

3b

Silent Symbols Speak Loudly: Icons, Brands & You

Brands, icons and symbols permeate our visual culture. Too often we assume that everyone interprets symbols the same way. Yet, as we know from current events, symbols like the American flag can mean different things to different people. In activity 3A we learned that what the audience brings to a message is also part of the process of understanding the message. In this lesson, students analyze the symbols on the common \$1 dollar bill (paper money is media too!), explore the variety of meanings in the symbols and then create their own money with symbols that are meaningful to them. Through creating media (money) that represents themselves, they not only express their own ideas of who and what is important and but also wrestle with the concept that different people have different ways of seeing and interpreting the world around them.

Objectives: Students will be able to...

1. Build awareness of the visual symbols around them.
2. Understand how different people can read the same symbols differently.
3. Use symbols they choose to express their concerns, interests and ideas.

Correlation With McRel National Standards:

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S9/B1)
- Grades 3-5: (S9/B6)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B1, B6), (S10/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B1, B6), (S10/B10)

Materials/Preparation:

1. Copies of Handout 3B: “Make Your Own Money!” one copy per student. For younger students, you may wish to make enlarged copies.
2. Pictures of students or famous people (small enough to fit inside the oval on the handout).
3. Crayons or markers
4. Glue and scissors
5. For information on the symbols used in US currency visit this web site: www.frbsf.org/currency/iconography/index.html

Teaching Strategies:

I. Symbols

- Explain that symbols are ways to communicate visually without words. Draw some symbols on the board and ask students to identify their meanings. The following are some examples for younger and older students:



- Change the **context** of the symbol to see how meanings can change. For example:
 - A symbol of a heart on a hospital door signifies cardiologist while the same symbol on a Valentine’s Day card signifies love or friendship.
 - A skull and cross bones on a ship’s flag signifies pirates but on a bottle it signifies poison.

II. Symbols in Money

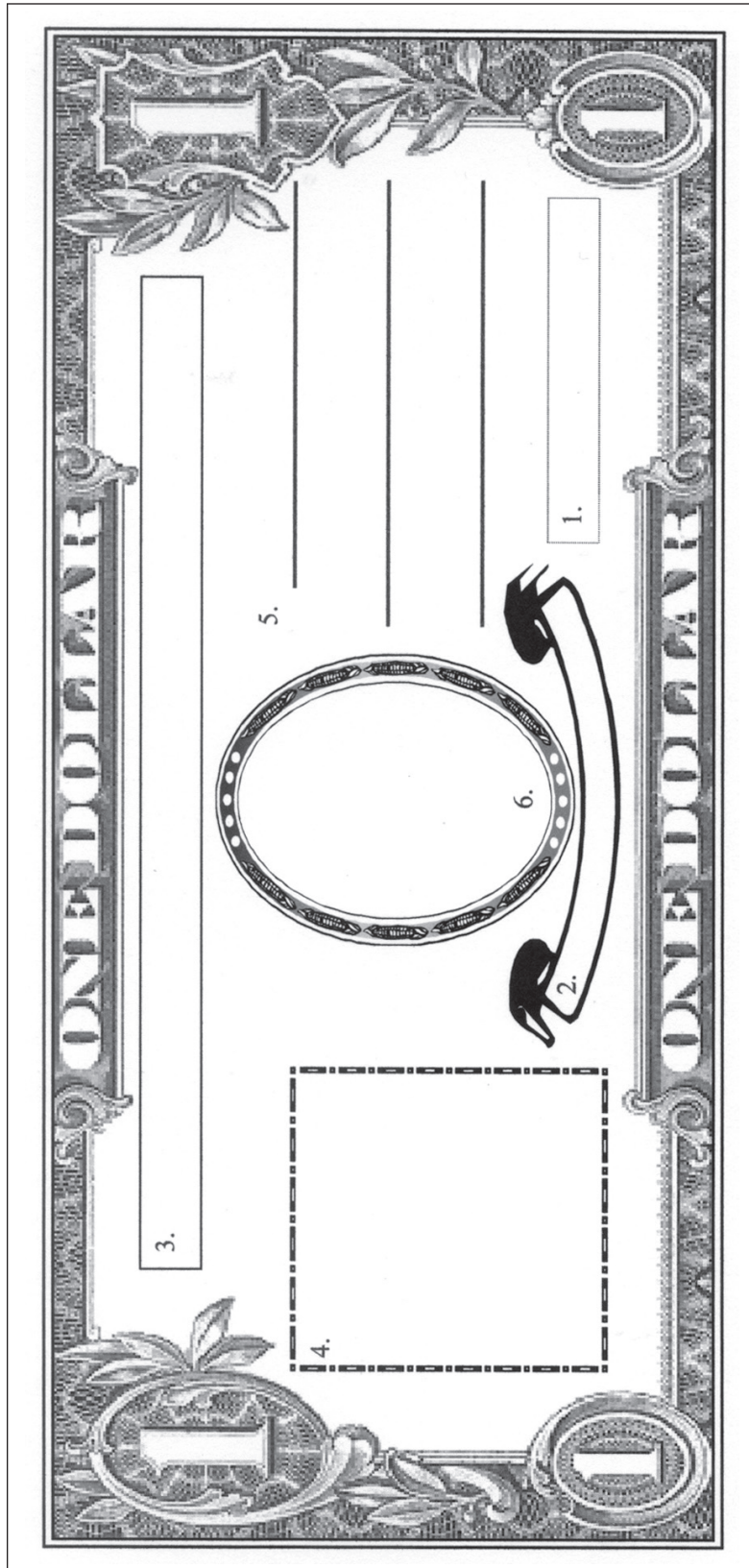
- Discuss money and the symbols they find on a \$1 bill. Ask students to bring in any money they have from other countries or play money from games to share with the class. Analyze the US dollar bill as well as any other money by asking:
 - ? What are different messages that the symbols could be communicating?
 - ? How might different people understand these symbols differently?
- Distribute Handout 3B. Before students begin writing and drawing, encourage them to think about who and what are the most important things and people they want represented on their own money.
- Have students begin creating their money by writing their name in box #1.
 - ↳ Younger students should write their own name in box #1 and then they can copy teacher writing or use drawings to answer most of the other questions.
 - ↳ Older students should sign their signature in handwriting for box #1 and then all other writing should be printing.
- Under the oval, in box #2, students need to write the name of the person whose picture they want to put on their currency. This should be someone they feel is so important that they want everyone to see this person often.
- In box #3, write the name of any country they want their money to represent.
- In box #4, students need to think about what symbol or symbols best signify the values and message they want to communicate. They should draw a large symbol to fill the entire box so that it is easy to read from a distance.
 - ↳ Older students might want to combine symbols to tell a more complex message.
- On the lines marked #5, write a brief motto or message that is so important to them they want others to think about it.
- In the oval marked #6, a picture of someone important to the students should be placed.
- Encourage students to color in their money with crayons or markers while not coloring on top of any writing or drawings.
- All students should explain their choices, older students can write why they chose the symbols and motto they used.



Assessment Tip

The deeper learning from this activity should be assessed more for examples of understanding about communicating with symbols than artistic abilities.

Make Your Own Money!



Box 4: Why did you choose this symbol? _____

Box 5: Why did you choose this motto? _____

Boxes 2 and 6: Why did you choose this person? _____