

A JOURNEY THROUGH SYMBOLS

**YOUR GUIDE TO EXPLORING THE
IMAGINATION**

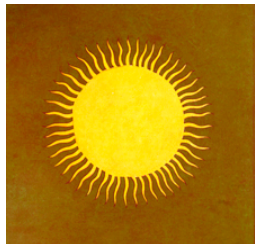


INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM GUIDE

The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism

Table of Contents

Begin Your Journey with Symbols	3
A Note on This Guide	4
Signs and Symbols	5
About Symbols	7
A Note on the Journey	8
Four Steps of the Journey	9
I. The Call	10
Introduction to the Collage	15
Create a Collage	16
Reflect on and Explore your Collage	17
II. The Departure	18
Explore your Symbol by Drawing	22
Introduction to Research	23
Research Sample – SUN	24
Create Key Words	32
Your Research	33
Resources	34
III. The Transformation	36
Create Your Art Work	40
Write a Poem	42
IV. The Return	43
Create Artist’s Statement	48
Reflect on Your Journey	49



Begin Your Journey with Symbols

You are about to embark on an inner journey using symbols. Symbols have the power to help you discover aspects of yourself and the world around you that you may not have even known were there – although you might recognize them when they emerge.

This booklet is a guide for creating a *relationship* with symbols – a relationship that can lead you to a deeper understanding of yourself and others. When you create a relationship with symbols, they expand in their meaningfulness and have the power to touch many parts of your life.

A Note on This Guide

Today, visual images are everywhere. They confront us in every form of media. But among all the images out there, just a few seem to have a resonance for us, a connection that moves and inspires us in a meaningful way.

In this guide we invite you to experience ways to connect to images with a symbolic resonance.

Whether you are a student or an educator looking to incorporate the study of images, art, and universal symbolism into your work, or an individual on your own journey, the activities and information included in this guide are meant to foster experiences in which you explore, analyze, and reflect on the power of symbols and the role they play in your life.

The Guide includes texts about the journey and images from different world cultures and time periods. These words and images are meant to guide and inspire you throughout the journey.

The Guide also suggests activities to help you deepen your relationship with symbols, such as art-making, collage creation, reading, writing, and researching. The Guide offers reflections on each step.

Suggested materials for the activities:

Art-making: different kinds of craft papers and boards, pens, pencils, crayons, paint, Play-Doh, clay, boxes, sticks, fabric, beads, glue, scissors, or any material you have access to.

Collage creation: large-size sheets of paper, various magazines with images.

Writing: paper, pencil or pen.

Reading and Research: See “Resources for Research and Inspiration” on p.

35

Signs and Symbols

Is there a difference between signs and symbols?



This image is a *sign* to warn people that lions are in the vicinity. It is meant to convey a clear meaning and pass along helpful information about something known.



This image comes from the tomb of King Tutankhamen in ancient Egypt. It points to a meaning that is hidden from view but may become apparent if we think about what a lion is like. A lion is strong. So, the image of this lion makes us feel that it guards the King in the Underworld. We know this is not simply an image – it is a *symbol* because it moves us. It brings feelings in relation to what it is, not simply to what information it is conveying.

In this Guide we will explore symbolic images that have the potential to communicate and connect to the unknown – images that have an emotional meaning.

“The true symbol should be understood as an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formulated in any other or better way.”

C. G. Jung

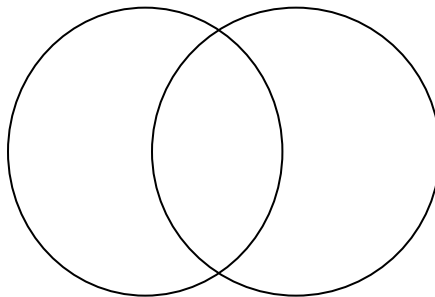


WHAT IS A SYMBOL?



About Symbols

In ancient Egyptian myth, the world was created when Heaven and Earth were united. In China the world was created when the original wholeness separated into two, yin and yang. Whether in union or separation, in our *perception* it seems like everything in our world exists in pairs of opposites. This is true not only of our concrete reality, but also of our feelings as well as abstract concepts and ideas. Where we find light there is darkness, where there is past there is future. The list of opposites seems endless: there is black and white, above and below, far and near, good and evil, love and hate, male and female, hot and cold, chaos and order, conscious and unconscious.



If we imagine the opposites as two circles overlapping, an oval shape appears in between, forming an opening or doorway. In ancient Greek geometry the oval was called the birthplace or the place of creation. ***This is where symbols appear.*** The word “symbol” comes from an ancient Greek word meaning “thrown together.” If we think of the two opposing circles as the conscious and the unconscious, this means that the symbol has something from both. And when we ***experience a symbol*** the two realms become one. Symbols feel so powerful because they point to things we don’t know, originating from a source that we call “the unconscious.”

Symbols give us dual vision where we can see both heaven and earth at the same time.

A Note on the Journey

"I dwell in possibility." —Emily Dickinson

"Obstacles do not block the path, they are the path." —Zen Proverb

In this Guide we use the myth of the Hero's Journey to discover symbols. We have seen how symbols open us up to other ways of seeing, which can also lead to new ways of being. Symbols are vital seeds – living carriers of possibility. They bring us inspiration, learning, and healing. They move us to become transformers, mediating change. Myths are stories that use symbols to teach us how to understand our world and ourselves. From the beginning of humankind myths have functioned as guides on life's journey.

As the myth of The Hero's Journey tells it, we are all called to become a hero or heroine in search of adventure. This may bring both excitement and fear as we must leave home and enter a world that is new and unknown. Leaving home can also be seen symbolically as the beginning of a new project or a new phase in our life.

Once departed, we will have to overcome obstacles and dangers on the way, forcing us to learn new skills and develop powers we didn't know that we had. In the meantime, we find ourselves being transformed. And one day a memory may come to us of home, calling us to return. Once we are home, we can be called to begin a new journey. The Hero's Journey is a circular story.

Joseph Campbell structured and popularized ancient hero myths from all over the world in a book that he called *The Hero's Journey*. This guide uses a version of his structure to lead you through the journey in four steps:

- The Call

- The Departure

- The Transformation

- The Return

Campbell was inspired by C.G. Jung's work and called him "...a scholar in the grand style, whose researches, particularly in comparative mythology, alchemy, and the psychology of religion, have inspired and augmented the findings of an astonishing number of the leading creative scholars of our time."

Four Steps of the Journey



I. The CALL

Creating a collage
Finding your symbol



II. The DEPARTURE

Creating drawings
Research



III. The TRANSFORMATION

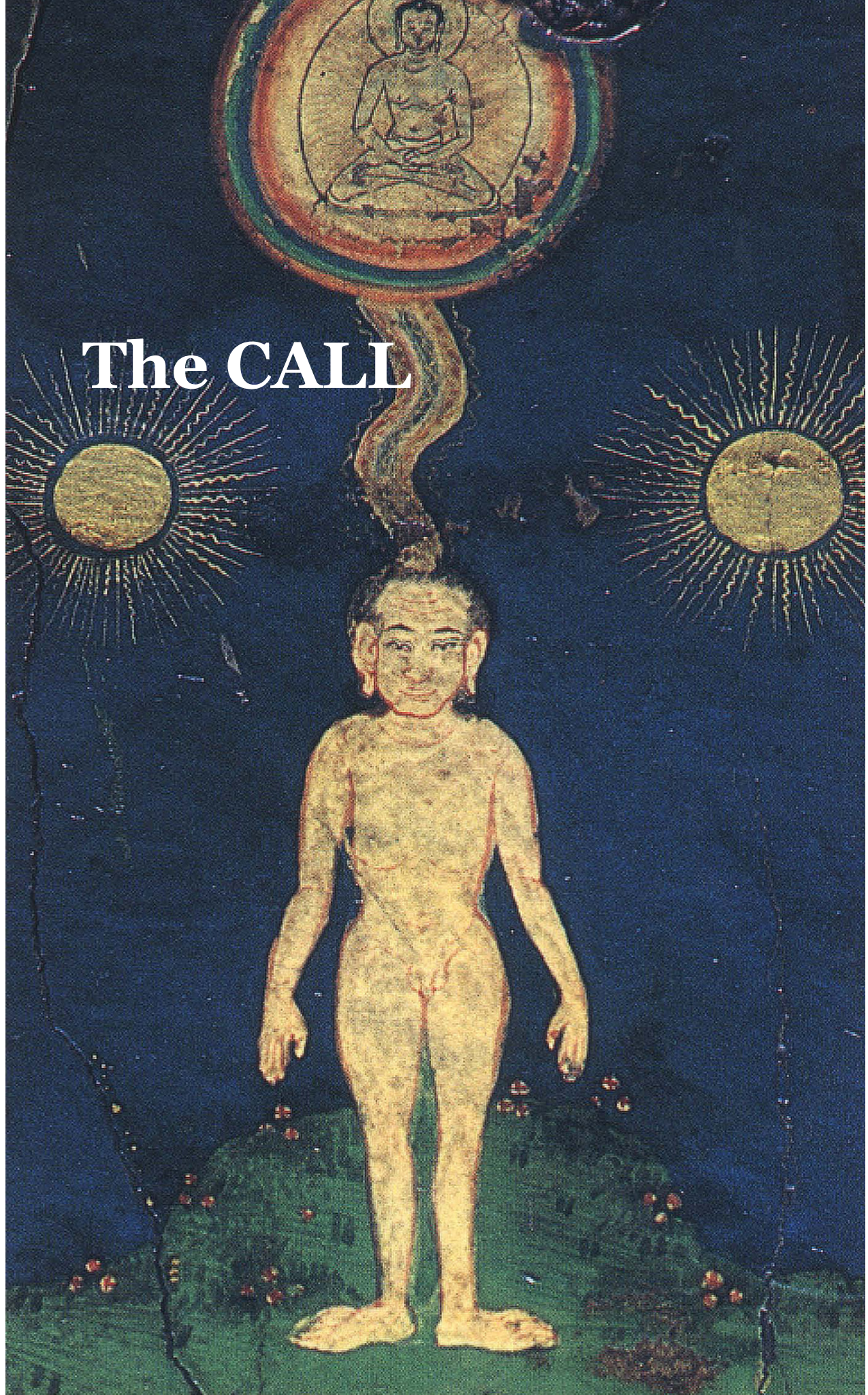
Creating artwork
Writing poems



IV. The RETURN

Creating artist statement
Reflection

The CALL











I. The Call

“The mountains are calling, and I must go.” —John Muir

The journey begins with a call. Have you ever been drawn to a person, place, or thing and not been able to articulate why? Have you ever chosen a path that, although not the clearest, just seemed right? Have you ever delved into unknown territory, against your own logical thinking? You may have an intuition or feel a deep longing to do something that you never thought of or tried before. You may hear an inner voice whispering to you to do something that both excites you and frightens you. You have probably already experienced *the call to adventure* in many ways, just as you are sure to experience countless other calls throughout your life.

Inspiration is also a form of calling, bringing faith and guidance. Inspiration comes from a Latin word meaning “spirit,” turning into wind and breath. To breathe. To listen.

You will begin this Hero’s Journey by doing a collage where you will let the images call you. Even an art activity may feel scary. No wonder – a call to adventure is asking for a suspension of logic and a leap of faith. It asks you to leave the comforts of what is known and to dive deep into the unknown.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLAGE

Images calling

This is the first step of your journey, where you will explore images that you feel are calling you.

Gather a variety of magazines with images.

The magazines can be about nature, travel, art, fashion, health or anything you can find. You might have old magazines in your home, or you can ask your friends for donations, or pick up discards from the local library or even places like hair salons. When you have a diverse set, you are ready for the next step.

Find a place that invites an open mind.

Thank your rational side and ask it to take a back seat for a moment. Then invite your intuitive side to guide the creative process and to allow for surprise and discovery.

Select and cut out images that speak to you.

You don't have to have a reason for the images you select. Simply cut out what calls to you. Choose images that attract or even repel you, images with heat, images that spark, or leap out, that are familiar or maybe strange. Do not censor yourself, or force a specific theme, even if you see one. Take the opportunity to be spontaneous. Let images emerge.

You can act as if you are fishing for the images with your fingers and not your eyes. You may even pretend the images are selecting you rather than the other way around. Let it be an adventure to discover what images are calling you, in a whispering or a loud voice.

The selection should be done within a short period of time so as to be playful and spontaneous.

Begin fishing and play!

"I shut my eyes in order to see." —Paul Gauguin

CREATE *a collage*

Now you have a pile of images that have called to you.
This is your treasure that will take you to the next step.

Get a piece of blank paper, big or small.

Start to arrange the images on the paper. See how the images want to be placed and what feels right to you. You can use entire images, or just cut out parts of them. You might want to cover the entire paper or not; the paper itself will be part of the final image.

There is no need to articulate why you are arranging the images in a specific way. Work intuitively. You will have time later to be more reflective.

When the arrangement feels right, you may glue the images down.

Be open and curious as you work on your collage!

Reflect on and explore your collage — *Find your Symbol*

You are about to explore the collage you have created. It contains a set of images that have asked you to take them somewhere, or to take you somewhere.

Step back and look at your collage.

What do you see?

Does the entire collage appear as one image?

Gaze without judgment.

Let your eyes explore.

Take time to describe what you see to yourself or to someone else.

You can imagine you are describing the collage to someone who cannot see it.

Notice whether there are any specific colors, shapes, or textures.

Are there images that feel familiar to you, meaningful and healing?

Are there images that feel surprising to you, unexpected, strange and odd?

Any images that feel frightening or repulsive?

Any images that are leaping out, funny, energizing, making you smile?

Do you notice a theme emerging?

Are there patterns of similar types of images?

Notice the placement of the images.

What have you placed at the edges, at the center, or at the top?

Does this placement create a certain relationship or dialogue among the images?

You might want to invite someone to describe what they see in your collage. Another person may see things you didn't notice.

After exploring your collage, choose one or two strong images that emerge from the whole collage—*images* you feel generate heat; images that stir curiosity or excitement within; images that feel meaningful to you; images that are familiar, or maybe completely new. Follow your instinct.

When you have found your image/images, just say: "Nice to meet me," because that is a little bit of you, reflecting back at you. What is exciting is how it connects, and how you connect to the larger wider world.

Name the image/images or theme you have chosen. It might be: Cat, Eye, Dragon, Fire, Egg, Forest, Home, etc. This image/theme you selected will be your Symbol, which you will explore in different ways throughout this guide. By using your intuition and unconscious mind, you have been "called" to this symbol.

When you work with symbols, you will see that they start to liquefy, to move, to transform. They will go to other places, or they might stay close to home. When you work with symbols, something might shift. You have to pay attention. It is an adventure.

A call to adventure!

A high-angle, aerial photograph of a person walking away from the viewer down a wide, light-colored path that cuts through a dense, dark forest. The path is illuminated, possibly by sunlight filtering through the trees, creating a strong contrast with the surrounding dark foliage. The person is a small, dark silhouette in the middle of the path, heading towards the top of the frame.

The DEPARTURE







II. The Departure

At this point of the journey, the hero or heroine has decided to accept the call to adventure and to go forth into the unknown.

The departure can be literal, physical, or metaphorical. Even if you do something as simple as taking a step into something new, you accept the challenge of leaving what is known to you, risk stepping into the unfamiliar and invite chance to guide your way. Even wrong turns or blunders are part of the journey and will lead you forward along this unknown path.

In the context of this guide, you have now gathered the images that called you and have found your symbol. You can now set forth on a journey.



EXPLORE YOUR SYMBOL

by drawing

"In order to create, we draw from our inner well." —Julia Cameron

Start to explore your symbol visually by using paper, pens, pencils, and crayons.

Chose a color and write down the name of your symbol, big or small.

If you were to close your eyes, and someone were to say the name of your symbol aloud,
what do you see in your mind?

On a piece of paper, begin doodling ideas.

Consider the following:

What drew you to select your image/symbol in the first place?

You may have selected your symbol based on some instinctive pull.

Use that as your guide.

Does the symbol feel challenging in any way, or does it feel more pleasing and comforting?

Is it real or more of a fantasy?

What does the symbol mean to you?

Let your hand explore freely. Drawing is like writing, which is made of forms, too – you already have your own way of shaping words, just as you have your own way of writing. See what forms and shapes your symbol inspires you to draw. Just follow your hand and pay attention. Don't think of whether your symbol is good or bad, but just invite your curious mind to explore.

This activity is an initiating step of getting to know your symbol. Allow yourself to be spontaneous and playful, welcoming the responses.

When something has emerged, take your time to look at what has been created.

What do you see? Does it feel familiar, or surprising?

Make a note of your response.

INTRODUCTION

to research

"Research is creating new knowledge." —Neil Armstrong

Research is a creative process that is not always linear. It can lead you in interesting new directions and be a rich inspiration on your journey.

After having explored your connection with your symbol by doing some initial drawings, you will now bring it out into the world and see how it has been depicted in other cultures, as well as your own.

Symbols can hold very different interpretations and meanings across cultures and time periods.

Research sample

What follows is an example of some research on the symbol of the **SUN**. There are some images from different cultures, and some text written to explain how the sun was viewed cross-culturally and in different time periods.

Take your time to look at the images.

Consider the following:

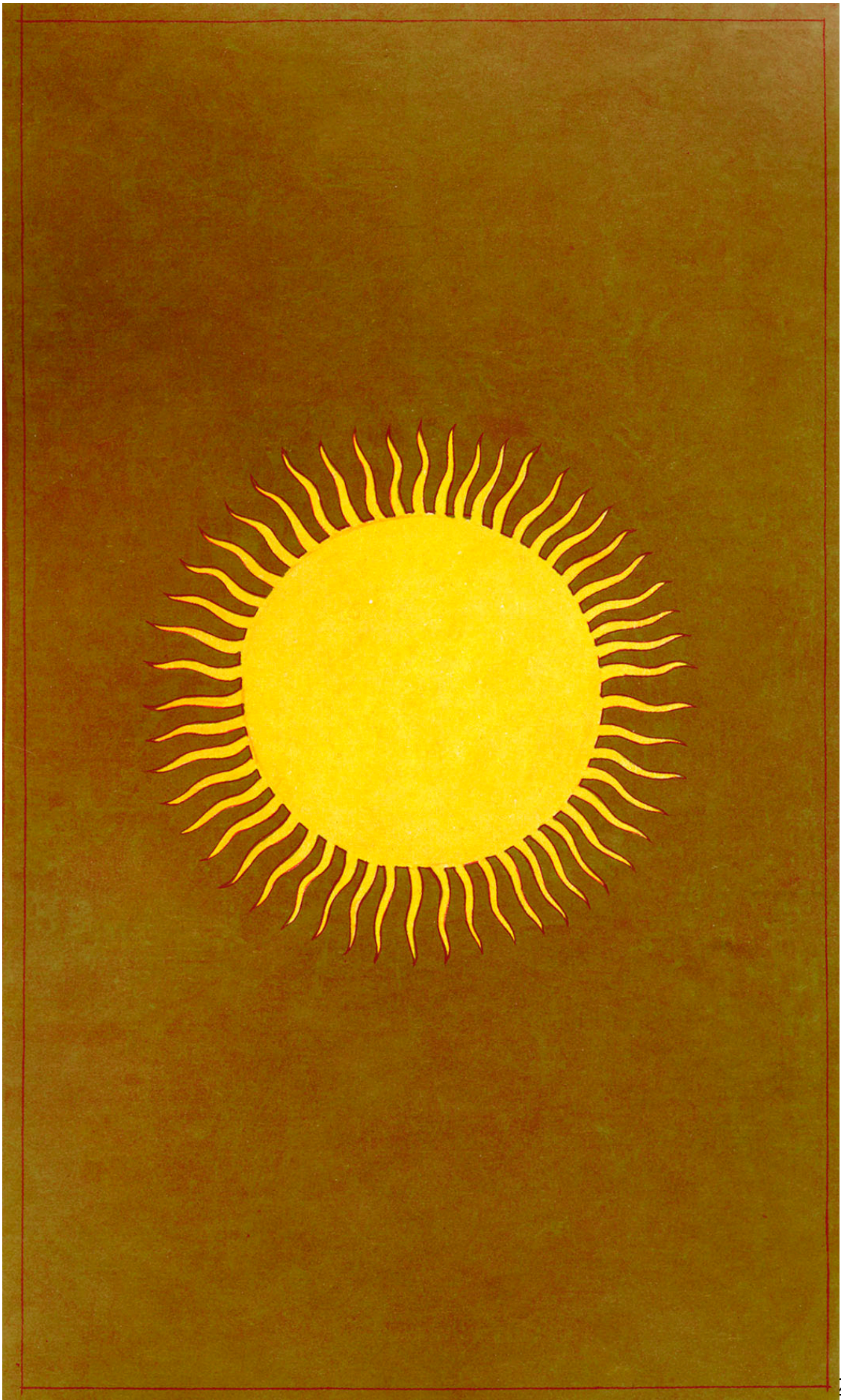
How is the sun depicted differently in the images?

What colors are used? What shapes?

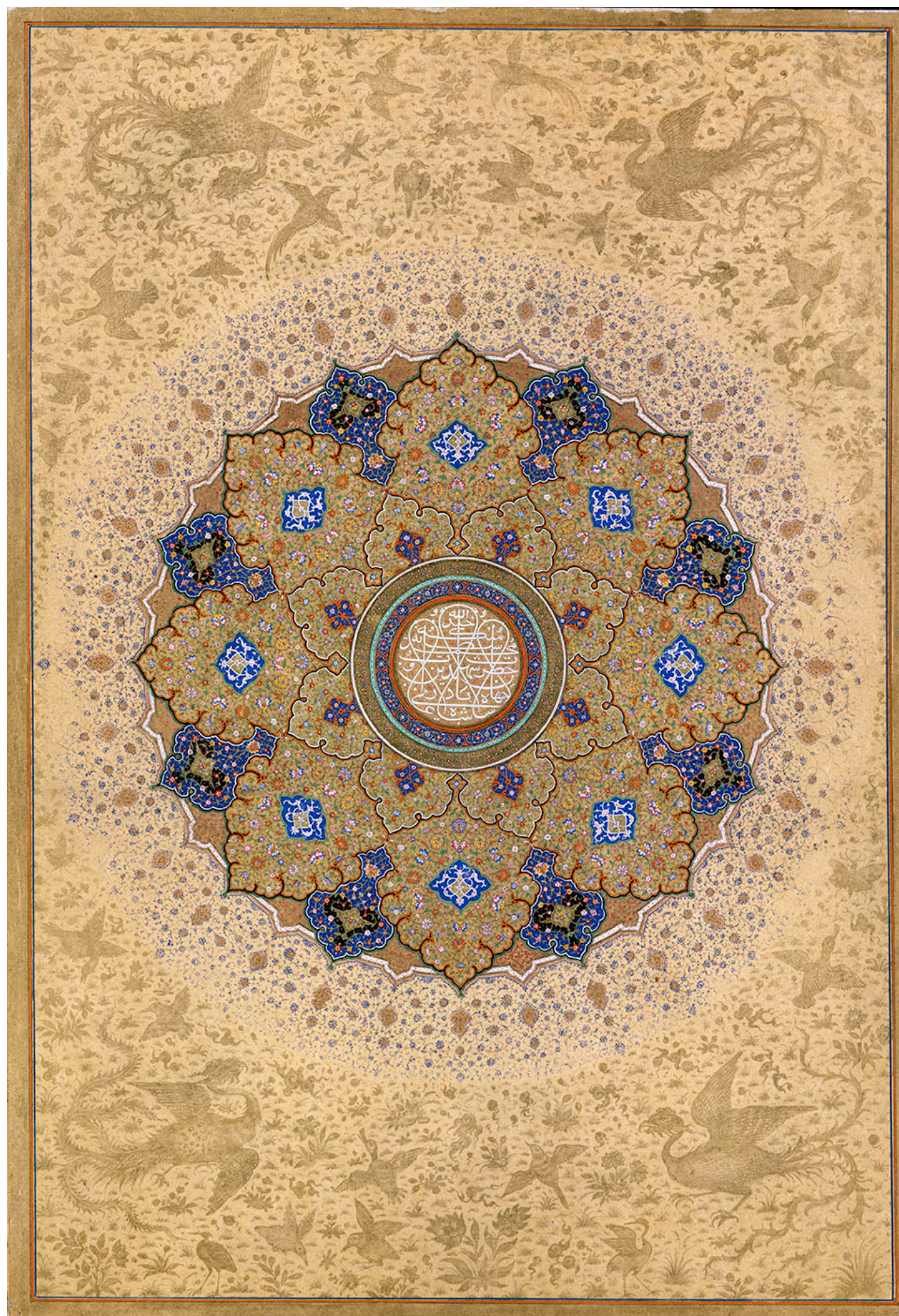
How are the images composed and arranged?

Do any of the images tell a story?

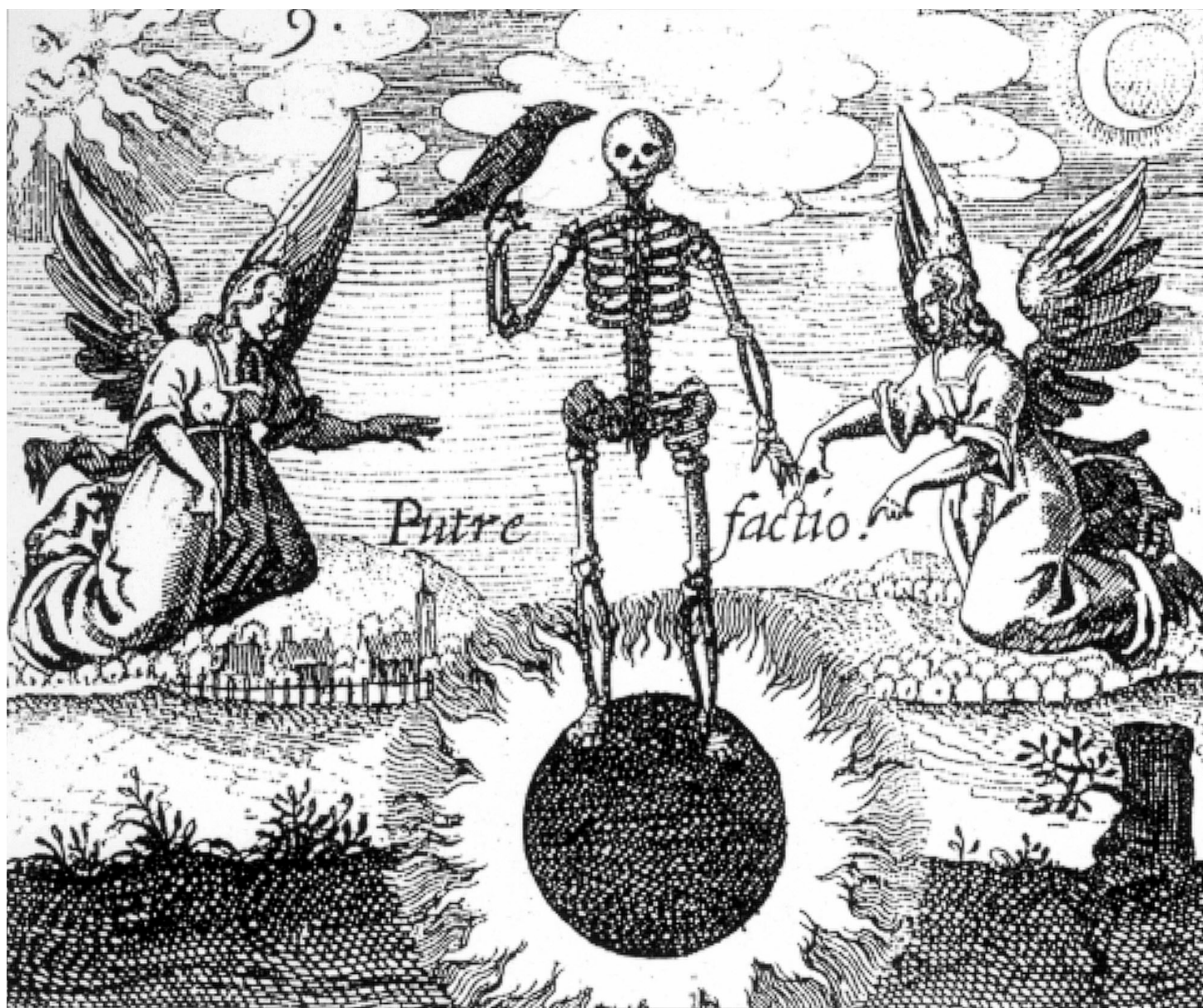
What do you learn from this sample of images of the SUN?











SUN



Yoti (Sanskrit, Light) evokes both Spirit energy in its radiance, and Matter as its rays reach us here and now.



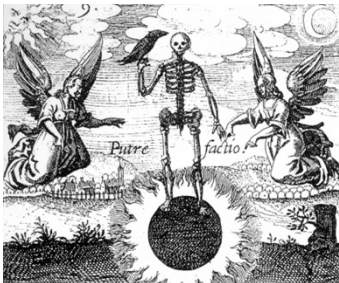
The falcon-headed sun-god Horakhti directs his flower sun rays at the worshipping Taperet. Painted wood stele of Lady Tapere, 22nd Dynasty (1070-712 BCE), Egypt.



This “Sunburst” mandala evokes the celestial order over which the sun presides. Opening folio from an album Shamsa (“sunburst”), inscribed with the titles of Shah Jahan (1628-58) – “May God Make His Kingdom Last Forever!” ca.1645, India.



Sun Woman, whose hut is also a sun-wheel, conveys the sun’s power of fertility, nurturing light and warmth as well as its capacity for destructiveness. “Sun Woman in her Hut” by Tjamalampuwa, ochre on bark, 1954, Melville Island, Australia.



“The black sun,” evokes the stage of alchemy called nigredo or blackness. It was also described by the medieval alchemists as melancholy, which we today call depression. Although shown as an encounter with death the presence of the angels suggests that this passage is not only necessary in order to grow and mature as an individual but there is also help.

THE SUN

...Of all forms, yellow, all-knowing,
The supreme goal, the one light, giving heat.
Thousand-rayed, existing in a hundred forms,
The sun rises as the breath of creatures.

—*Prasna Upanishad*, Question 1.8

These lines from the Indian *Upanishad* tell of the sun as the life-giving force on earth. It creates the world anew each morning, giving color and form to all as it rises out of the black formless night. We can even feel the sun's presence on our skin when we are touched by its warm rays. The Egyptians depicted this as the sun's rays ending in small hands. They also believed that after death the pharaoh became a star or a little sun, forever shining. In a parallel imagination, after death the pharaoh's body turned into gold, becoming eternal, unchanging like the sun.

The medieval alchemists continued this vision by secretly practicing in their laboratories, trying to turn lead, the basest of all metals, into gold. But they also knew that the real goal was to be found within, to become golden and clear like the sunlight. This idea appears in many other traditions – in, for example, the Buddhist and Taoist search for enlightenment and in C.G. Jung's psychological development of individual consciousness.

Not only was the sun's gold considered perfect, so was its circular form, deemed by Plato as the most perfect of all forms. The circle appeared often in the earliest art as painted dots, hollows or stone spheres believed to be inspired by the sun. Its meaning is manifold but always related to the human desire for procreation, for fertility, making the sun a symbol of life itself. (Giedeon, 126ff)

In earlier times the sun was often seen as the father and the moon as the mother of the world. While the moon was connected to the night world, the sun belonged to the day with related ideas of time, light and order. The sun disc was the sun god's eye, which carried the rich symbolism of sight, as all-seeing ruler, judge and logos – the supreme masculine principle.

The sun has been worshipped across cultures and throughout time. Being the most powerful of all, the sun came to be the symbol of the king as the son of the sun. This tradition was still alive in England at the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 when she was wearing a golden cloak under her robe and a crown of gold, rayed like the sun on her head – even though this time the ruler was a woman.

More than 5000 years ago the symbol of the sun appeared in visual form as a circle with a dot at the center in countries like Egypt and China, without any known connection between them. The circle with a dot is still used in astrology as the symbol for the sun and in alchemy as the symbol for gold or the highest goal of the work. In Greece it also became a symbol for the ongoing creation.

Like all symbols, the sun is bivalent; it is not only part of creating life, it is also destructive. As the sun sets at the Western horizon and the night arrives, everything turns dark, as if creation is dissolving, all becoming invisible. Some believed that the sun died at sunset and was reborn in the morning. In myth, the solar hero travelled with the sun into the dangerous underworld. In nature, the sun is also destructive as the scorching midday or midsummer sun, heating the earth.

Sadly, we have forgotten this fragile balance of the opposite poles as we increasingly pollute the air we breathe, cut down and burn the forests, the lungs of the earth, causing the sun to warm both land and sea to the degree that it threatens all life. We can only hope that it is not too late to show our reverence for the sun by keeping the earth green, the air clean and, at least from a human perspective, by preserving the sun as life-giving, golden and eternal.

Giedion, S. *The Eternal Present: The Beginning of Art*. New York, 1962

CREATE

Key words



Now that you have looked at the various images of the Sun, you will begin to research your own symbol.

First generate your guiding key words for the research.

You will find key words by doing a “word association” exercise:

Write down the name of your symbol in the middle of a piece of paper.

Take a moment to look at what you wrote down and listen to your inner voice. You may want to close your eyes to hear.

What words come to mind?

Make a word web, or a tree and let the words branch off from the central word for your symbol. If you get stuck, just go back to the central word and start a new branch and see where it takes you.

Use a timer or watch, and give yourself 60 seconds to write down as many words as possible.

This exercise will give you many facets of your symbol to explore in your research.

YOUR *Research*

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” —Zora Neale Hurston

You will now start your own research by exploring your symbol in other cultures as well as your own.

Consider the following:

Is it possible that the symbol you selected means one thing to you and something entirely different to someone else? Is it possible that the symbol you selected has been perceived differently in other times and cultures? See how many contrasting meanings you can find, and see if you can understand their differences through the cultural or historical contexts.

Consider your resources. You may use local libraries, archives, or online resources to investigate. "The Book of Symbols" and www.aras.org, can be very helpful to you.

Your guiding light will be your key words.

If one word doesn't lead to anything interesting, try another.

Keep a record of what material you find.

Make sketches and jot down notes; all of this information will help you understand your symbol.

Keep an open mind. Research is a creative process that may lead you to new discoveries that you did not even know you were looking for. Try to let go of any preconceived notion of where you will end, and open yourself up to transforming your way of seeing along the way.

If working in a library, your key words will also help guide your search. If you come across a dense book, use the index and/or table of contents to help narrow your search. Skim the pages for words relating to your subject. You can even just skim the text for images.

All manner of materials can be helpful to your search, whether it is images, stories, textbooks, and dictionaries. While your research will most likely take place in a library or archive, you can also begin to ask around. Ask friends and family members for their opinions; what is their understanding of your symbol? What do they think of when they see it? This sort of cultural research is helpful as well.

RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH AND INSPIRATION

RESEARCH

The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism (ARAS)

ARAS is one of the world's most comprehensive resources of mythological, ritualistic and symbolic images. The Archive includes 18,000 images of art from all over the world and from all epochs of human history, accompanied by scholarly commentary.

Visit ARAS Online at www.aras.org

As a member you have access to the entire archive of 18,000 images, which also includes the following publications by ARAS:

- *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*. Taschen, 2010.
- *An Encyclopedia of Archetypal Images, vol I*. Shambhala Publications, Boston & London, 1991.
- *An Encyclopedia of Archetypal Images* subtitle *The Body*. Shambhala Publications, Boston & London, 1996.

There is also a large amount of material on ARAS Online that is free of charge including our extensive online Library of articles and back issues of our quarterly newsletter, ARAS Connections.

Visit in person:

The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism (ARAS)

Address: 28 East 39th Street, New York, NY, 10016. Tel (212) 697-3480.

There are also ARAS centers at the following locations:

C.G. Jung Institute. 2040 Gough Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. (415) 771-8055

C.G Jung Institute. 10349 West Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90064. (310) 556-1193

C.G. Jung Institute. 53 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, Ill, 60604, (312) 701-0400

Suggested Book References:

Caspari, Elizabeth, *Animal Life in Nature and Myth*. Wilmette, Illinois: Chiron Publications, 2003.

Chevalier, Jean and Alain Gheerbrant, *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*. New York: Penguin, 1996.

Cooper, J.C., *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

de Vries, Ad, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*. Amerstad: North Holland Publishing Company, 1984.

Ronnberg, Ami and Kathleen Martin, eds. *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*. Cologne: Taschen, 2010.

Saunders, Nicholas J., *Animal Spirits*. New York, Toronto, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.

Walker, Barbara, *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988.

INSPIRATION

Visit local libraries, museums and galleries. Many museums and galleries also offer free access to images on their websites.

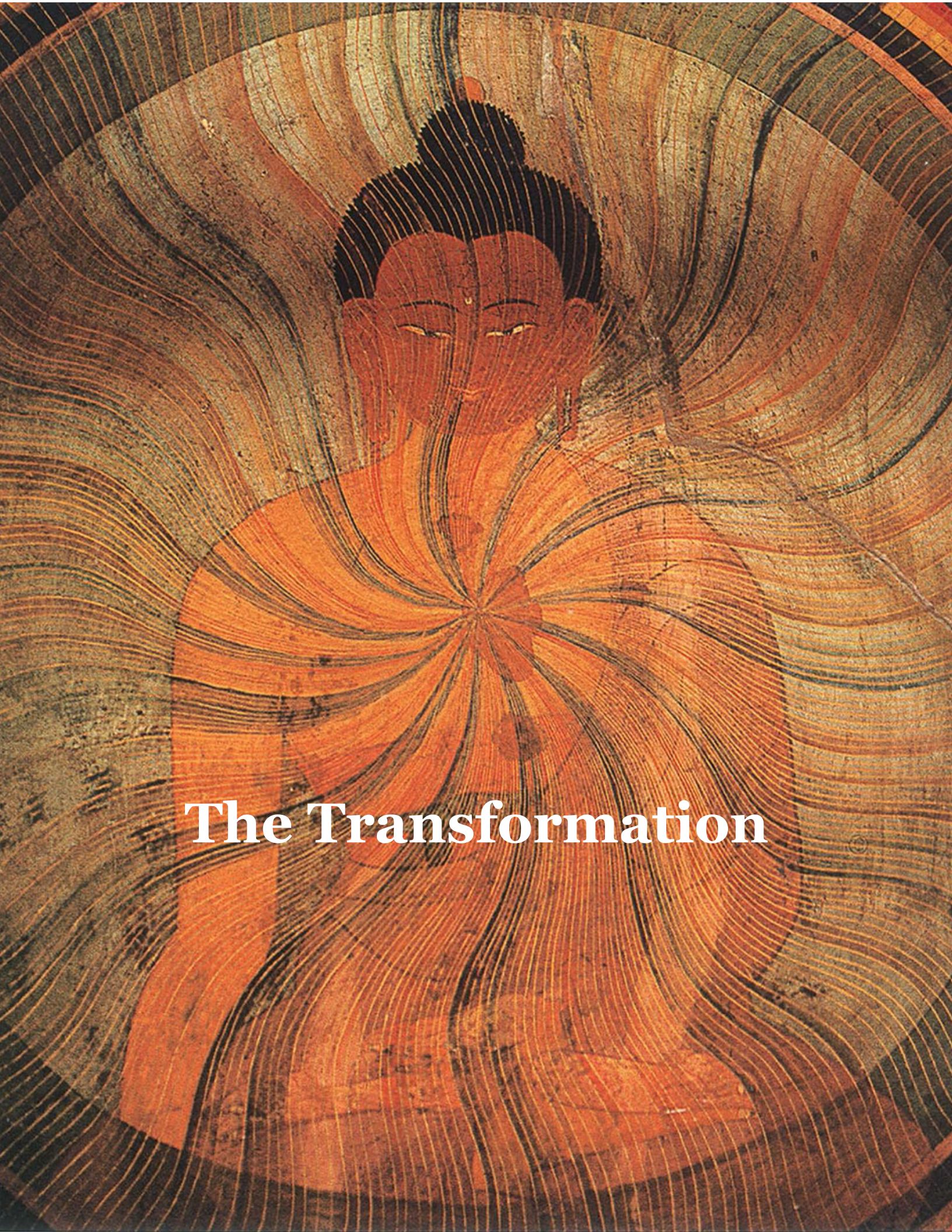
[Art-collecting.com](http://art-collecting.com) — this site offers a comprehensive list of galleries in all states and parts of Europe and Latin America

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_museums — find museums in your area.

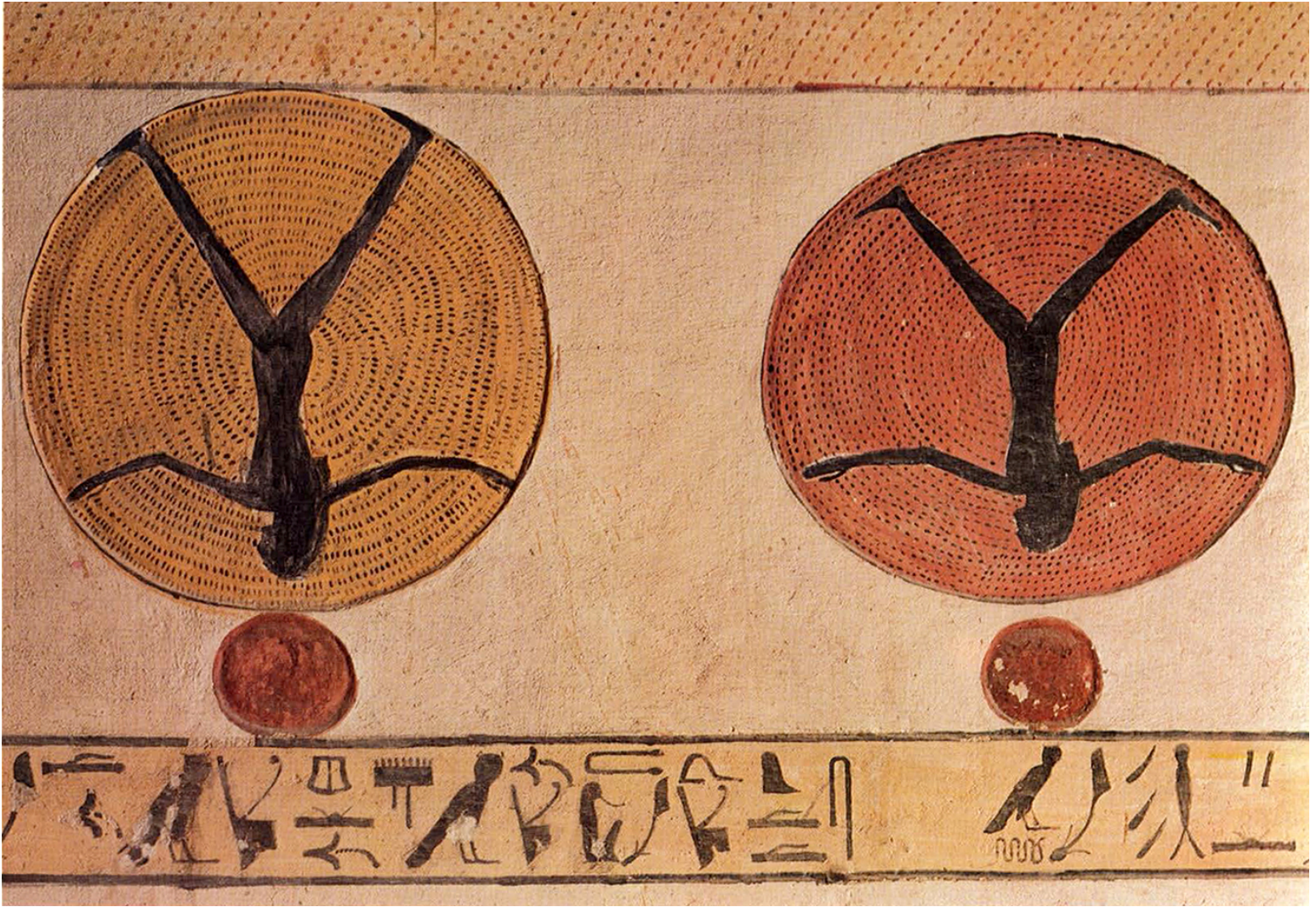
Look at art books of all kinds.

Look for symbols anywhere you go – from walking in your home town to looking at advertisement or movies. Observe your own pet or look at nature. The world is full of symbols! Here are some examples:

The fountains in our cities evoke ancient springs of renewal. The cross at the top of a church brings up the symbolism of the crucifixion and also the place where the vertical and horizontal and also heaven and earth, meet. Wedding rings made of gold and diamonds promise union forever. Apples, so common in advertisement, remind us of health and youth but also of The Tree of Good and Evil in the Bible. In a negative form it appears as the poisoned apple of the witch in fairy tales, or it simply indicates bad or rotten character. Fast cars evoke speed and wealth. The independence of the house cat can become a symbol for an inner aspect of someone's personality. *Anything becomes a symbol when it has some hidden quality that moves us in some way.* A sunset may just be the ending of the day or imagined as the myth of the hero travelling with the sun into the underworld. **The world becomes magical when you begin looking for symbols!**

The image is a full-page background featuring a traditional Buddhist painting. It depicts a Buddha figure seated in a meditative posture, with a large, multi-lobed mandorla (halo) surrounding the head. The painting is characterized by dense, concentric, wavy lines in shades of orange, red, and brown, creating a sense of movement and depth. The Buddha's face is serene, with closed eyes and a slight smile. The overall style is reminiscent of traditional East Asian Buddhist art.

The Transformation







III. The Transformation

"The goal of life is rapture. Art is the way we experience it.
Art is the transforming experience." —Joseph Campbell

Following your call to adventure and departure, the journey continues and goes through multiple stages, leading in various ways to transformation. This transformation symbolizes some sort of shift in awareness; where once you saw the world one way, you now see it slightly differently.

As you continue on your journey of relating to your personal symbol, soon something will be created that didn't exist before. To start a journey, a new project, or a work of art can be both exciting and also frightening. The white paper can feel demanding, and you may not know what to do, but as soon as you take the step to put a mark on the paper, things start to happen. There is a communication taking place between you and the material, between your conscious and unconscious – a dialogue that will lead you on.

In the process of making art the material is transformed. At the same time, you are transformed by the process. This is the result of multiple trials and challenges, physical and intellectual as well as spiritual.

"Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible." —Paul Klee

"Creativity takes courage." —Henri Matisse



CREATE

Your Art Work

"Art evokes the mystery without which the world would not exist." —René Magritte

At this point you have taken both an inner and outer journey. You have explored your personal connection to your symbol by initial drawings, and you have obtained information from the outside world by researching how other cultures view your symbol. These journeys can inspire your further work.

Invite your creative mind to reflect on this experience.

Now you will begin to transform what you have experienced into an artwork. Set aside time and space for yourself to create a piece of art in response to your symbol.

Use the questions below to help spur your process:

- Now that you have learned more about your symbol, has your personal relationship with it changed?
- Have you seen your symbol before? Is it something you see every day, or only on special occasions?
- What color does it evoke? What shape? Is it hot or cold, wet or dry?
- If it made a sound, what would it be? What kind of music does it evoke?
- Is it figurative or more abstract? Does it call for words?
- If you created an environment like a room or a safe space to put your symbol in, what would it be? How would it look?
- What feels most inspiring and exciting about your symbol?

Use the answers to these questions to guide your process.

Select material that you wish to work with; different papers, crayons, paint, boxes, sticks, Play-Doh, clay, fabric, or any material you have access to.

What material speaks to your symbol?

You may want to include something from your initial sketches or collage.

Your artwork can be a drawing, a painting, a sculpture, or a multi-media piece.

Take time and care to reflect on the various meanings of your symbol and see how you can transform these meanings within your chosen medium. Allow generous time – maybe even several days.

Experiment and continue using your playful mind to explore your symbol.

"There is no must in art because art is free." —Kandinsky



WRITE

A Poem

*Between what I see and what I say,
between what I say and what I keep silent,
between what I keep silent and what I dream,
between what I dream and what I forget:
poetry.*

—Octavia Paz

When you feel your art work is completed, take your time to look at what has been created.

Step back and look from a distance. Then move closer. What do you see?
Does it change?

Let your eyes explore.

Does your art work feel familiar to you, or surprising?

Take a piece of paper.

Write down as many words as possible that come to your mind when you look at your art work.

Use these words to write a poem.

Using a list with free-associated words will open up your imagination and create a surprising addition to your visual art work.

A poem is an image in words.

When you finish the poem, read it quietly to yourself and then out loud.

How does the poem add to your visual artwork?

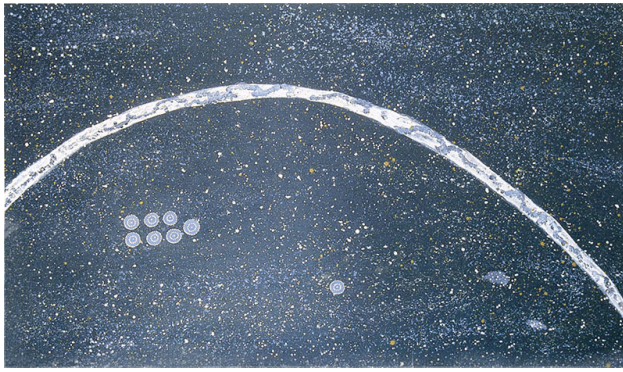
A circular illustration on a textured, aged paper background. The scene depicts a person with short hair, wearing a light-colored robe with a red sash, riding a dark brown water buffalo. The buffalo is shown in profile, facing left, with its head slightly turned. The rider is seated on the buffalo's back, holding a long, thin object, possibly a flute or a stick, to their mouth. The background within the circle consists of horizontal lines representing a field or water, with some dark, rocky or tree-like shapes on the left and right sides. The overall style is traditional East Asian ink and wash painting.

The RETURN





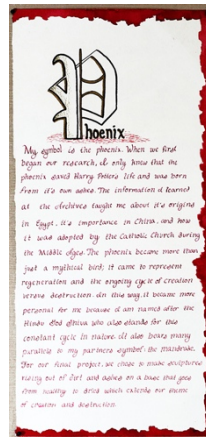




IV. The Return

After your journey, it is time to return. In some stories of journeys, this is a literal return home. After completing an adventure, the hero or heroine returns home to find that while the home is the same, they are somehow changed. They may bring back an actual trophy of their quest, or a treasure or a goal they have attained. And they may have achieved a new emotional state or being.

Now it is time to reflect on your journey. You are coming home with a treasure which is your artwork as well as the experiences you have attained. You have a new understanding and perspective, especially about the role of imagery and symbolism.



CREATE *Artist's Statement*

"Art is not what you see but what you make others see." —Edgar Degas

Imagine that you are introducing yourself to your artwork and the artwork is introducing itself to you. What would you say to each other?

Make an artist's statement

Once you have finished your artwork, write an *artist's statement* describing what you have done and your journey to get there. Explore your ideas, insights, and inspirations.

Consider including the following to describe your journey:

- How would you describe the symbol you selected?
- What does your symbol mean to you now? Has it changed through the process?
- What materials did you work with?
- Did your symbol have opposite sides: positive and negative, good and evil, dark and light?
- What inspired you during the journey?
- What have you learned about your symbol?

Your statement can also be a work of art. Take time to write it by hand and/or embellish it with images that complement the statement.

REFLECT

Your Journey

“Time and reflection change the sight little by little 'till we come to understand.” —Paul Cezanne

You have now completed the journey. You have taken time to explore images, stories, and myths in order to enrich your experience of symbols.

You have heard the *call* to a symbol that you selected, you have *departed* on a journey to understand the many facets of your symbol, and you have *transformed* your symbol into an artwork.

Is there anything that has been transformed in you?

Has your relationship with your symbol expanded in a meaningful way?

Has your understanding of symbols changed during this process?

Did any experience surprise you?

This guide can be used multiple times because the Hero's Journey is circular. Once you are home, you can begin a new journey.