



Visual Symbols

S A M P L E R

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Selected by Clement Mok

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Human speech is made up of a core vocabulary of a few thousand words that are used to construct and manipulate daily communication. This core vocabulary is relatively simple and universal in its interpretation. Similarly a core set of visual images is interpreted and used to enhance visual communication. For example, a megaphone is used to illustrate or to infer movies or movie making. A stethoscope is frequently used to convey health services. These visual symbols are used alone, to reinforce an idea, or in combination to form fresh and compelling messages.

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The Greeks introduced horseshoes to Western culture in the fourth century, believing that its iron composition, and its crescent moon shape, brought good fortune. Throughout history these beliefs were carried forward to the Roman and Christian culture.



With the fear of witchcraft peaking, the Christians endowed the horseshoe with even greater powers.

In legend, witches traveled on broomstick instead of horsback because of their fear of the iron horseshoes on the horse's hoofs. Soon after, blacksmiths were credited with the ability to repel evil with the good spell of a horseshoe, instead of a Bible. A buried witch would often have an iron horseshoe nailed to her coffin. The configuration was always the same, from the witch's coffin to the house-door: the points were oriented upward so that none of the luck would drain out.

As recently as 1805 the British hung a horseshoe from the mast of their command ship in their battle against Napoleon's army.

Sunglasses existed as early as the fifteenth century in China. At the time, however, the purpose of these glasses had

nothing to do with sun. Even before the invention of corrective lenses in 1430, smoked quartz lenses were devised to conceal a judge's eyes so that his evaluation of evidence would not be disclosed until the conclusion of a trial.

Later, corrective lenses were sometimes smoke tinted but they were still used mainly by judges – only rarely to block the sun.

The widespread use of tinted glasses to block the sun gained popularity after the United States Army Air Corps hired Bausch & Lomb to design glasses for Army air pilots to block dangerous high-altitude solar glare. They were aptly named Ray-Ban for their ability to ban the sun's rays.

Sunglasses as fashion became prevalent in the 1960s with the "Sunglasses of the Stars" campaign by the Foster Grant company, depicting famous celebrities and the line "Isn't that...behind those Foster Grants". In the 1970s the sunglass craze reached full stride as millions of men and women hid behind glasses originally designed to uphold justice.



It would seem odd that a bank would be named after a pig. After all, the pig is not the most likely candidate for an animal symbolizing prudence.

In fact the piggy bank was not named for the animal to which it bears a close resemblance, rather it was named after a type of clay jar.

In the Middle Ages metal was so rare that most household utensils were manufactured from an orange clay called pygg. Then, as now, prudent types often saved their cash in these clay jars—which, by the eighteenth century in England, were called pygg jars or pygg banks. As time moved on, the name of the bank remained but its shape became more appropriate to the name – it was cast in the shape of the pig.



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