

The Colors of Color Guard

Color is a part of all our lives. We 'feel blue', see the world through 'rose-colored glasses' and can have 'black moods'. Colors affect us emotionally. Our reactions to color are both instinctive and learned. Instinctive reactions appear to be universal; learned reactions are a product of cultural influence. Culture plays a large part in our perceptions and feelings about color.

Red Red! The color of a morning sunrise, of a campfire, of a delicious apple or a tree in its last thrush of fall color. It is a Stingray Corvette breaking speed records on the Autobahn. Reds evoke our deepest and most dangerous emotions. Red is the color of blood, aggression, danger, war, and violence. A man and a girl wearing red bring two different images to the mind. Red is Salomae in her seven veils, dancing feverishly before Herod. Red is excitement, energy, desire, speed, strength, power, heat, love, fire, and all things passionate.

Green Like most colors, the wrong green can make or break your show. Green can be used to evoke calming or invigorating thoughts of nature, fertility, renewal, spring, and environment. Other uses of green are to indicate good luck, good or poor health, youth, vigor, generosity. Emotionally, green can convey jealousy, inexperience, envy, or misfortune.

Blue Blue skies, blue water, sacred blue... the color that most identifies our world and our most precious source of life and renewal: water. Blue suggests peace, tranquility, and calm. It can also speak of stability, harmony, unity, trust, truth, confidence, security, cleanliness, order, and loyalty. In Greece, blue is the color of virginity. On the darker side, blue can indicate depression and physical or emotional coldness.

Yellow Yellow is the color of joy, happiness, optimism, idealism, imagination, hope. It is the sun in the sky, the color of summer and gold and wealth. However, studies show that, in décor at least, yellow creates feelings of anxiety and unease. This color can be used to design an atmosphere of betrayal, deceit, dishonesty, cowardice, jealousy, covetousness, or illness.

Brown Brown evokes comfortable earthy feelings of home and hearth. Brown can call to mind the deep musty giving soil of our Earth, the outdoors with its tall trees. It is symbolic of reliability, the endurance and stability of trees and rocks, rural country, all things archaic and ancient. The color of the peasant caste, brown is also associated with poverty, body functions, filth and "off-color" humor.

White Use this color with care; its symbolic burden is heavy. For most of western culture, white is the color of virginity. However, in many Asian cultures, white is the color of mourning, the color of death. Here are some of the more common emotions or states most commonly associated with white: reverence, purity, cleanliness, peace, humility, innocence, youth, birth, winter, snow, good, sterility, marriage, and death.

Black Westerners view black as somber, and its most common symbolic use is to express mourning and death. However, this does not explain its popularity in costuming and staging. Black is used to provide depth and anonymity to a stage. It can express power, formality, sophistication, style, elegance, and wealth. Black is a backdrop for our darker emotions: fear, evil, unhappiness, sexuality, mystery, sadness, remorse, and anger.

Though there are many ways to convey ideas physically, using color deliberately can enhance the layers of your message. It adds to the information being processed by the audience and can help them understand your intentions. Used carelessly, color can muddle your show with unintended ideas and symbolic baggage.