

Stories with Symbols



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Time Needed: 15-30 minutes

Arts Focus: Literary Arts
Math Focus: Reading Symbols

Age Range: 7-8

Mini-Lesson Description:

In this lesson, learners will explore using symbols instead of words. Practice creating a rebus story using familiar symbols.



Key Concepts:

Reading Symbols; Storytelling; Language of Math; Rebus; Poetry; Representation; Emojis.

Materials Needed/Prep:

- A comfortable space to move around in
- Paper or index cards
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Optional: examples of rebus stories or poems

Step-by-Step:

1. A “rebus” is a writing technique when authors use pictures instead of words.
Here is a simple rebus sentence:  +  + U. The eyeball represents ‘I’, the heart represents ‘love’, and the letter U is short for ‘you’. Using the plus symbol between the pictures adds them together: “I love you’.
2. A “symbol” is a picture that represents something else. Symbols can fill in the place of words, like an emoji. Emojis are small pictures that can show facial expressions, common objects, places, types of weather, and animals. What emojis have you seen? Have you seen an emoji used in a sentence or phrase?
3. Brainstorm together different everyday symbols or emojis and their meanings. Draw them on paper to help keep track of all the ones you think of. Some examples: stop sign, heart, plus sign, dash, arrow, clock, exclamation point, thumbs up, circle, star, anchor, smiley face, frowning face, lightbulb, music note, lightning bolt, cloud, sun, flame, snowflake, umbrella, recycling, dollar sign, check mark, etc.
4. Build a sentence using just symbols and/or emojis or a combination of symbols and words. Can you turn it into a poem or a story?

Rebus Story-Building Game

5. Have the learner make a list of all math symbols they know. Together discuss math symbols names and their meanings (e.g., plus, minus, equal, multiply).
6. Make symbol cards using your drawing supplies. Draw math symbols and everyday objects or emojis onto separate index cards.
7. Have the learner pick 4-6 symbol cards (math and non-math symbols). Using their symbol cards create a story! Add words as needed to help the story come together.
8. Take turns sharing your rebus stories!

Variations and Next Steps:

- Other rebus examples: <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson-docs/RebusBookList.pdf>
- Challenge the learner to make a story using as many math symbols as possible.
- Encourage more complex symbols and meanings (e.g., scales, caution triangle, house, globe, thought and/or speech bubble, peace sign, horseshoe, recycling, dollar sign, etc.).

Standards

English Language Arts Standards: ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3](#)) Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

Math Standard: Mathematical Practices ([CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP2](#)) Reason abstractly and quantitatively.

Watch a video of this Creative Start Mini-Lesson and find more at: <https://www.arts.wa.gov/creative-start-studio/>