Garden Messages

How shared symbols teach and preserve group practices

S.3.3 "Explain how symbolic communication allows for socialization and cultural transmission."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the three symbols used in the garden, then circle what each one communicates. Number the symbols 1 to 3 so you can track how each helps people learn or pass on a group practice.

What the Garden Teaches

1. At a neighborhood garden, a blue wooden stake beside a plot does not mean "water" by itself. Gardeners have agreed that the stake tells volunteers the soil needs checking before anyone pours water. Each spring, experienced members show new volunteers the stake and explain why they should feel the soil first. A newcomer who thinks blue means "water now" might soak a bed that is already wet. Once volunteers learn the shared meaning, they can coordinate care even when they work at different times. The stake also teaches newcomers a garden habit: check conditions instead of acting on a guess.

2. Near the tool shed, a sign reads, "Borrow tools, return them clean." No one needs to be standing there to give the instruction. Its words communicate an expectation about how members treat shared equipment. When a teenager joins the garden, she watches other members rinse a shovel and put it back after reading the sign. She begins doing the same. The sign and the members' actions together make the rule part of her routine. This is socialization: by interpreting a shared message and seeing it practiced, she learns what conduct the group expects of her.

3. At the end of the season, gardeners put saved seeds in labeled envelopes. One envelope says, "Hill beans: plant after the last frost; save seeds from dry pods." Years later, new gardeners read the note and grow beans even if its writer has moved away. The written words carry planting knowledge across time, while the practice of saving and labeling seeds passes along a garden tradition. Members can also ask why the note matters and revise it if local conditions change. Shared symbols do more than help people work together today: they allow knowledge and customs to reach people who never met.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the blue stake help volunteers coordinate care when they work at different times?

2. How do the tool-shed sign and other members' actions help socialize the teenager?

3. How does the labeled seed envelope pass garden knowledge and tradition to people who never met its writer?

4. Why might a newcomer harm a plot after seeing the blue stake? What does this show about symbols?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a symbol that could help new students learn a school group's routine. In four or five sentences, describe its agreed meaning, how newcomers learn it, what behavior it encourages, and how future students could learn the same meaning.

ANSWER KEY

Garden Messages

HIGH SCHOOL · S.3.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the three symbols used in the garden, then circle what each one communicates. Number the symbols 1 to 3 so you can track how each helps people learn or pass on a group practice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the blue stake help volunteers coordinate care when they work at different times?	**Because volunteers share its meaning, the stake tells each person to check the soil before watering, even when other members are absent.**
2	How do the tool-shed sign and other members' actions help socialize the teenager?	**The sign states the rule for shared tools, and members demonstrate it. The teenager learns to clean and return tools herself.**
3	How does the labeled seed envelope pass garden knowledge and tradition to people who never met its writer?	**Its words tell later gardeners when to plant the beans and how to save their seeds, carrying both knowledge and a seed-saving practice forward.**
4	Why might a newcomer harm a plot after seeing the blue stake? What does this show about symbols?	**A newcomer might mistake the stake for a command to water immediately. Its meaning must be learned from the group; the color alone does not explain the practice.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In a school music club, a purple card on a chair means its player is helping set up and will return. Older members explain the card to new players during their first rehearsal. New players learn to leave that chair open instead of taking someone's place. Each year, outgoing members teach the next group the card's meaning, so the club keeps the same considerate routine.

Accept answers that connect a shared symbol to a learned group expectation or practice. For the open task, the symbol's meaning must be taught to newcomers and passed to future members, not assumed to be obvious.