

Activity sheet A

Which object is especially important to you?



CONSIDER WHICH OBJECT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU.
DRAW OR DESCRIBE IT!



NOTE DOWN YOUR HISTORY TO THIS OBJECT IN KEYWORDS:
EXPLAIN WHAT EXACTLY THE SPECIAL VALUE OF THIS OBJECT
IS TO YOU.

Activity sheet B

Hands symbolism in speech

Search for expressions, that is, images in speech in which “hand” or “hands” stand for a certain meaning. These could be formulations that are made up of “hand” and another word (e.g. “hands down” (to be sincere)) or proverbs like “to know something like the back of your hand” (to know it very good).

If you speak more than one language, you could also consider how the expressions are different or similar in the different languages (e.g. Turkish, Arabic etc...)



1. WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING THAT YOU FIND OUT.

2. FOLLOWING THIS, CONSIDER WHERE THE ORIGINS FOR THESE HAND IMAGES COME FROM IN THE LANGUAGE AND WHAT THEY MEAN.

Activity sheet C

Find hand signals which everyone understands

All participants look at the hand signals below in their own time.

- What could each of the hand signals stand for?
- Are there different meanings or similarities?



A



WRITE DOWN YOUR INTERPRETATIONS ON A – F COVERTLY ON A SHEET OF PAPER. FOLLOWING THIS, COMPARE AND DISCUSS YOUR INTERPRETATIONS! MAKE SURE THAT YOU GIVE REASONS FOR YOUR INTERPRETATIONS BY DESCRIBING THE SIGNAL!



B



D



E



C



F

Each member of the group thinks of a further gesture, respectively hand signal (e.g. thumbs up = positive rating) on his/her own.

NOW PRESENT YOUR HAND SIGNALS, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, IN THE CIRCLE WITHOUT ANY WORDS OR EXPLANATIONS. THE OTHERS HAVE TO GUESS EACH TIME WHAT IS MEANT.

Try to agree on the answers to the following questions:

- Which signals are obvious?
- Which are ambiguous?
- What could be the reason for a signal being misunderstood?

Info sheet A

Amulet

Object	Pendant	Place	Egypt
Inventory no.	I. 2152	Material	Lead (Metal)
Period	12th–13th centuries AD	Size	6.1 cm long, 2.7 cm wide

THE SYMBOL

What a symbol is, will be answered differently in different contexts. Here we understand it to be a figurative sign whose meaning goes far beyond that which is depicted. The meaning of a symbol must therefore be culturally determined and every person has their own perception of it. For example, a heart is set as a symbol of love. Some people who see this symbol associate it directly with positive emotions - a feeling of security and comfort, happiness, contentment – others associate it with kitsch.

Predominantly Islamic art and cultural history contains hardly any symbols. There are, however, two motifs which come very close to a symbol: The crescent moon and the hand. Both of these were assigned a meaning through regional traditions in each case. These meanings, however, do not come from the Quran and have never established themselves completely and everywhere.

THE HAND AS A SYMBOL

Depictions of hands can be found in the cave paintings of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. As a part of the human body with which we can grasp, touch ourselves, ward off dangers or make ourselves understood, it is especially important. We still do not know today what it was supposed to express at that time. It has also found its way into Islamic religious practice up to the present day.

Christian, Jews and Muslims use the hand as a symbol, but they call it by a different name in each case. In the Near East and North Africa Jews speak of the “Hand of Miriam” (the sister of Aaron and Moses), Christians call this the “Hand of Mary”, (the mother of Jesus) and Muslims say “Khamsa” (German: fünf, English: five) or even the “Hand of Fatima” to the symbol.



Info sheet B

Amulet

KHAMSA

The Khamsa amulet or the “Hand of Fatima” is often used as ornamentation or in various other contexts. The Khamsa (Arabic for five) in the form of an open hand with the fingers closed is supposed to bring good luck and protect against the “evil eye”.

The number five can refer to the five fingers of the hand, but just as much to the Five Pillars of Islam, one of which, prayer, is to be repeatedly said five times a day. Likewise, there are five religious assessments for objects or deeds: neutral (mubah), forbidden (haram), obligatory (wadschib), recommended (mahbub) and disliked (makruh).



The object on this page is a small pendant made of lead, which was probably made in Egypt in the 12th or 13th century. The protective function is very evident, as shown by a pentagram. Bismillah (in the name of God) and mashallah (God willing) were engraved on the wrist on both sides. Thus, a strong connection to the Islamic faith is established on the object. Hence this pendant could also have served as a visualisation and a “tangible” expression of faith.

Info sheet D

Amulet

