

Color, Symbol, Image

A routine for distilling the essence of ideas non-verbally.

As you are reading, listening, or watching, make note of things that you find interesting, important, or insightful. When you finish:

- Choose a **color** that you feel best represents or captures the essence of a key idea
- Choose a **symbol** that you feel best represents or captures the essence of a key idea
- Choose an **image** that you feel best represents or captures the essence of a key idea

With a partner or group, first share your color and then share the item from your reading that it represents. Tell why you chose that color as a representation of that idea. Repeat the sharing process until every member of the group has shared his or her Color, Symbol, and Image.

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine asks students to identify and distill the essence of ideas from reading, watching, or listening in non-verbal ways by using a color, symbol, or image to represent the ideas.

APPLICATION

When and where can I use it?

This routine can be used to enhance comprehension of reading, watching, or listening. It can also be used as a reflection on previous events or learnings. It is helpful if students have had some previous experience with highlighting texts for important ideas, connections, or events. The synthesis happens as students select a color, symbol, and image to represent three important ideas. This routine also facilitates the discussion of a text or event as students share their colors, symbols, and images.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

After the class has read a text, you might ask the class to identify some of the interesting, important, or insightful ideas from the text and list these on the board. Write CSI: Color, Symbol, Image on the board. Select one of the ideas the class has identified. Ask students, what color might they use to represent the essence of that idea. What color captures something about that idea, maybe it is the mood or tone. Select another idea and ask the class what symbol they could use to represent that idea. *You might define a symbol as a simple line representation or uncomplicated drawing, such as two crossed lines to denote an intersection of ideas, or a circle to represent wholeness or completeness.* Then pick another idea from the list and ask students what image they might use to represent that idea. *You might define an image as a visual image or metaphor that is more complex and fully developed than just a symbol.*

This thinking routine was developed as part of the Cultures of Thinking project at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.