

## Academic Vocabulary for Collection 6

These are the terms you should know  
as you read and analyze the stories in this collection.

---

**Symbol** An object, a person, an animal, or an event that stands for something more than itself. For example, a blindfolded woman who is holding up scales is often used to symbolize justice, which is supposed to be fair in weighing the fate of the accused.

**Public symbol** A symbol that has become widely recognized, such as the bald eagle (a symbol of the United States) or the olive branch (a symbol of peace).

**Invented symbol** A symbol invented by a writer, which usually stands for something abstract, such as evil, innocence, or love. The meanings of literary symbols must be interpreted by the reader. Use these guidelines when you are trying to interpret the meaning of a symbol:

- Symbols are often visual.
- When an object or event is used as a symbol, it usually appears several times in a text.
- A symbol is a type of figurative language. Like a metaphor, a symbol is identified with something that is very different but that shares some of the same qualities. When you are thinking about whether something is used symbolically, ask yourself: “Does this character, object, or event stand for something?” In Herman Melville’s novel *Moby-Dick*, for example, readers begin to sense that the white whale being hunted by Captain Ahab is more than just a whale. From the many descriptions of the whale in the novel, readers come to see it as a symbol of random, unexplainable evil.

**Allegory** A story in which characters and settings stand for something beyond themselves, usually virtues and vices. Sometimes the characters in an allegory are given names that indicate what they stand for. For example, a woman who stands for goodness may be named Mrs. Kind.



### For Further Information . . .

- Be sure to read the essay on **symbolism and allegory** in *Elements of Literature*, page 402–403.