

Question 5: With an emphasis on Welsh language, Culture or Identity chose a theme or focus on creative practitioners relevant to your field of study and critically analyse your choices. This essay can be presented in Welsh or in English in discussion with your tutor.

Student Number: 1800846

Course: Graphic Design

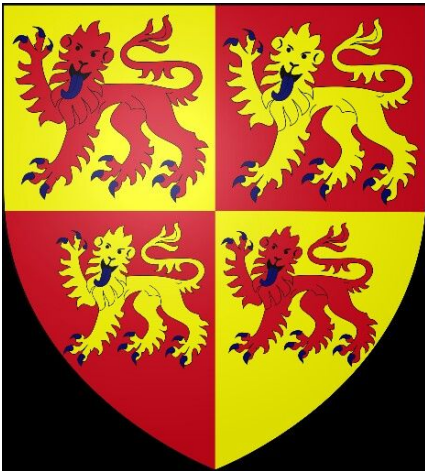
Word Count:

Lecture's Name: Timi O'Neill

While some opinions may argue that the Welsh language and its Celtic descent are what created the Welsh culture, I believe that even though it may have been founded with this in mind, the Welsh culture would not be as rich as it is today without its strong symbolic references. Those I have chosen to talk about are the dragon, the love spoon and the daffodil. Therefore, I will be describing what each of these different symbols are and why I deem them to be the most symbolic when it comes to representing Wales and its culture.

Wales is an important part of the United Kingdom. However, on the national flag, also known as the Union Jack, Wales is not represented or recognised. "...it is popularly supposed to have been the battle standard of King Arthur and other ancient Celtic leaders." (2) The Dragon correlates with King Arthur and various other Celtic Leaders. There is also evidence of this in literature, documentary history and archaeology. People believed that the Dragon came from a much earlier era and considered it as being a Romano-British nationally recognised symbol. The Dragon has been manipulated and adapted over the years, as have many other ancient symbols, therefore there are multiple variations of the Dragon. The Red Dragon has been associated with and around Wales for many years and therefore the Welsh flag has been named one of the oldest national flags still in use today. The Welsh Dragon has remained a huge part of the Welsh identity throughout history. This has created a huge amount of patriotism and pride for the Welsh. Patriotism brings people together and can create a sense of community across an entire country. In hard times such as this year (2020), community and patriotism have been at the forefront of people's lives. Countries have had to stand together and support one another through times of need. On hindsight, a nation's pride has helped some to overcome certain duress. To my mind, the Welsh Red Dragon has had such an impact on the country because it promotes different values to those of other Western and European Dragons and the values that they were recognised for. The Red Dragon is portrayed as a benevolent, strong, respected and fierce creature. Whereas previous Western/European dragons were depicted as monstrous, evil, fire breathing animals that represented all the dark sides of humanity such as greed and jealousy. Throughout the history of the United Kingdom, different leaders used the dragon as a metaphorical image to stand by. They would use it as a standard by which they would see themselves and wish for those in their land to stand up too. The dragon has always been portrayed as being full of pride, power and strength and all types of leaders wanted their kingdom to be respected as much as the dragon. It is also

one out of ten of The Queens Beasts. Each of the ten beasts represent the genealogy of Queen Elizabeth II. With each individual beast being portrayed on a shield that has either the arms or badge from each family that is recognised as an ancestor of Queen Elizabeth II. The Dragon's



Prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd,
coat of arms (5)

shield is the coat of arms of the last native Prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, it consists of four lions, one in each quarter. "The Red Dragon is often seen as symbolising all things Welsh..." it represents sports teams, businesses, public and private institutions and schools, as well as local authorities. It is easily the most recognised symbol for the country of Wales and has been since it has become the main aspect on their flag.

The Welsh love spoon is another highly recognised symbol in the culture. Folklore depicts that young men used to carve these magnificently delicate spoons with signs, symbols and images that would expose their intentions and affection towards their loved one. For example, receiving a love spoon with a daffodil carved into it would mean that your partner wanted you to recognise your relationship as one with growing love. A ring or a knot would suggest the combining of lives with marriage and forever love between the couple. It all started with the soup spoon which over the years lost its use and was used as an ornament when carved with the intricate designs. The idea of a spoon also represented the idea that the suitor wanted to "feed" or provide and support the receiver. The anchor was another symbol used quite a lot on these love spoons to symbolise "Security and the desire to settle down" (7), used a lot by sailors during their long distance journeys. While the dragon represents the harder sides of humanity, the love spoons represent the more vulnerable and caring side. Love spoons are a desired item for travellers and tourists as souvenirs, they are also still given as gifts of emotion for events such as weddings, funerals, birthdays, engagements, baby showers, and anniversaries. The Welsh love spoon is by far the most well known, however there are other versions of the love spoon traditions in various parts of Eastern Europe and



Scandinavia. They are versions of the same idea but all have their own styles and unique symbols hand crafted by each individual. This is a more personal item which is unique to anyone who carves or receives a love spoon, unlike the Welsh dragon which represents a huge amount of people in a community. Love spoons started as a way for young boys and men trying to express their true feelings and emotions through a solid block of wood. This demonstrated to the girls family that he was capable, talented and skilled with his hands, which was a very admirable skill to have. Today these traditions have started to be revived but are now mostly commissioned for meaningful and special events in peoples lives or in the lives of their loved ones. Love spoons are pieces of art, a craft passed down from generation to generation, with each individual spoon unique in its own intentions and story behind it, just like each person that. makes, buys, or receives one.

The daffodil is yet another national symbol that holds a strong tie to Welsh culture. With multiple links to other elements of Welsh customs and traditions, it is a symbol that is instantly recognised as being proudly Welsh. The daffodil has become more prominent since the 19th century when the Welsh Prime Minister at the time, Minister David Lloyd George, wore one on St David's Day and at certain events marking the then Prince of Wales investiture (11). As well as this, the Welsh translation of daffodil is St Peters Leek (another strong Welsh national emblem and has become less prevalent as a Welsh symbol than the daffodil) (12). It also grows around the same time of year that St David's Day, the day celebrating the patron saint of Wales, falls upon (13). As well the coincidence of the flower blooming around his day of celebration, they also come at a time of year where new life begins. They grow at the end of winter and so are a sign of hope for better things to come (14). They symbolise new beginnings and rebirth due to being one of the first perennials¹ to flower after winter (15). With St. David reportedly being born in 520AD (16), his name and legend even created another name for a Welshman; Taffy, which derived from Dafydd, the Welsh spelling of David. Artists have even been inspired to recreate the saint using daffodils, produced as part of the Cadw's Rediscover History campaign (17). With such a strong link to both Wales in the past and present, it's no wonder that the daffodil has helped to create an identity and a sense of national pride. At many Welsh rugby matches, supporters will be seen wearing a daffodil hat or badge, meaning even if the famous red shirt isn't worn, they can easily be

¹ A plant to last longer than two years – a daffodil is a herbaceous perennial (11)

recognised as being Welsh. This idea of Welsh patriotism is very strong and have been found to be one of the most patriotic countries in Europe (18). A strong sense of Welsh patriotism has been particularly poignant in the current year. With such hardships felt across the world due to COVID 19, among other issues, a need for togetherness from a nation has never been more vital and the sight of a daffodil in the spring can help to give people a sense of hope, certainly after what will be a difficult few winter months ahead. As well as Welsh symbolism, the daffodil also has links to other countries across the UK. Marie Curie, a charity that helps people with terminal illnesses through their end-of-life process, has their annual big fundraiser; the Great Daffodil Appeal. The event involves many volunteers across Wales and the rest of the UK collecting donations for the charity, with daffodil pins being given out in return (19). It can also be seen as a symbol of hope, in that the people going through such an early and sad end to their life can do in as much comfort and ease as possible. Another link to the care of patients, albeit an unusual one, is that daffodils are grown as a commercial produce in Mid Wales to help create a substance known to treat Alzheimer's (20).

In conclusion the three most prominent symbols that enrich the Welsh culture are the Red Welsh Dragon, their sensitive Love Spoons and the Daffodils that bloom in spring. Some people may argue that the Welsh language and its Celtic descent are what created the Welsh culture. However, I believe that even though it may have been founded with this in mind, the Welsh culture would not be as rich as it is today without its strong symbolic references. Therefore, I deem them to be the most emblematic when it comes to representing Wales and its culture.

Bibliography:

1. Johnson, B., 2020. *The History Of The Welsh Dragon - Symbol Of Wales*. [online] Historic UK. Available at: <<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofWales/The-Red-Dragon-of-Wales/>> [Accessed 9 October 2020].
2. En.wikipedia.org. 2012. *Welsh Dragon*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_Dragon> [Accessed 9 October 2020].
3. The Flag Shirt. 2019. *Why Patriotism Is So Important*. [online] Available at: <<https://theflagshirt.com/blogs/news/why-patriotism-is-so-important>> [Accessed 9 October 2020].
4. Non-alien Creatures Wiki. 2020. *Welsh Dragon*. [online] Available at: <https://non-aliencreatures.fandom.com/wiki/Welsh_Dragon> [Accessed 9 October 2020].
5. I.pinimg.com. 2020. [online] Available at: <<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/32/9d/05/329d05244e874a5b88b43f4008003dbc.jpg>> [Accessed 9 October 2020].
6. En.wikipedia.org. 2020. *The Queen's Beasts*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Queen%27s_Beasts#The_Red_Dragon_of_Wales> [Accessed 17 October 2020].
7. King, A., 2020. *History And Meanings*. [online] Welsh love spoons by Adam King. Available at: <<https://www.adamking.co.uk/pages/history-and-meanings>> [Accessed 17 October 2020].
8. Wales. 2020. *National Symbols Of Wales*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.wales.com/about/culture/national-symbols-wales>> [Accessed 19 October 2020].
9. Welsh-love-spoons.co.uk. 2017. *History Of Welsh Lovespoons*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.welsh-love-spoons.co.uk/history>> [Accessed 19 October 2020].
10. Angel Woodcraft. 2020. *Love Spoon Symbols, Meanings & History – Angel Woodcraft*. [online] Available at: <<https://angelwoodcraft.co.uk/love-spoon-symbols/>> [Accessed 13 November 2020].
11. Sarah. Three symbols of Wales. *West Wales Holiday Cottages*. [Online] February 27, 2013. [Cited: December 04, 2020.] <https://westwalesholidaycottages.co.uk/blog/three-symbols-of-wales/>.
12. Grow Wild UK. How do you spot a real Welsh daffodil? *growwilduk.com*. [Online] August 08, 2020. [Cited: December 05, 2020.] <https://www.growwilduk.com/blog/how-do-you-spot-real-welsh-daffodil#:~:text=The%20wild%20daffodil%20is%20thought,time%20of%20St%20David's%20Day.>
13. Hughes, Marcus. This is the reason why the daffodil and the leek have become iconic symbols of Wales. [Online] February 28, 2019. [Cited: December 04, 2020.] <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/nostalgia/reason-daffodil-leek-become-iconic-15893220>.
14. Crampton, Linda. Beautiful Daffodils: Facts, Toxicity, and a Symbol of Hope. *owlcation.com*. [Online] March 13, 2020. [Cited: December 05, 2020.] <https://owlcation.com/stem/Daffodils-Beautiful-Flowers-and-a-Symbol-of-Hope>.
15. FTD Fresh. Daffodil Meaning and Symbolism. *FTD by Design*. [Online] February 06, 2017. [Cited: December 04, 2020.] <https://www.ftd.com/blog/share/daffodil-meaning-and-symbolism>.
16. History Extra. 16 things you (probably) didn't know about St David's Day traditions. *historyextra.com*. [Online] March 01, 2017. [Cited: December 04, 2020.] <https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/facts-st-davids-day-wales-traditions-facts-welsh-costumes-leek/>.
17. BBC News. Artist creates giant St David from daffodils and bark. *bbc.co.uk*. [Online] March 01, 2019. [Cited: December 04, 2020.] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-wales-47415230>.

18. Gaskell, Simon. Pride in Wales shines through patriotic poll. *walesonline.co.uk*. [Online] March 28, 2013. [Cited: December 05, 2020.] <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/pride-wales-shines-through-patriotic-1924814>.
19. Warren, Jess. Marie Curie cancel Great Daffodil Appeal, estimating loss of £1 million. *Wokingham Today*. [Online] March 19, 2020. [Cited: December 05, 2020.] <https://www.wokinghampaper.co.uk/marie-curie-cancel-great-daffodil-appeal-estimating-loss-of-1-million/>.
20. Government, Welsh. National symbols of Wales. *Wales*. [Online] July 03, 2019. [Cited: December 05, 2020.] <https://www.wales.com/about/culture/national-symbols-wales>.
21. Josue, Myrell. A Beginner's Guide to Growing Daffodils: Everything You Need To Know. [Online] July 04, 2020. [Cited: December 05, 2020.] <https://florgeous.com/daffodil/#:~:text=Daffodils%20are%20herbaceous%20perennials%20native,cultivate%20one%20successfully%20are%20minimal..>