

Symbols: A How To

The Symbol: A concrete object used to represent an abstract idea.

Step 1:

Find as many page references to possible symbols as you can throughout the whole novel. Mark them down in your notebook (keep adding as you encounter new symbols).

Step 2:

In your own words, write out what each reference concretely represents.

Step 3:

In your own words, decide what each concrete example may be representing.

Step 4:

Look over your abstract ideas as a whole to make an overall connection between all of the ideas. What is the main abstract idea that is represented in the work?

Use a chart to keep yourself organized

Symbol: Clothes

Page Reference	Concrete Description	Abstract Representation
8	Celie is afraid that Alphonso will start to try to fool around with Nettie so she dresses up in feathers and high heels to try to be sexy for him	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celie believes that her clothing can change how Alphonso looks at her and thinks of her. • sex=high heels
14	The first time Celie sees her daughter Olivia, Olivia's mother is buying cloth. Celie tries to befriend them by complimenting the cloth she has chosen. Olivia's new mother says that she is going to make new dresses for Olivia and that her father will be proud.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cloth will turn into new dresses and that will make Olivia have higher status in her father's eyes (men have power in this world).

<p>21-22</p>	<p>Kate tells Albert that he should let Celie buy some new clothes. Celie doesn't choose a bright colour like red, but instead chooses dark blue. Celie is overwhelmed by having a new dress, so much so that she can't talk.</p>	<p>For Celie, the dress is the first time she starts to get power. Kate tells her she deserves more than a new dress and Celie says she might think she does deserve more.</p>
<p>98 & 100</p>	<p>98 - Squeak dresses like a white woman to see the white police about Sofia's jail sentence. 100- Squeak comes home from talking to the white police officers. She has been raped and beaten Her clothes are ripped and torn.</p>	<p>The clothes were supposed to give Squeak the power of a white woman, but the tearing and ripping of the clothes represents her lack of power — or a reminder that she doesn't have the same type of power or doesn't get the same type of respect that a white woman would receive.</p>
<p>164</p>	<p>Corrine tells Nettie that she doesn't want her to borrow her clothes anymore.</p>	<p>Later in the novel we find out that Corrine is jealous of Nettie and thinks that Nettie and Samuel are/have been together. By telling Nettie that she can't borrow her clothes, she is making sure that they don't look alike, or that they are not good friends; that they should be different.</p>
<p>261</p>	<p>Albert and Celie meet up after being apart and Albert comments on Celie's business of pant making; not only is everyone wearing her pants, but she has made a prosperous business from it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pants business gives Celie confidence and security and independence. • Pants allow for women to be free from the confines of dresses. They can work easier. • Pants also break down the gender divide in the novel.

Overall Abstract Connection:
