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# ORTHODOX RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: SYMBOLS

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Grade Level 10-11 / 16-17y



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## Orthodox Religious Education: Symbols

### Competences/Learning Outcomes

- To recognize the symbols when they see them.
- To know the meanings behind the symbols.
- To raise awareness of the dynamic connection between religion and symbol.
- To understand and interpret the deeper meaning of symbols and to consider it in personal contexts.
- To identify the symbolism embedded in religious symbols and texts.
- To explore how symbols are used to represent abstract concepts, stories, rituals, and spiritual beliefs.
- To reflect on their own beliefs, values, and identities.

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### Grade level

10-11 /16-17y

### Duration

90 min



## Preparation

- Bring into the classroom objects such as images, symbol cards, statues, etc. that are appropriate to students' worldviews.
- Ask the students questions to motivate them Write some questions for students to explore the meaning and cultural context of religious symbols and encourage them to engage in discussions. A list of question can be found under "materials".
- Copy the KWL Chart for each student.

## Step-by-step description

- Distribute the KWL Chart (M1) to the students and ask them to fill 'What I Know' and 'What I Wonder' columns. Ask students to keep the charts for the end of the lesson.
- Show the group the objects (M2) and put them up where all students can observe.
- Divide the participants into groups of 4-5 students to work together and present their works.
- Give each group the task of choosing one of the religious symbols and distribute each group the question cards (M3).
- Ask students to answer (in groups) four (4) of the questions on the cards.
- Provide sources (such as books, glossaries, online sources etc) for the students to search for information on the symbols.
- Guide each group to search for information and discuss about the role of the religious symbol in order to provide answers to the questions.
- Ask each group to design a poster to present information about the symbol they have chosen.
- Ask each group (when they finish) to share their work in the plenary classroom within a specific time frame.
- Guide and ask students to reflect on the work of each group with an active discussion.
- Ask students to work on KWL Charts and fill in the 'What I Learned' column by reflecting on the following questions:
  - How did you experience the activity?
  - Did the group activities help you understand the symbols?
  - What do you notice about the appearance of the chosen symbols? What do you think about the colors, shapes, or characteristics?



- What emotions or feelings does the symbols evoke in you? Why do you feel this way?
- How can you relate the symbols to your personal experiences? What connections do you find in your own life or culture regarding these symbols?
- What biases or prejudices do you have about the symbols? How did these biases form, and how do they influence your understanding of the symbols?

## Tips for teachers

- Select different objects for students to examine different types of symbols.
- Ask students to bring the object themselves.
- Design your own questions for the 'Question Cards'.
- Suggest web pages in your local languages for your students to help them during group work.

### Good to know:

Religious symbols differentiate from other symbols mainly because they are believed to have a transcendental origin. Symbols are human constructions and they have a great social influence, beyond the limits of the religious sphere. Symbols (word or image) are used to guide the believers to understand their faith. Religious language is symbolic because it is impossible to express the supernatural and transcendental truths of faith in another way. The symbols in the life of the Orthodox Church are images, representations, scenes taken from the Bible or everyday life, which reveal to the faithful the great mysteries of the life of the Church, about the events of the divine economy and about the spiritual life. Symbols use a different language to articulate the content of faith and convey the divine message; they carry meanings and traditions that are meaningful to the humans.

The depiction of symbols in paintings ignores the naturalism and the spontaneity reflected through three dimensions (height, width and depth) and depicts the figures with light movements, while, at the same time try to express the idea of the supernatural world.



## Materials

### [M1] KWL Chart

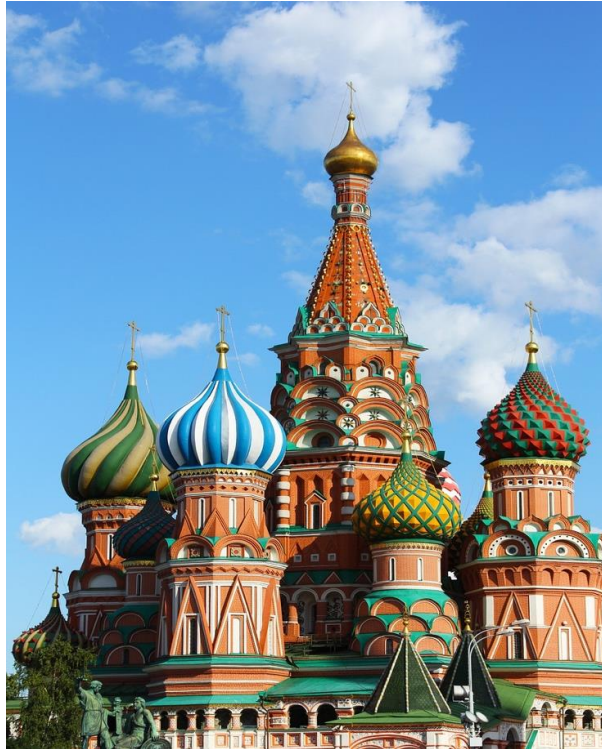
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>What I Know</i>	<i>What I Wonder</i>	<i>What I Learned</i>



[M2] Symbols & Objects

1



6

2





3



4



7





5



6



7



8

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8



9



9



[M3] Question Card



1. Where have you seen or this symbol? In what contexts has it appeared to you?
2. With which beliefs and rituals is this symbol associated?
3. Are there any stories or narratives associated with the symbol? What meaning do these stories give you?
4. Are there any significant events in the history or cultural context of the symbol?
5. What can you do to gather more information about the symbol? What resources can you use or experts can you consult?
6. What do you feel about this symbol?





## Bibliography

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