



# Layers of Meaning

## Iconography & Symbolism

Copyright-Free and Royalty-Free Images from  
Pixabay in this document

**Our Goal This Week:** Explore how artists use symbolism to express deeper emotions, thoughts, and ideas.

**Essential Question:** How can we interpret layers of meaning in art compositions? Artists create layers of depth in thinking by using symbols and iconography.

**Iconography:** a system of symbols *used by a culture*; Culture is relevant.

**Symbol:** An image, sign, or element, such as color, that is understood, by convention or context, to suggest some other meaning.

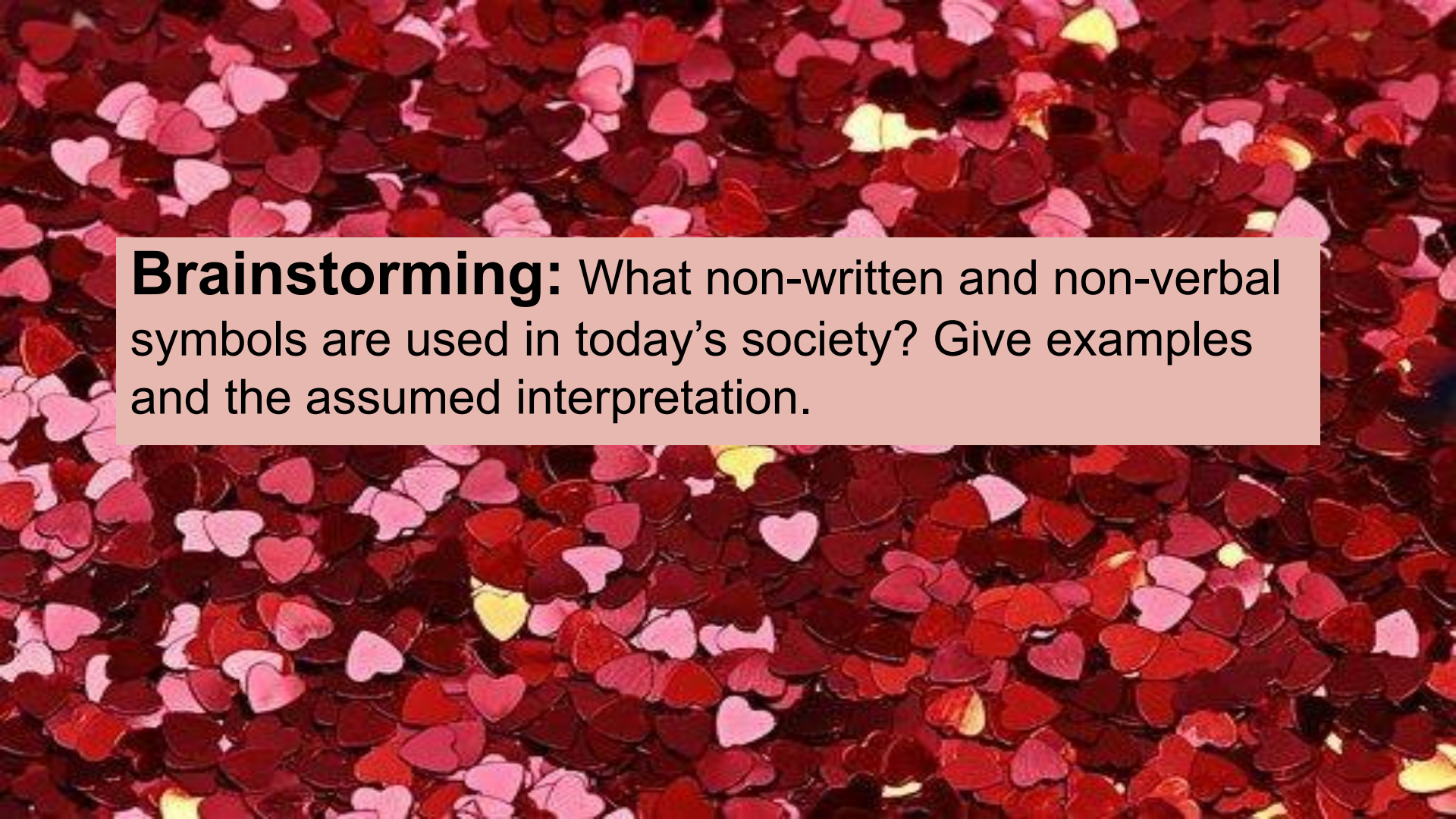
**Context:** A set of interrelated conditions (such as social, economic, political) in visual arts that influence and give meaning to the development and reception of thoughts, ideas, or concepts, and that define specific cultures and eras.

**Let's take a  
moment to watch  
a quick video:**

---

**“Mind-Blowing  
Origins Of  
Everyday Symbols”**  
(1:40 minutes)



The background of the entire image is a dense field of small, heart-shaped confetti. The colors are primarily various shades of red, from deep maroon to bright pink, with occasional light pink and yellow hearts scattered throughout. The hearts are oriented in different directions, creating a textured, shimmering effect.

**Brainstorming:** What non-written and non-verbal symbols are used in today's society? Give examples and the assumed interpretation.



**Guided Practice:**

# **Analyzing an artwork:**

How can we  
interpret layers of  
meaning in art  
compositions?

(3:49 minutes)



# Technique Demonstration and practice of using marker on tracing

**paper:** Using wet marker on resistant tracing paper allows the colors to blend without immediately soaking into the paper and drying.



**Activity:** We will create a composition with at least two symbols.

- You must have at least one additional layer [glued] to your base paper - a symbol in itself of a layered/deeper meaning.
- A layer may be hiding part of an image for a “hidden meaning” that may be revealed if uncovered by lifting the layer.

- Include a **title page** with student name, class, title for the project/artwork, and subtitle of “Layers of Meaning”.
- Make 4-9 **thumbnail sketches** on 1 one page of a composition that includes at least two symbols; Colors can be used as symbols.
- Make **1 full draft**; Note any significant colors that will be used in the final if you do not show them; Note any hidden objects.
  - You may create a ½ page composition; but be considerate of the space, detail, and how you will layer materials.
- Include a **process board** of at least 3 images on one page/slide.
- Make **your final composition** (½ - 1 full page, including layers).
  - Include close-up pictures of hidden images on one additional page/slide.



**Activity:** We will create a Google Doc describing the symbols in your work.

- 1-2 pages, Arial 11 pt. font, double-spaced; include title of "**Layers of Meaning: Interpreted**", your name, class, and West.
- List each symbol and write at least one sentence describing its significance and meaning.
- *\*\*Students who have issues with technology are allowed to hand-write this assignment for credit.*



## Critique Expectations:

Students are encouraged but not required to give feedback to one another in class. *We're all learning together as a community.*

If the student is not comfortable presenting their work in front of their peers **due to stress or anxiety** they may speak from their seat.

**All students are encouraged to practice speaking about their work** and addressing any questions their peers or instructors may have to prepare for future critiques in advanced art courses, in college courses, and in real life scenarios.

**\*\*\***If you miss your critique date there will be a short writing or media recording assignment.