Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

English II Honors Period # \_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson: Symbolism**

An author uses a **symbol**, such as an object, a person, a place, or an experience, to represent

something else. The thing represented is often abstract, but it can be concrete as well. A

symbol may have more than one meaning, and its meaning may change during the story.

**DIRECTIONS: *Read the following passage. As you read, try to determine what symbols***

***the author uses. Then answer the questions that follow.***

1 There was once a neighborhood where people lived in small, low houses with open

yards. Flowers grew in front of these houses, and children played on the front lawns.

Everyone knew each other, and everyone watched out for each other. When a child

cried, all the neighbors came running.

2 Then one day, Mr. Folderoy woke up and noticed his neighbor’s dog rooting in his

rose bushes. *This has happened one time too many*! he thought. That afternoon, he split

some wood and built a low wooden fence, just high enough to keep the dog out.

3 Nobody had ever thought of building a fence before, and soon the news spread

around the neighborhood. “What a good idea,” said the neighbors. “Let’s build one,

too!” Soon everyone had low wooden fences.

4 The neighbors were all very pleased with their fences, and they went on living

more or less as they had before.

5 Then, Mrs. Moriarty was sitting on her sun porch, rocking on a rocking chair,

when a neighbor waved. Mrs. Moriarty was in a private mood and felt annoyed. *This*

*is my own porch*, she thought. *I deserve some privacy! What I need is a better fence!* So she

hired some workers to make one.

6 When completed, the fence was very high—so high that she could see nothing of

her neighbor’s yard and her neighbor could see nothing of hers.

7 Soon everyone was building higher and higher fences. Once they had the taste of

privacy, they couldn’t stop. They grew high, thick shrubs, erected impregnable gates,

and installed shades in every window. Each house became a fortress, imposing and

secretive. Soon no one knew anything about anyone else.

8 “It was wonderful,” the people said.

9 But when Elaine Foley’s baby came a month too early, she screamed and nobody

heard her. When children fell and stubbed their toes, no neighbors came running.

When Thanksgiving came, people no longer went door to door, distributing food and

greeting neighbors. A coldness fell over the neighborhood.

10 And when neighbors passed each other on the street, their eyes glazed over and

they nodded coldly. It was as if they carried their fences wherever they went.

1. Identify the central symbol in this story and explain what it represents.

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**2.** At what point were you aware that this object carried a symbolic value? Identify the

point at which you realized this object was a symbol, and explain what clues in the

passage suggested that the object should be viewed symbolically.

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**3.** Often, authors use symbols to convey a larger point or message. What is the point or

message of this story, and how does the symbolism serve to convey this message?

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