

A Zoroastrian Symbol



The illustration on this handout is the Faravahar, a symbol of Zoroastrian faith. The Faravahar may have originated as a royal insignia, but throughout the centuries it has been interpreted in many ways by Zoroastrians. Although these interpretations are not based on the Zoroastrian scriptures, some are used to illustrate aspects of the faith, especially for children.

According to one such interpretation, the bearded man in the central circle represents the human soul. One hand is extended in blessing, providing a reminder to keep in mind the path to heaven. The other hand holds a “ring of promise,” reminding Zoroastrians always to keep their promises. Each wing has three layers of feathers, which symbolize good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. The central circle represents eternity. The two ribbonlike shapes that extend from the circle symbolize the two choices humans face—good and evil.

Your Task

With the example of the Faravahar in mind, create, on a separate sheet of paper, a symbol that represents your own religious faith or personal understanding of human nature and destiny. You may incorporate symbols from your religious tradition, or you may create something completely original. Use any materials you wish—markers, pens, pencils, paint, construction paper, glue, scissors, magazines, and so on. Then write a brief description of your symbol and of the meaning behind each of its elements. Present your symbol to a classmate and explain the intention behind it. Then listen to your classmate’s explanation of her or his symbol.

