

## TYOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SYMBOLISM IN THE EYE OF THE STORM AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL IMPORTANCE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a didactic typology for understanding the symbolism in Patrick White's *The Eye of the Storm* and illustrates how it can be applied in EAP/IELTS reading classes. Though the previous criticisms do not entirely deny the novel's rich symbolic layer, they often treat symbols as a single category rather than as signs with varying degrees of decoding. The research paper bridges this gap by imposing a three-part typology upon a specific group of repetitive images and references: the archetypal, conventional and personal symbols. A qualitative analysis was performed using iterative coding to investigate symbol frequency, narrative roles, and interpretive meaning. The findings indicate that the novel's existential theme is driven by a few archetypal symbols, whereas traditional symbols serve as short-lived cultural references. It is the personal symbols that reveal the characters' memory and consciousness. The paper is completed with practical work in the classroom. The novel's existential theme is reinforced by a few archetypal symbols, whereas conventional symbols make only brief allusions to culture, as it turns out. Personal symbols help reveal the characters' memories and consciousness. The paper concludes with practical classroom activities that infer, enhance coherence and evidence-based interpretation to achieve better results on inference.

**KEYWORDS:** Symbolism, Typology, Archetypal Symbols, Conventional Symbols, Personal symbols, Patrick White, The Eye of the Storm, Reading Interventions

### INTRODUCTION

Symbolism plays an important part in Patrick White's *The Eye of the Storm* (White, 1973) and is one of the main components that helped the author to create the meaning of the novel. The storm and eye not only serve the purpose of plot progression but also direct the process of exploring the change in consciousness, memory, and moral judgment (Indyk, 2015). There has also been a focus on the rich imagery and how the emotional intensity overflows into objects, landscapes, and atmospheres, making the symbolic tension more enthralling to the reader as an immersive experience than an allegory. Although the motifs are discussed extensively, works usually pay more attention to the single pieces of information than to the system (Whaley, 2022).

This paper seeks to discuss typological characteristics of symbolism in the eye of the storm by categorizing the main recurring symbols as being archetypal, conventional, or personal. It covers their semantic roles and explains how typology can be used to explain such a multidimensional system of symbolism in the novel as shared cultural codes, mythic patterns, and inner signs that belong to each character. How to modify the typological model to be applied to teaching university-level Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or International

English Language Testing System (IELTS) reading classes, in which interpretive reading is a vital academic skill and a key in exams, is also an aspect of the study.

There is still a noted gap in the sparse use of symbol typology as a technique in the studies of *The Eye of the Storm*. Most of the criticism either views symbols primarily as thematic elements or views symbolism as stylistic texture lacking a stable system of classification (Meghwal, 2017). A typological methodology provides means of comparison of symbols in terms of interpretive behavior, including recognition speed, cross-cultural exchangeability of their significance, and their relation to consciousness or biography.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper examines different eminent models of interpreting symbolism and supports a typological interpretation. The Jungian approach gives a clue to the presence of archetypes and the collective unconscious, why various themes such as storm, darkness and mother figures are commonly used throughout all cultures as a symbolic motive (Jung, 1964). It can be applied to examine high-pressure mythic patterns of novels. Nonetheless, relying solely on the theory of Jung can simplify culturally exclusive and character-specific symbols and make them universalized.

Cognitive literary studies are concerned with how readers comprehend metaphors, image schema and conceptual blends. Consistent scaffolding is needed for students to master both English language skills and academic content across reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Chiaromonte, 2023). Recent EAP reading research uses metaphor analysis to examine how readers conceptualize reading, identifying different metaphors as analytical categories (Shi & Jin, 2024). Symbolism is also associated with improving reading English second language skills through cognitive approaches.

The approach developed by Finkelstein singles out three types of symbols: conventional, archetypal, and personal. His typological theory was chosen due to the fact it could be taught within a short period of time and could be used in a consistent manner within the classroom coding processes. It also separates universally recycled mythic structures, shared cultural codes among social groups, and signs attached to the author (Finkelstein, 2010). The typology is an analytical device; symbols are regarded as layered meaning-makers that can be both narrative and cognitive, consistent with more general hermeneutic perspectives on symbolic meaning as indirect and multi-layered.

## METHODOLOGY

To conduct this analysis, I selected textual samples from the book, “*The Eye of the Storm*” by Patrick White and establish clear criteria for examination. Throughout the process, attention was paid to context, meaning, and nuanced language to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the material. Finkelstein's (2010) framework will be applied to symbolic words and phrases across three categories: (1) Archetypal symbols are cross-contextual, culturally profound and mythic patterns (2) A personal symbol derives its meaning from individual memory, perception, or repeated personal associations. It needs to be reconstructed contextually and not culturally (3) A traditional icon has a universally recognized cultural connotation and can be identified in a short time with no specific background knowledge.

## DISCUSSION

The symbolic system of “The Eye of the Storm” reveals a distinct structural organization in which different types of symbols perform specific narrative and cognitive functions. The typological classification of symbols identified in the novel is presented in the table below:

**TABLE 1**

*Types of symbols in the novel “The Eye of the Storm” following Finkelstein’s approach*

<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Types of symbols</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Storm	Traditional/Archetypal	A disaster that destroys life or the beginning of new life;
Eye of the storm	Traditional	The moment of epiphany, spiritual peace;
Black swan	Personal	Magic of nature, harmony with nature;
Rose	Traditional	Secrecy, mystery;
Dawn and night	Traditional	Dawn – renewal, night - loneliness
Theatre	Personal	Personal void, different faces
Terrible mother	Archetypal	The mother who has a strong influence on her child;
Dream	Personal	Depression, anxiety
King Lear	Archetypal	Regret, fight for inheritance, unfaithful children
Memory	Personal	Understanding mistakes
Wine stain	Personal	Mental breakdown

A major structural pattern identified in the table is that typically archetypal symbols have a small number but a high structural burden (storm, great mother, King Lear), conventional symbols serve as commonplace interpretive resources (eye of the storm, morning, night, roses) and personal symbols are numerous and unique to each scene, forming a rich internal semiotics (black swans, stains, memory, theater). The given trend supports the argument that this novel can be considered epic because macro-symbols and micro-symbols reinforce sensibility and mood (Indyk, 2015).

They are not replaced by a typological approach, which elucidates how the themes are expressed. The archetypal symbol will lead the narrative to universal human questions. It is the faster process of recognition, which, when conventional, is open to irony or inversion, and, when personal, must be rebuilt contextually and with attention well taken to character consciousness. This is one of the reasons why the symbols that White uses are at times so apparent and stubborn.

*The storm* and *its eye* are often singled out as structurally central in criticism that understands the opposition between turmoil and stillness as one of the key drivers of the novel's epic dimensions. Typologically, *the storm* is an archetype, since it is not just the weather but a mythic grammar of destruction and renewal that shapes memory and moral judgment. This archetypal layer is split over to the maternal figure as well. *The Great Mother* is not referred to by the text, so the novel provides archetypal images of the mother as both protective and deadly, an ambivalent typological coding is ideally suited to capture without compelling any single moral interpretation.

The same is the case with *the King Lear* allusion. Its most profound purpose, even where represented, as here, by the actor-consciousness of Basil, is archetypal: here the ageing power or storm-flooded recognition is called back to one of the most enduring of all literary types. This is important in that it connects the symbolic structure of storms in the family plot to the novel.

Symbolic codes of *light-dark* and *morning-night* are all conventional. These are repeatedly listed in the novel as instant reminders, only to be distorted. It is not only renewal but a hopeless waiting in the morning; it is not only seeing but a disputed and unstable perceiving. These inversions align with a broader critical point: the symbols used by White are literally present and have impacts that cannot be easily paraphrased (Whaley, 2022). Gifts such as *roses* are also quite traditional but morally dubious. They may be a symbol of love, social reputation or hiding.

Personal symbols in this novel tend to be material remains that bring consciousness to the visible realm. *The black swans* are not only exotic animals but also serve as Elizabeth's personal signifiers of the storm's weird silence, and they are memory objects rather than societal allegories (Priya, 2012). This is in line with the records that underscore the ability of White to bring emotional life to objects and landscapes. *The waking sleep* and *purple stain* are used as personal symbols, as they cannot be easily interpreted in terms of the culture.

Speed strategies and read-alouds are commonly promoted in IELTS reading preparation and in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education to improve students' critical thinking and understanding (Masharipova & Matlatipova, 2025). Nonetheless, comparative studies of IELTS and Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) reading indicate that the reading in IELTS might have less higher-order cognitive tasks, which require inference, evaluation, and argumentation skills required in academic literacy, than the reading in TOEFL, which leads instructors in universities to design extensions of reading that focus on inference, evaluation, and argumentation (Baghaei, Bagheri, & Yamini, 2020).

Typological symbolism can provide an accurate means of doing so without making the reading class look like an open discussion. By paying attention to discourse cues and semantic coherence rather than concentrating on keywords alone, students will learn to identify symbols, judge interpretations based on evidence, and answer IELTS-style questions more appropriately. This method is consistent with the general evidence in applied linguistics suggesting that reading strategies, along with critical-thinking intervention, may enhance reading comprehension and the classroom learning atmosphere (Ali, Palpanadan, Asad et al., 2022). It also supports EAP research

findings that organized interventions and reading-to-learn activities may assist students in comprehending challenging texts (Jin, Liu, & Lei, 2020).

In an effective university literature class, various activities are thoughtfully designed to help students better understand symbols. One popular activity is pair coding, where students collaboratively categorize symbols by type. The aim is to use typology as a useful tool for interpretation and to help students recognize different levels of symbolic meaning. To begin, students receive a clear handout explaining three main types of symbols: conventional, archetypal, and personal. Archetypal symbols carry universal, myth-based meanings; conventional symbols depend on shared cultural or linguistic codes; and personal symbols are influenced by individual or context-specific experiences.

Once students are familiar with the typology, they read selected passages from “The Eye of the Storm” and work in pairs, enjoying the chance to identify and classify symbols together. For instance, the phrase “of the storm” can be seen as a conventional symbol, representing calm amidst chaos. The image of black swans may serve as a personal symbol, reflecting something meaningful from a character’s inner life. On the other hand, the storm or cyclone might be regarded as an archetypal symbol, symbolizing universal themes such as struggle, transformation, and self-discovery. This approach to learning is so effective because it helps students distinguish between shared cultural meanings, universal symbols, and personal interpretations, making their analysis even richer and more engaging.

Additionally, an IELTS-style mini test on a literary passage is a helpful approach to turning literary interpretation into a clear, structured test format. In this activity, the teacher crafts questions based on a chosen passage, encouraging students to read carefully and make inferences. The test might include True/False/Not Given statements, which help gauge the ability to distinguish explicit information from implied information. Matching headings, which assess understanding of the main themes of paragraphs, and sentence-completion tasks, focused on recognizing key words and specific details from the text, are also great ways to support learning.

This combined approach maintains the clear, structured format of IELTS reading tasks while also expanding to include more challenging thinking skills, such as interpretation, evaluation, and deeper understanding. This way, students are encouraged not just to find information but also to create meaning, spot symbolic patterns, and connect with the deeper ideas in literary texts. This approach helps overcome the common challenge in IELTS reading instruction, which often focuses mainly on basic comprehension skills, by adding opportunities for cognitive-stylistic analysis and interpretative reasoning into the learning process.

## CONCLUSION

A typological approach reveals that symbolism in “The Eye of the Storm” is much more than just a thematic addition; it is a rich, layered interpretative system. Archetypal symbols create the fundamental structure of existence, while conventional symbols offer shared meanings that are often flipped or challenged. Personal symbols, on the other hand, bring to life the characters’ consciousness and memories in unique ways. This multilayered view helps us understand why the novel’s symbolism feels both instantly recognizable and deeply complex, resisting simple explanations. It also aligns well with critics’ descriptions of White’s symbolic use of material and the storm and eye structure as the central organizing elements of the work.

From a lesson planning perspective, typological symbolism serves as a meaningful link between focusing on exams and building strong academic literacy at the university level. Studies show that IELTS reading tends to focus more on basic thinking skills, highlighting the importance of guided interpretive activities. Collaborative academic reading offers practical, research-backed approaches that can be easily adopted in the classroom to help students develop these skills together.

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The author used Grammarly AI to improve the manuscript's grammatical accuracy and clarity. All intellectual content and analysis are the sole responsibility of the author.