Checklist: Writing about Symbols

- Which objects, actions, or places seem unusually significant? Are they mentioned in the beginning, end, climax, or title?
- List the specific objects, people, and ideas with which a particular symbol is associated.
- Locate the exact place in the story where the symbol links itself to the other thing(s).
- Ask whether each symbol comes with ready-made cultural associations.
- Avoid far-fetched interpretations. Also avoid making one-to-one allegorical connections unless there is no doubt of the link.
- Consider a symbol’s relevance to the plot.
- Ask yourself what the symbol means to the protagonist of the story.
- Remember: in literature, few symbols are hidden. When an object, action, or place has emotional and intellectual power, then it’s genuine.