

# **semiotics primer**

**semiotics**  
the study of signs.

*more specifically...*

**semiotics**

the study of communication through signs and symbols, both individually and grouped into sign systems. It includes the study of how meaning is constructed and understood.

**semiosis**

the transfer of meaning.

**semiosis**

the transfer of meaning.

an active process of negotiating meaning  
between the sign and the reader.

**sign**

anything that stands for something  
other than itself.

*any examples?*

**three types of signs:**

icon

index

symbol

**icon**

physical resemblance to the object / concept.

*photos, maps*

*can be recognized*





*woof*

[as a spoken word]



green pepper



woman

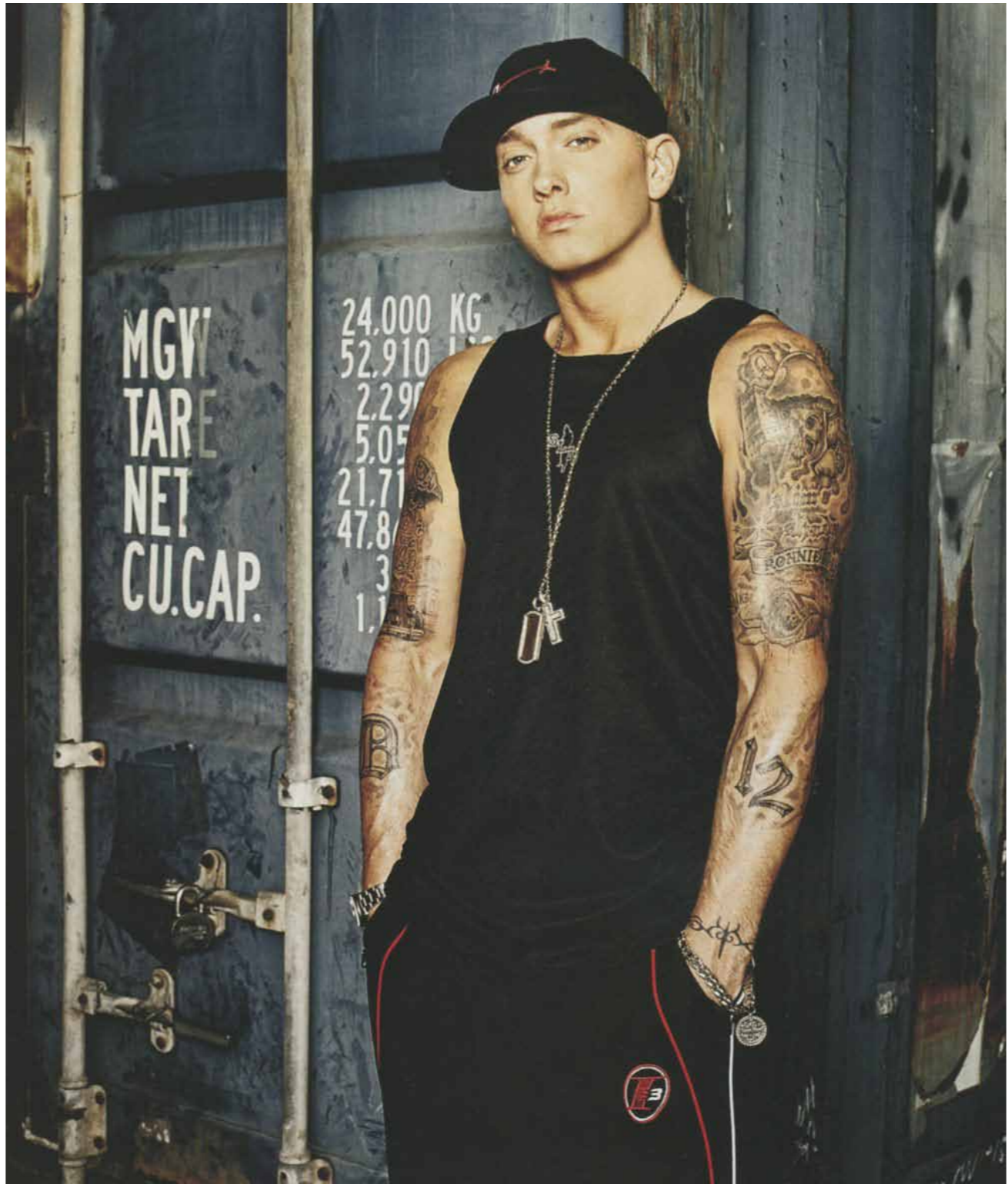
*woof*

[as a spoken word]

sound a dog makes



© PHOTOFEST / JAMES J. MCDONNELL









**index**

direct link between the sign  
and the object / concept.

*symptoms, clues, recordings, measurements*

*can figure out*



www.123rf.com







www.123rf.com

gauge=lack of gas



storm clouds=rain



smoke=pollution





**symbol**

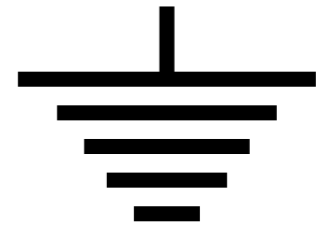
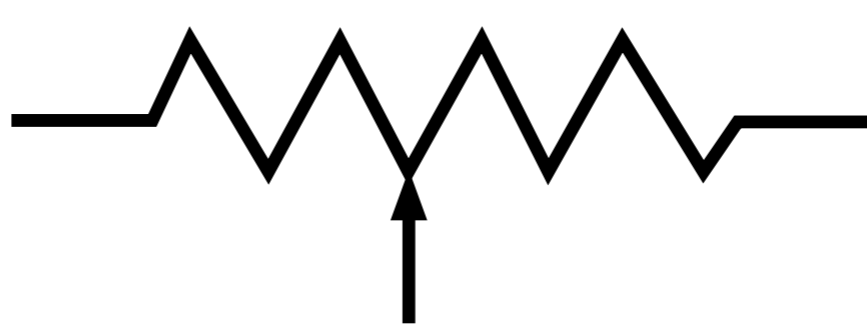
learned and agreed upon, but arbitrary, connection between the sign and object / concept.

*languages, alphabets, trademarks*

*can be learned*



**GOODYEAR**

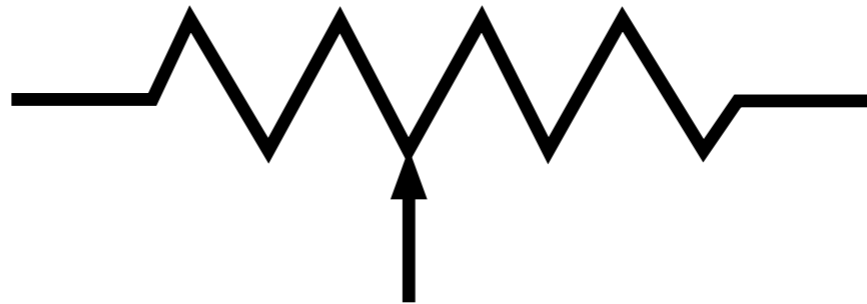




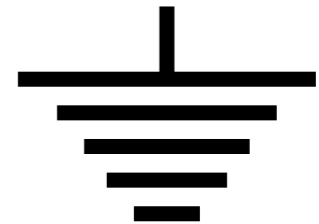
biologically hazardous  
materials  
*(the letters are also symbolic; we  
have to learn their meaning)*



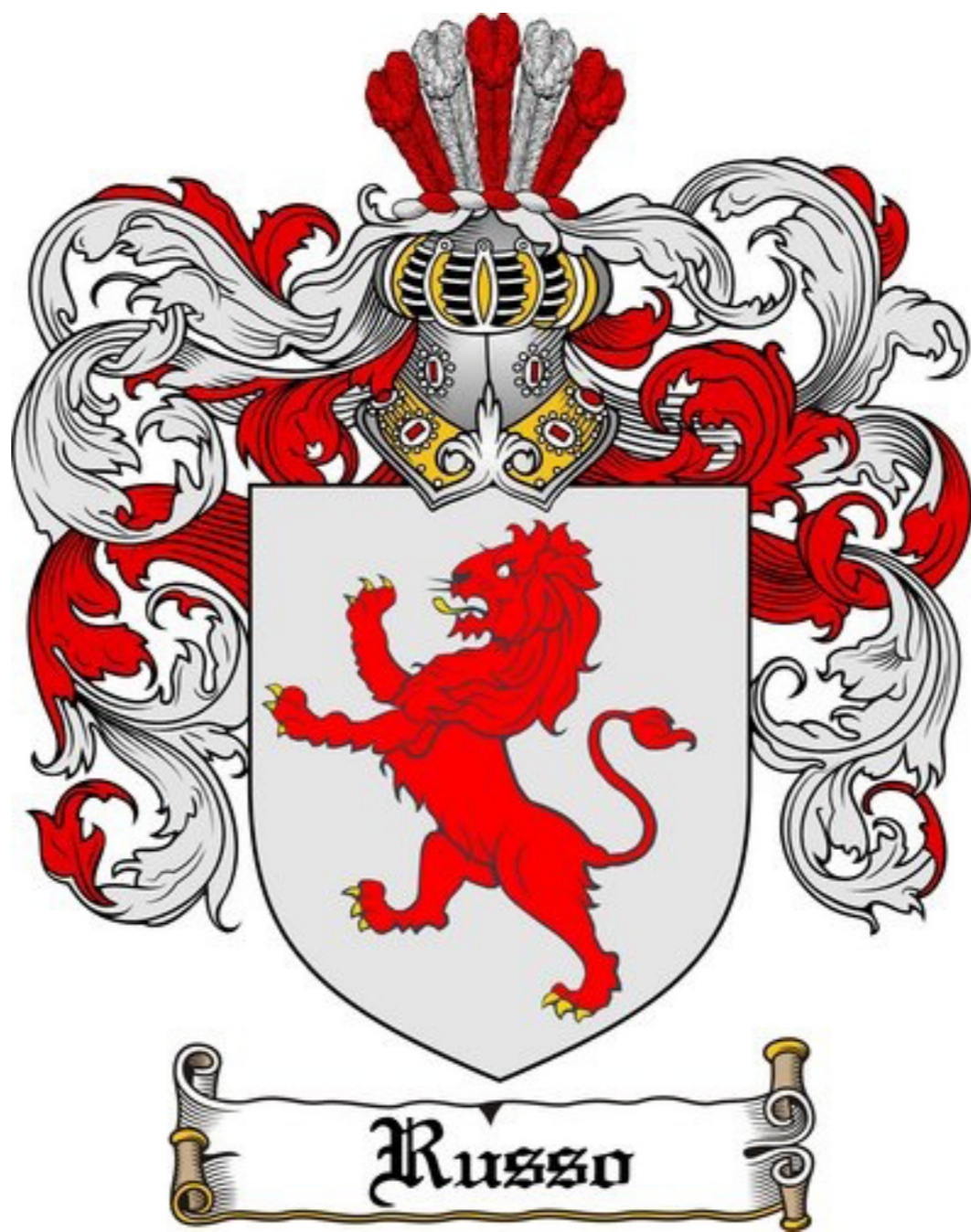
the goodyear tire corporation



various electrical connections

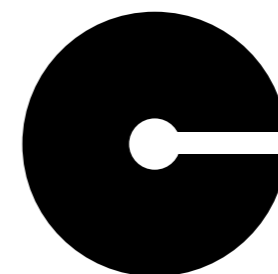




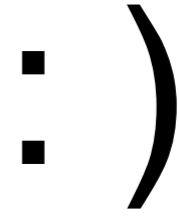


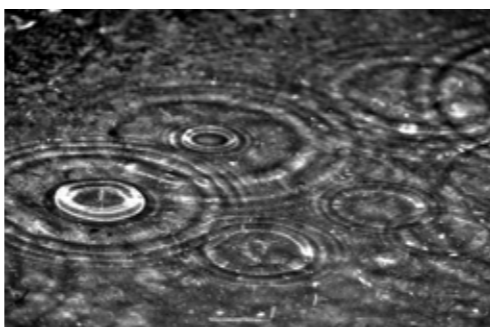






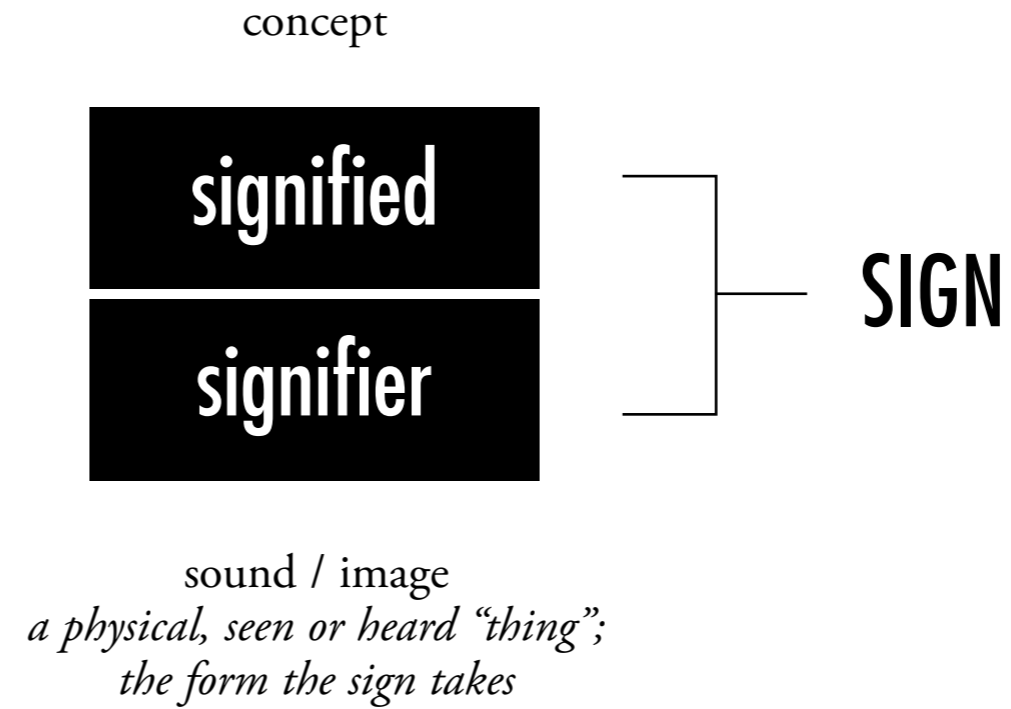






# the semiotic dyad

Saussure's model of the linguistic sign



## SOURCES

Baldwin, Jonathan and Lucienne Roberts. *Visual Communication: From Theory to Practice*. AVA Publishing: New York. 2006.

Crow, David. *Visible Signs*. AVA Publishing: New York. 2003.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representamen>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sign>

McCoy, Katherine. *High Ground Tools & Strategies*. handouts.