

This was on the SMART Board on 9/21/10

Cracking the Code of Symbols

Consider: A symbol in literature is a thing that suggests more than its literal meaning. Symbols generally do not “stand for” any one meaning, nor for anything absolutely definite; they point, they hint, or as Henry James put it, they cast long shadows. To take a large example: in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, the great white whale of the book’s title apparently means more than the literal dictionary definition meaning “an aquatic mammal.” The whale also suggests more than the devil, to whom some of the characters liken it. The great whale, as the story unfolds, comes to imply many meanings, among them the forces of nature, the whole created universe, fate, and even God.

How do you recognize a symbol in fiction? Fortunately, the storyteller often gives the symbol particular emphasis. It is typically mentioned repeatedly through the story. . . . An object, an act, or a character is surely symbolic if, when we finish the story, we realize that it was that item that led us to the author’s theme, the essential meaning of the work.

-excerpted from Kennedy and Gioia, *An Introduction to Fiction*, 229-31

So what does Richard Parker symbolize. Explain / support your answer to this.