

RED

GLOBAL MEANINGS, MESSAGES, AND SYMBOLISM



REFERENCES IN NATURE

- fire
- blood
- raw meat and flesh
- birds (cardinals, etc.)
- flowers (roses, carnations, etc.)
- fruits and vegetables (apples, berries, tomatoes, etc.)
- minerals/ gemstones (rubies, garnets, beryl, etc.)



CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

- traffic lights and signs designating “Stop”
- fire engines in many countries
- the planet Mars
- communism (in the 20th century)
- hearts (Valentines Day in Western Culture)
- Christmas and Santa Claus (Western and Christian Culture)
- “AIDS Awareness” ribbons (as a symbol of sympathy, support and hope for a day without AIDS)
- national flags (the most common color for flags - 30% of all flags)



GENERAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMBOLISM

- (Asia), warmth, dominance, sexuality, prostitution, aggression, rebellion, violence, the devil
- Deep Red: strength, power, energy, tastiness, vigor, warmth
- Red-Purple: elegance, creativity, vitality, richness, tastiness, juiciness
- Dark Red-Purple: sophistication, elegance, power, luxury, royalty

OSHA Coding

- Red: danger, stopping, fire protection equipment



OPTICS

- Red advances, thereby creating the impression that red objects are closer than they are.
- Approximately one in twelve males is color-blind in the red-green portion of the spectrum.



RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

Buddhism

- Red is the highest degree of contemplative ecstasy of the Shingon Buddhists in the following sequence of colors - black, blue, yellow and red.
- Coral is one of the five sacred stones of the Tibetan Buddhists. It symbolizes the energy of life force and is often considered to be a protection against the evil eye. It was also believed that it would lighten in color if the wearer were exposed to illness, became ill, or were given poison. When the wearer recovered, the coral would darken. Coral was also associated with stopping the flow of blood from a wound, curing madness, imparting wisdom, and calming storms.



RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

Christianity/Catholicism

Red symbolizes love, blood and the martyrdom of Christ.

Christian art depicts Christ wearing red robes symbolizing not only the blood he shed as a sacrifice, but also his passion and love.

In the Roman Catholic liturgy, red is worn in memory of Christ's Passion and on the feast days of the Apostles and the martyrs.

Cardinals wear red.

Roman Catholic priests sometime wear rose near the end of Advent and the end of Lent to symbolize the coming seasons of rejoicing.



RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

Hinduism

In priestly rank, red is inferior to yellow, and occupies the third place in the sequence of colors laid down by the holy book, the Mahabharata.

Red is the color of Rajas, reflecting the life source of activity, passion and energy.

Red is the color of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and beauty.

Red is the Hindu symbol of love, as in the robe of Rhada, beloved by Krishna.

Islamic (Muslim) Cultures/Middle East

Red is the color of the Sharifs, the protectors of Mecca.

A red rose is symbolic of Allah's perfect beauty

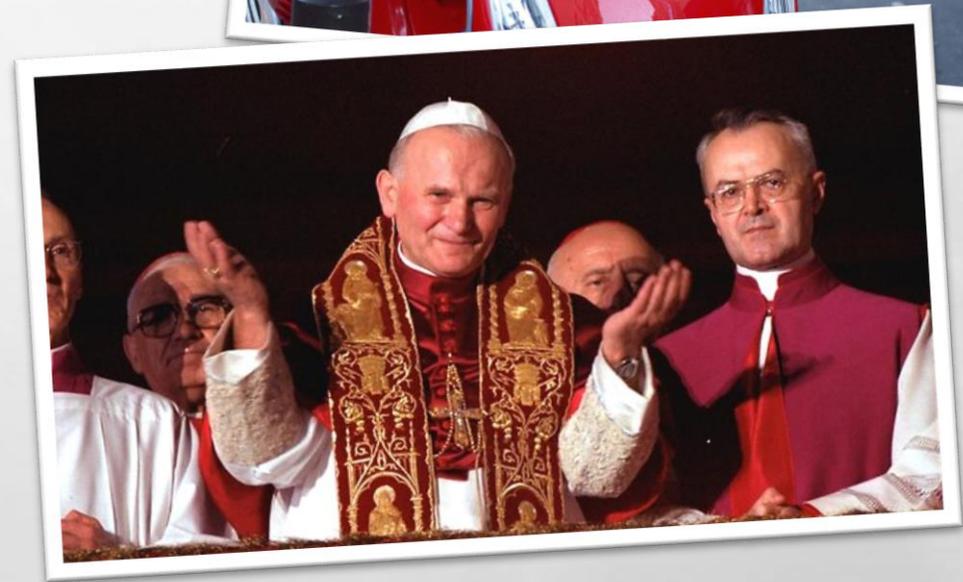


RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

Italy

The Catholic symbolism of red in “Festivals of the Passion” is the precious blood of Christ or “great love” (per Innocent III).

Red replaced purple (from the Roman era) as the color symbolizing divinity; it is linked to Christ-like good works and piety.



RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

Judaism

Red represents sacrifice and sin to the Hebrews.

Polynesia

Red was associated with the ancient deities as well as the nobility.

Shintoism (Japan)

Red is the symbol of life.



RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

American Indian/Cherokee

Red is symbolic of victory.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Africa

East

Red is used for burial clothing in Madagascar.

South

Red is frequently the color of mourning.

The Xhosa tribe wears primarily red clothing and is known as the “red people” or the “red tribe.”



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Asia

Eastern, South-Eastern

In East Asian stock markets, red is used to denote a rise in stock prices. (Note: In North American stock markets, red is used to denote a drop in stock prices.)

Bangladesh

Red is the color worn by brides.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Bulgaria

Red is the color of communism – may generate negative reactions. This may be disappearing with time.



Canada

Red is the color of Canadian flag and the dress uniform of Royal Canadian Mountain Police.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

China

Red is the most popular color.

There are more than 30 single characters describing different kinds of red - such as the red of wine, the red of silk, the red of meat - and even more terms are used to describe different levels of red.

Red signifies good luck and happiness.

Red is the traditional color for many cultural celebrations that range from weddings to New Year's celebrations - and even funerals.

Money is traditionally given in red packets. On Chinese New Year, coins are given in red envelopes to wish good luck. Annual bonuses also come in red paper.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Invitation cards for festive occasions are usually printed in red, or have some red in the design.

A name or a signature in red on a white background has negative connotations and implies an obituary or at the severing of a relationship. It is not propitious.

Red is the color of fertility. Brides traditionally wear red.

When a Chinese baby is between one month and one year old, red colored eggs and ginger are used for the celebration. In some areas, Chinese babies are given their names at a red-egg ceremony.

Rubies are worn for long life.

Red also means summer and south and is associated with the sun.

Red may also symbolize bloodshed, danger, stop, speed, war, and aggression.

Red is irrefutably linked with Communist China and especially the southern regions where the revolution began.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Egypt

Red symbolizes death.

The ancient Egyptians considered themselves a red race and painted their bodies with red dye for emphasis.

Germany

Red represents a menacing character in German folk culture.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Ghana

Red is the color of mourning.

Greece

Eggs are dyed red for good luck at Easter.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

India

Red denotes life, action, gaiety, and enthusiasm.

Red is the color of the Royal caste, the Kshatriyas, formerly warriors.

Red is the symbol for a soldier.

Red is an auspicious color for marriage. Brides wear red saris; grooms wear red turbans.

In northern India, brides wear red and yellow to ward off demons.

Sikh brides may wear any shade of red or pink.

A red “bindhi” and red powder along the part in a woman’s hair symbolize that a woman is married.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

India

A red “bindhi” is used on a woman’s forehead after worship. The “bindhi” has evolved into a purely decorative tradition, and is coordinated with a woman’s clothing.

The red lotus flower symbolizes wealth and the beauty of success. Although the flower is beautiful, the roots must reach into the mud to create the beauty, thereby representing the toil it takes to create that success.

Maroon is an increasingly popular color, for advertising and clothing.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Indonesia

Red represents luck, prosperity, and happiness.

Red is worn for good luck.

Traditional wedding dresses are red with gold embroidery.

Red ink signifies anger at the recipient of the letter.

Iraq

Bright red is used for passenger transportation



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Italy

Young people give bright red underwear - to be worn on New Year's Eve - for good luck.

Jamaica

An old superstition implies that it's bad to write a letter or sign your name with red ink.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Japan

Red symbolizes strong emotions - or things of strong emotions - rather than intellectual ideas. For example, excitement, energy, speed, strength, anger, danger, passion, and aggression

Red - the color of blood and fire - represents life and vitality.

Most Japanese perceive that the sun is red. (Children usually draw the sun as a big red circle.)

The red sun is a symbol of energy, radiating its vitalizing life force into human beings.

The connotations of the Japanese term for "red" include "complete" or "clear." The term is used in expressions that mean such as "complete lie," "completely naked" and "complete stranger."



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Red rice with “azuki” beans is served to celebrate graduation, weddings and a young woman’s coming of age.

Japanese brides wear red kimonos after the formal wedding ceremony.

Cherries symbolize self-sacrifice.

Red lobsters are symbols of long life – a common gift at New Year.

Red ink is a traditional method of writing a letter than ends a relationship (like a “Dear John” letter or a pink slip).

Red is the symbol of life in Japan’s Shinto religion.

A “true red” in Japan is actually an orange-red (as seen in old prints). It is not a bright pure red as seen in other cultures.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Korea

For older generations in the South, red may stir up bad memories of the Communist North. To younger generations, it's just a color.

Malaysia

The red hibiscus is the national flower
Red hibiscuses are used as an herbal medicine to cure a variety of illnesses.

Mexico

Red is a favorite color. It is the Aztec color for north, used in national flag.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

New Zealand

Bright reds are sacred color in Maori traditions.

Exposed beams in Maori dwellings are painted white on an earthy red background.

Nigeria

Only chiefs wear red.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

North America

In North American stock markets, red is used to denote a drop in stock prices; in East Asian stock markets, red is used to denote a rise in stock prices

Pakistan

Many men do not wear shades of red. Those who do may be ridiculed because reds are very strongly associated with women.

In traditional wedding ceremonies, red (or a shade of red) is worn by women and off-white or white by men. (This tradition is slowly changing. Men are now wearing black or navy blue suits and women wear blues and greens and sometimes white - a color that was never worn in weddings in the past.)



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Poland

Red is important in some folk costumes.

Easter eggs are painted red.

Russia

The Russian word for red - "krasniy" - originally meant beautiful. The semantics of beauty are still part of the meaning of this word.

Red is the color of communism and revolution. This originated in 1917 when the Bolsheviks overthrew the tsar and used a red flag as their symbol.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Spain

Red symbolizes blood and aggression.

Red is the color of the capes and bandanas of bullfighting.

Red is used prominently in flamenco costumes.



Thailand

Red is a symbol of Sunday.

Red is the dynamic color of the extinction of desire in Buddhism.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

Turkey

Red and white, the national colors, are popular.

Red is the most commonly occurring color in kilim rugs.

United Kingdom

Red is a color of the crown and is therefore the color of power and authority.

Many government agencies use red. For example, mailboxes are red (a symbol that the mail is handled by the government). Also, red is used for London Transport buses and telephone booths.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

United Kingdom

Carpets and judges robes in courts of law are red.

English physicians wore red until the 19th century.

Jackets worn for the hunt are traditionally red.

United States

Red symbolizes extremes - dynamic energy, power, courage, passionate love, rebellion, and violence.



NATIONAL & REGIONAL SYMBOLISM

United States

Red is the second favorite color of American women.

Red is the color of Christmas, Santa Claus and Valentine's Day.

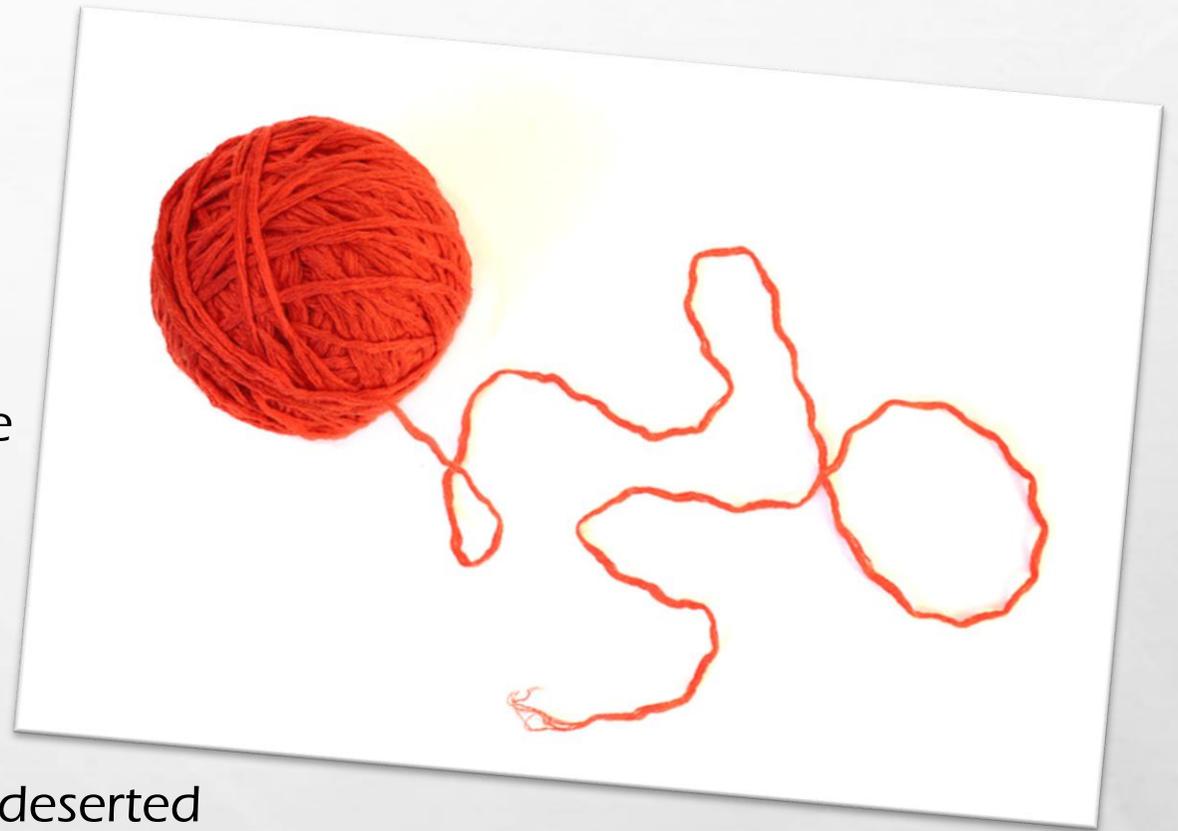
Idiomatic expressions include "red-blooded" (hearty, healthy), "red-neck" (low class, uneducated), "red light district" (prostitution), "to be caught red-handed" (with evidence), and "to be in the red" (in debt).



A RED THREAD

#1 Uncanny Recurrence

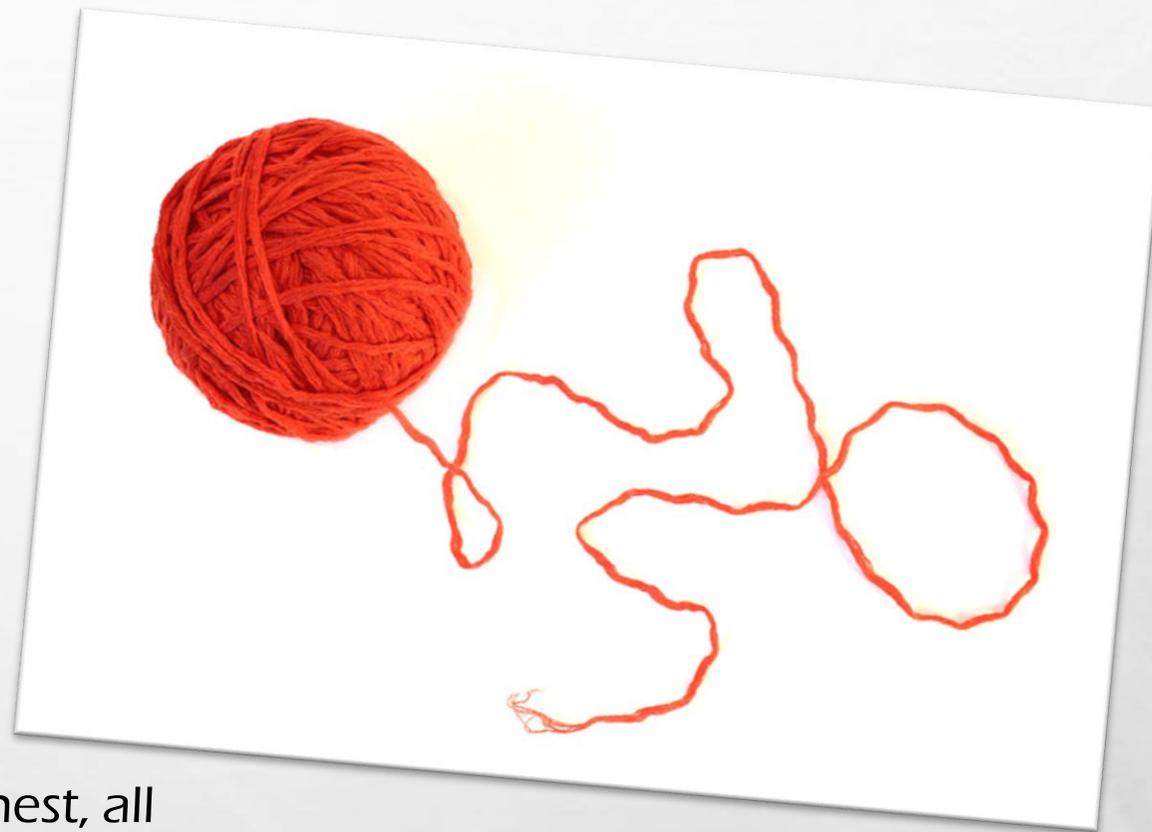
To the Germans, der Rote Faden connects the disparate dots of a buried, recurring theme in one's life or in a fictional story. Say Cousin Billy accidentally broke your wrist, maimed your dog, got you your first job, married your first girlfriend, then washes up with you on a deserted island. Like it or not, the Germans would call Cousin Billy's toothy, rueful apologies a Rote Faden in your life.



A RED THREAD

#1 Uncanny Recurrence

The first Rote Faden appears in Goethe's 1809 novella *Elective Affinities*. Describing one character's discursive style, hopping from subject to subject but returning to certain themes. Goethe writes of a "curious practice of British Marines. The ropes of the royal navy's fleet, from the sturdiest to the thinnest, all having a red thread woven tightly into them, such that it cannot be removed without unraveling the whole, the smallest part of which announces these ropes belong to the Crown."



A RED THREAD

#2 The Stuffed-Chameleon Charm

Until the early 20th century, Moroccan soldiers killed and gutted chameleons, embalmed them with coriander seeds, stitched their bodies closed with red silk thread, then slung their gory stuffed animal friends over one shoulder before trudging into battle.



A RED THREAD

#3 Chokers a la Victime

Certain questionable accounts of France's Reign of Terror chronicled the "victims' balls" thrown by rich young people to revive the anemic post-Terror ballroom scene. Only relatives of those who died by guillotine could attend. "Guests showed up with the name of their neck shaved, as though prepared for the guillotine, and with a red thread around their throat," writes Francois Gendron in a 1993 account. "They greeted one another a la victime by imitating the sudden drop of the head as it is lopped off by the falling blade."



A RED THREAD

#4 The Red String of Fate

Similar to the Western idea of finding one's "other half," the Chinese and Japanese share a belief in an invisible red string of fate that binds two people destined to get married. The Chinese tie their lovers together by the ankles, the Japanese often by their pinky fingers. In both cases, the lunar god of matchmaking Yue Xia Lao oversees the binding.

