather and winter. The umbrella comes to symbolise something more than the object.

The Parliament of Victoria has many significant symbols, some of which are displayed above. See if you can work out what some of the symbols might mean. What might be the associations you have with that image/object? What do you think of when you see that object?

Three of the important symbols of Parliament include the Parliament of Victoria Crest, the Mace and the Black Rod. For more information about these symbols, check out the Parliament of Victoria Crest, The Mace and The Black Rod stories.
Knock knock, who’s there? The Black Rod

The Black Rod is an important part of the symbolism of Parliament... but exactly how is it used?

The Black Rod symbolises the office of the President. Who’s that? Well, the President is the Presiding Officer of the Legislative Council. He’s the person who sits up higher than everyone else and amongst other things, keeps order in the Legislative Council Chamber (the red room). The Black Rod is carried by a person called the Usher of the Black Rod and their job is to help the President maintain order in the Chamber.

The Usher of the Black Rod’s role can be traced waaaaaaaay back to 1361 in the House of Lords (in England), although we’ve only used that title in Victoria since 1951. Before that, the role was called the ‘Gentleman Usher’. The Usher of the Black Rod used to wear full Windsor Court Uniform on ceremonial occasions: a black tunic, lace cuffs and jabot (a cascade of lace frills worn around the neck), knee-breeches, silk stockings and silver-buckled shoes. They only stopped playing dress-ups in 2003!

The Black Rod is made of fiddleback blackwood, with the head, foot and joint made of gilded sterling silver. It is carried by the Usher on ceremonial occasions and placed at the table of the Legislative Council in all its meetings. The most exciting part of the Usher of the Black Rod’s use of the Black Rod happens during the Opening of Parliament ceremony. The Usher is sent to the Legislative Assembly Chamber (the green room) to summon its members to the Legislative Council Chamber. The Usher uses the foot of the Black Rod to bang loudly on the closed door of the Assembly Chamber. Once they let the Usher in, he conveys the message from the Governor, demanding that Members of the Legislative hurry up and get to the Legislative Council Chamber! The Members of the Assembly deliberately take their time (to demonstrate their independence), then the Usher (with the Black Rod) and the Serjeant-at-Arms (with the Mace) lead Members of the Legislative Assembly across to the Council Chamber for the official ceremony.
The Marvellous Mace: an important symbol

What is 1.52 metres long, weighs over 8 kilograms and is made from solid silver with gold plating? Read on to find out...

The Mace symbolises the office of the Speaker. Who’s that? Well, the Speaker is the Presiding Officer of the Legislative Assembly. He’s the guy that sits up higher than everyone else and amongst other things, keeps order in the Legislative Assembly Chamber (the green room). The Mace is carried by a person called the Serjeant-at-Arms, who is a parliamentary officer who supports the Speaker in official and ceremonial duties.

The role of the Serjeant-at-Arms was created in England during the late 14th Century (aaaaaaaages ago: this is a long tradition!) and his job was to be a bodyguard for the Speaker. The role of the Speaker used to be pretty dangerous, and the Serjeant-at-Arms offered protection and safety for the Speaker. These days, the Speaker’s role is not quite as dangerous, but the tradition carries on. When Parliament is sitting, the Serjeant-at-Arms walks in front of the Speaker (carrying the Mace) as they enter the Chamber.

The Mace stays in the Legislative Assembly as long as the House is sitting (sitting is a fancy way of saying ‘whenever the Parliament get together to meet and talk about things’). When the Speaker is in the chair, the Mace is placed on a central table with the head of the Mace always pointing to the Government’s side of the Chamber. When the Speaker leaves the chair and the Chairman of Committees sits there instead, the Mace is placed on brackets below the table instead.

The current Mace dates back to 1901. It is modelled on the Mace from the House of Commons (in England) and is made of silver with gold plating. It weighs over 8 kilograms and is 1.52 metres long. It has some engravings listing the names of the previous Speakers. The one that is currently used is the Parliament of Victoria’s third Mace. The first and original Mace is on display in the Parliamentary Library. The second Mace mysteriously disappeared in 1891 and was never recovered. Do you know where it is? If so, you could win a $50,000 reward!
### Sample symbols

**Task:** Use this grid to select your five favourite symbols. There is space at the bottom of the grid for you to add your own ideas.

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Add your own ideas here:
Diagram: Symbols of Parliament

Instructions: Label and annotate each symbol with details you have learnt in today’s lesson.
## Symbols treasure hunt

**Task:** Find five symbols around the school. Draw the symbol in the left-hand column. Write what you think the symbol means in the right-hand column.

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<tr>
<th>DRAW THE SYMBOL</th>
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