

Color Symbolism

Disclaimer: NOTE TO STUDENTS: This information is not "authoritative" - I am not an expert on this topic. This handout was created for my students to give them an awareness of symbolism of colors in different cultures. Some of the listings come from web sites which would not be acceptable for my students to view from school (sites blocked by filtering software) - so I copied the lists (without permission). If you are doing research - look for sources that have been researched and can be verified.
~Judy Decker -Mrs. Green

Colors are uniquely powerful symbols:

Color is considered one of the most useful and powerful design tools you have. People respond to different colors in different ways, and these responses take place on a subconscious, emotional level. In our American culture, black has long been associated with death, while white is believed to signify life and purity. In the Chinese Culture, however, white is the traditional color of mourning. In the United States, black has also come to suggest sophistication and formality. Americans generally associate trust and stability with the color blue, while Koreans have this reaction to pink and other pastel colors.

In the Western Culture:

Purple and Gold are often associated with Royalty, wealth and opulence (luxury)

Red, White and Blue reminiscent of the American flag, immediately convey notions of patriotism and, to some extent, conservatism.

Green has taken on a very strong connotation as the color representing ecology and concern for the environment, however, it also conveys meanings associated with money and the suggestion "to go ahead" which is obviously derived from traffic lights.

Blue, Red, White and Grey = Stability, Power, Trustworthiness, Conservatism

Yellow, Brown, Orange, Green = Nature, earthiness, warmth

Red, Orange, yellow = more warmth

Blues and Aquas = water and coolness

Primary colors (Red, Blue, Yellow) = Convey fun

RED: Maintaining health, strength, physical energy, passion, courage, protection. The color of the element of Fire. Red is associated with life and death, volcanoes, and intense emotions; associated with both the deities and with the highest social classes. Love, good health, strength and physical vigor.

PINK: Love, friendship, compassion, relaxation. Pink is symbolic of gentle emotions and of emotional unions. It's less intense than red. Overcomes evil, represents honor, love, morality, friendship, general success.

Color Symbolism

ORANGE: General attraction, energy. Orange is a lesser aspect of red. Encouragement, strengthens the ability to concentrate, attraction, and adaptability.

YELLOW: Intellect, confidence, communication, eloquence, travel, movement. Yellow is the color of the element of Air. It symbolizes the sun, grain, and the power of thought; color of royalty and divinity. Attraction, instills confidence, charm.

GREEN: Money, prosperity, employment, fertility, healing, growth. Green is the color of the element of the Earth and symbolizes life itself. Money, luck, financial success and prosperity, good crops and harvest, cooperation.

BLUE: Healing, peace, patience, happiness. Blue is the color of the element of Water. Symbolic of the ocean, sleep, twilight, and the sky.

DARK BLUE: Moodiness, changability, and impulsivness

LIGHT BLUE: Understanding, health, tranquility, protection, peace, general happiness, sharpens the power to perceive, spiritual awareness, patience.

PURPLE: Power, healing severe disease, spirituality, meditation, religion; symbol of royalty; symbolizes the divine. Ambition, promotes business progress, power, causes tension, strengthens will power.

WHITE: Protection, purification, all purposes. Symbolic of the Moon, freshness, snow, cold, and potential. Adds to spiritual strength, represents faith, purity, truth and sincerity.

BLACK: Banishing negativity, absorbing negativity. Symbolizes outer space and the universe. Black is the absence of colors. It is not an evil color.

BROWN: Animals; represents soil; Hesitation in all matters, uncertainty and doubt, neutrality, robs energy.

GRAY: neutrality.

Colors represent holidays and seasons of the year.

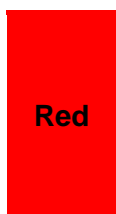
The fall foliage colors of Red, Orange, Yellow, and Brown and can also be for Thanksgiving.

Halloween: Orange and Black.

Red and Green represent Christmas.

Purple (Violet) and Yellow and other pastels colors represent spring and can also be for Easter .

Cultures and Meanings



- Australian Aboriginals: Land, earth
- Celtic: Death, afterlife
- China: Good luck, celebration, summoning
- Cherokees: Success, triumph. Represents the East.
- Hebrew: Sacrifice, sin
- India: Purity

Color Symbolism



- South Africa: Color of mourning
- Russia: Bolsheviks and Communism
- Eastern: Worn by brides, happiness and prosperity
- Western: Excitement, danger, love, passion, stop, Christmas (with green), Valentine's Day
- Astrology: Gemini
- Feng Shui: Yang, fire, good luck, money, respect, recognition, vitality
- Psychology: Stimulates brain wave activity, increases heart rate, increases blood pressure
- Roses: Love, respect — red and yellow together means gaiety, joviality
- Stained Glass (Dante): Divine love, the Holy Spirit, courage, self-sacrifice, martyrdom. A warm, active color.



Pink

- Korea: Trust
- Eastern: Marriage
- Western: Love, babies, especially female babies, Valentine's Day
- Feng Shui: Yin, love
- Psychology: Used in diet therapy as an appetite suppressant, relaxes muscles, soothing
- Roses: Gratitude and appreciation (deep pink) or admiration and sympathy (light pink)



Orange

- Ireland: Religious (Protestants)
- Netherlands: House of Orange
- Western: Halloween (with black), creativity, autumn
- Astrology: Sagittarius
- Feng Shui: Yang, earth, strengthens conversation, purpose, organization
- Psychology: Energizes, stimulates appetite
- Roses: Enthusiasm, desire



Gold

- Eastern: Wealth, strength
- Western: Wealth
- Astrology: Leo (Golden Yellow/Orange)
- Feng Shui: Yang, metal, God consciousness
- Stained Glass (Dante): The sun, the goodness of God, treasure in heaven, spiritual achievement, and the good life.



Yellow

- Apache: East — where the sun rises
- Cherokee: Trouble and strife.
- China: Nourishing, royalty
- Egypt: Mourning
- India: Merchants
- Japan: Courage
- Navajo: Doko'osliid — Abalone Shell Mountain
- Eastern: Proof against evil, for the dead, sacred, imperial
- Western: Hope, hazards, coward, weakness, taxis
- Astrology: Taurus
- Feng Shui: Yang, earth, auspicious, sun beams, warmth, motion

Color Symbolism



- Psychology: Energizes, relieves depression, improves memory, stimulates appetite
- Roses: Sociability, friendship, joy, gladness — red and yellow together means gaiety, joviality
- Stained Glass (Dante): The sun, the goodness of God, treasure in heaven, spiritual achievement, and the good life.



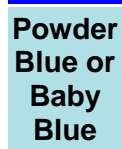
Green

- Apache: South
- China: Green hats imply a man's wife is cheating on him, exorcism
- India: Islam
- Ireland: Symbol of the entire country, religious (Catholics)
- Islam: Perfect faith
- Japan: Life
- Eastern: Eternity, family, health, prosperity, peace
- Western: Spring, new birth, go, money, Saint Patrick's Day, Christmas (with red)
- Astrology: Cancer (bright green)
- Feng Shui: Yin, wood, growing energy, nurturing, balancing, healing, health, calming
- Psychology: Soothing, relaxing mentally and physically, helps with depression, anxiety and nervousness
- Stained Glass (Dante): Hope, victory over ignorance, happiness and gaiety, springtime, youth, good humor, and fun



Blue

- Cherokees: Defeat, trouble. Represents the North.
- China: Immortality
- Iran: Color of heaven and spirituality, mourning
- Navajo: Tsoodzil — Turquoise Mountain
- Eastern: Wealth, self-cultivation
- Western: Depression, sadness, conservative, corporate, "something blue" bridal tradition
- Astrology: Capricorn and Aquarius (dark blue)
- Feng Shui: Yin, water, calm, love, healing, relaxing, peace, trust, adventure, exploration
- Psychology: Calming, lowers blood pressure, decreases respiration
- Stained Glass (Dante): Wisdom of God, the light of heaven, meditation, enduring loyalty, and eternity.



Powder Blue or Baby Blue

- Western: babies, especially male babies
- Astrology: Virgo



Purple

- Thailand: Mourning, widows
- Eastern: Wealth
- Western: Royalty
- Astrology: Gemini, Sagittarius, and Pisces
- Feng Shui: Yin, spiritual awareness, physical and mental healing
- Stained Glass (Dante): Justice, royalty, suffering and mystery. With white it

Color Symbolism



stands for humility and purity.

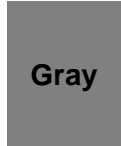
- Astrology: Virgo and Libra
- Psychology: Suppresses appetite, peaceful environment, good for migraines

White

- Apache: North — source of snow.
- Cherokee: Peace and happiness. Represents the South.
- China: Death, mourning
- India: unhappiness
- Japan: White carnation symbolizes death
- Navajo: Tsisnaasjini' — Dawn or White Shell Mountain
- Eastern: Funerals, helpful people, children, marriage, mourning, peace, travel
- Western: Brides, angels, good guys, hospitals, doctors, peace (white dove)
- Astrology: Aries and Pisces
- Feng Shui: Yang, metal, death, mourning, spirits, ghosts, poise, confidence
- Roses: Reverence, humility
- Stained Glass (Dante): Serenity, peace, purity, joy, faith, and innocence.



- Apache: West — where the sun sets
- Australian Aboriginals: Color of the people
- Cherokee: Problems and death. Represents the West.
- China: Color for young boys
- Navajo: Dibé Nitsaa — Obsidian Mountain
- Thailand: Bad luck, unhappiness, evil
- Eastern: Career, evil, knowledge, mourning, penance
- Western: Funerals, death, Halloween (with orange), bad guys, rebellion
- Feng Shui: Yin, water, money, income, career success, emotional protection, power, stability, bruises, evil
- Psychology: self-confidence, strength, power



- Eastern: Helpers, travel
- Western: Boring, dull, plain, sad
- Feng Shui: Yin, metal, dead, dull, indefinite



- Western: stylish, money
- Feng Shui: Yin, metal, trust, romance



- Australian Aboriginals: Color of the land
- Cherokee: Good.
- Western: Wholesome, earthy, dependable, steadfast, health
- Astrology: Capricorn and Scorpio (reddish brown)
- Feng Shui: Yang, earth, industry, grounded

Color Symbolism

Color symbolism in Zulu beading.

Young girls learned bead work and the meaning of the symbols and colors used from their older sisters. The bead work was usually worn as a head or neck band. Men depended on female relatives to explain the code. The patterns and colors can also tell what region a woman comes from and what her social standing is.

Native American Color Symbolism

Colors in Native American culture often symbolize different things from culture to culture....African cultures have different meanings....and so on. Colors symbolize different qualities in various European cultures.

Cherokee

The Four Directions

Colors were associated with the four directions.

Blue represented North which meant cold, defeat and trouble.

White was South representing warmth, peace and happiness.

Red was East, the color of the Sacred Fire, blood, and success.

West was black the color meaning problems and death.

Other colors also had special meanings.

Brown was good but yellow meant trouble and strife.

Navajo Meanings of Colors

This information was posted to Getty Teacher Art Exchange by Christine Merriam

The Four Sacred Mountains and directions are associated with colors. The Navajos believe that their Creator placed them on the land between the following 4 mountains representing the 4 cardinal directions:

White: Mount Blanca (Tsisnaasjini' - Dawn or White Shell Mountain) Sacred Mountain of the East near Alamosa in San Luis Valley, Colorado

Blue: Mount Taylor (Tsoodzil - Blue Bead or Turquoise Mountain) Sacred Mountain of the South north of Laguna, New Mexico

Yellow: San Francisco Peaks (Doko'oosliid - Abalone Shell Mountain) Sacred Mountain of the West near Flagstaff, Arizona

Black: Mount Hesperus Dibé Nitsaa (Big Mountain Sheep) - Obsidian Mountain Sacred Mountain of the North La Plata Mountains, Colorado. http://www.lapahie.com/Sacred_Mts.cfm

The principal colors, white, blue, yellow and black are linked to the four sacred mountains as well as the directions-

Red is often considered a sacred color and represents sunlight. (source for this is off line now)

White Mountain Apaches

Four sacred colors of the White Mountain Apaches in east central Arizona contrast interestingly with the Cherokee colors:

White represents the north, source of snow

Yellow is east, where the sun comes up

Green is south

Black is west, home of the sun's setting

Color Symbolism

Medicine Wheel color symbolism:

EAST- dawn of new day-Yellow-illumination-inspiration-eagle
SOUTH- red or green-passion, heart, warmth-emotions-porcupine
WEST- black-introspection, self examination, reflection-bear
NORTH- wisdom of our elders-white-white buffalo

The Flag of the Flag of the Iowa Nation

The color of the streamers brings together the four primary colors in Native American art, the black, yellow, red and white. These colors are said to represent the four races of man and the four prime directions of the compass. With its use of color and its chosen emblems the flag of the Iowas may be the most typical of all Native American flags.

Native American Color Symbolism (varies by ethnic group - this source was not "authoritative")

Red (Faith): Communication
Yellow (Love): Overcoming challenges through unconditional love
Blue (Intuition): Using intuition to teach and serve
Green (Will): Living willfully
Pink (Creativity): Working
White (Magnetism): Sharing
Purple (Wisdom): Gratitude/healing
Orange (Learning): Kinship
Gray (Honoring): Friendship
Brown (Knowing): Self-discipline
Rose (Seeing): Motivation
Black (Hearing) Harmony; listening
Crystal (Clarity): Wholeness

Asian Color Symbolism

Red: Happiness, marriage, prosperity
Pink Marriage
Yellow: Against evil, for the dead, geomantic blessings
Green: Eternity, family, harmony, health, peace, posterity
Blue: Self-cultivation, wealth
Purple: Wealth
White: Children, helpful people, marriage, mourning, peace, purity, travel
Gold: Strength, wealth
Gray: Helpful people, travel
Black: Career, evil influences, knowledge, mourning, penance, self-cultivation

Color Symbolism

Astrological Color Associations (this source was not "authoritative")

(SIGN--COLOR)

Aries -- White

Taurus -- Yellow

Gemini -- Red or Purple

Cancer -- Bright Green

Leo -- Golden Yellow/Orange

Virgo -- Pale Blue or Violet

Libra -- Violet

Scorpio -- Reddish Brown

Sagittarius -- Orange or Purple

Capricorn -- Brown or Blue

Aquarius -- Dark Blue

Pisces -- White or Purple

Color Therapy - Color and the Brain

Specific colors have different effects (list copied from Biopulse.org)

Black: self-confidence, power, strength

Blue: calming, lowers blood pressure, decreases respiration

Green: soothing, relaxing mentally as well as physically, helps those suffering from depression, anxiety, nervousness

Violet: suppresses appetite, provides a peaceful environment, good for migraines

Pink: used in diet therapy as an appetite suppressant, relaxes muscles, relieves tension, soothing

Yellow: energizes, relieves depression, improves memory, stimulates appetite

Orange: energizes, stimulates appetite and digestive system

Red: stimulates brain wave activity, increases heart rate, respirations and blood pressure.....

Roses – Flower Colors & Meanings



red

There's nothing secret about the red rose's symbolism of love. Valentine's Day would hardly exist without this bold and dramatic bloom. The ultimate symbol of romantic love and enduring passion, the red rose also conveys respect and the creative spirit of love. Representing true love stronger than thorns, the red rose is known universally as the lover's rose.



white

Representing, humility, purity and innocence, the white rose - often referred to as the bridal rose - is associated with young love. In Scotland, when the white rose bloomed in autumn, it was seen as a token of early marriage. Also symbolizing truth and reverence, it sends a message of loyalty and says "I am worthy of you."

Color Symbolism



yellow

While in Victorian times, the yellow rose symbolized jealousy, today it represents friendship, joy and caring. A bouquet of these sun-filled blossoms conveys warmth, gladness and affection.



pink

Symbolizing gentility, femininity, elegance and refinement, the pink rose also carries additional meanings depending on its hue. A deep pink conveys gratitude and appreciation, while pale shades connote grace and gentleness, admiration and happiness.



orange

With their warm, vibrant tones, orange roses symbolize enthusiasm and desire. If you're looking for a way to express admiration and attraction - with an underlying message of passion and excitement - then send a bouquet filled with these fiery blooms.



lilac & purple

Thought to be almost mystical in nature, with symbolism tied to enchantment, desire and even proceeding cautiously, it's not surprising that lilac and purple roses send a message of love at first sight, A great Valentine flower.



multi-colored roses

In some instances - usually when mixing red with another color rose - you can send additional messages with your choice of bouquet. For example, a combination of red and yellow roses conveys gaiety and happiness, while a mix of red and white roses symbolizes unity.