



RED

by Sara Tusek

The September 2007 issue of ALOE covers the color BLUE. As noted there, for 23 years I've been asking people what color best expresses their personality and view of life, as part of a career development exercise. While the most commonly chosen color is blue, red is rarely chosen.

Those who do choose red often point to its attention-getting qualities, saying that they themselves enjoy attention. Others find red to be festive, or dangerous—characteristics they attribute to themselves. What does the color RED convey?

Google “red”

A quick Google Image search for “red” turned up the expected roses, along with red I-pods, t-shirts with ironic red quotes and, of course, Valentine's hearts.

Searching for “red art” does not turn up Communist



The Dessert: Harmony in Red (The Red Room) by Henri Matisse

propaganda posters, as you might suspect. Instead, I found this lovely Matisse painting, which uses a red background to convey warmth, hominess and comfort.

Červen and červenec

The Czech language salutes red (or maybe it salutes worms!) in the names of two months:

June -- červen (either from červený, red, or from červ, worm, both related to fruit)

July -- červenec (the same as with červen)

Maybe the Czechs are referring to red, as the name of the first two months of summer, to indicate the warmth of the sun that makes these months to welcome after the cold of winter (red=fire=warmth). Or maybe the names are in recognition of the red fruits of the summer: strawberries, rhubarb, red chard, red currants, red raspberries, red cabbage, radishes, red beet greens and tomatoes. Or perhaps the word “red” refers to sunburns on pale winter-white skin. Summer has plenty of red!

Scientific red

You may be wondering just how the eye sees the color red:

“Red” is any of a number of similar colors evoked by light consisting predominantly of the longest wavelengths of light discernible by the human eye, in the wavelength range of roughly 630–740 nm. Longer wavelengths than this are called infrared (*below red*), and cannot be seen by the naked human eye.

Red is used as one of the additive primary colors of light, complementary to cyan, in RGB color systems. Red is also one of the subtractive primary colors of RYB color space but not CMYK color space (from *Wikipedia*).

Red is a primary color; no combination of colors, when mixed, produces red. It is primary in a way similar to a number being prime: it is *sui generis*, comparable only to itself. It cannot be broken down into constituent parts: it exists in totality.

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Sara and Jarda Tusek with Klaus

“A Lesson on English” is a series of short lessons created for people who want to become fluent in conversational English. The lessons are practical and useful for students who have learned English in a traditional classroom setting or on their own.



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RED AS A SYMBOL

Over the centuries, red has come to symbolize both positive and negative concepts and qualities.

On the negative side, red stands for **sin** (*The Scarlet Letter* is a book about adultery in Colonial America), **guilt** (being caught red-handed means that you're caught in the act of committing a crime) and **anger** (“He saw red” means “he was overpoweringly angry”).

On the positive side, red stands for **blood** and **sacrifice**. While bloody sacrifice may not seem positive to a 21st-century European or American, the concept of sacrificial blood is at the **heart** (another red item) of many religions. Red stands for **courage** (as in *The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane's novel of the Civil War). In English heraldry, red stands for **love**, while a particular shade of red called crimson stands for **boldness** and **enthusiasm**.

RED ROVER

When I was a child, we often played “Red Rover” at school. Here are the rules, in case you want to play:

“Red Rover (also known as Bullrush, Forcing the City Gates and Octopus Tag) is an outdoor game played primarily by children on playgrounds. This 19th century children's game is thought to have originated in England and then spread to Australia, Canada and the United States.

The game is played between two imaginary lines, usually around thirty feet apart. Each team lines up along one of these lines, and the game starts when the first team (usually called the “East” or “South” team, although this does not relate to the actual relative location of the teams) calls out, “Red rover, red rover, send [name of player on opposite team] right over.” or “Red Rover, Red Rover, let [name of player of opposing team] come over.” or “Red rover, red rover, we call [name of player on opposite team] over.”

The immediate goal for the person called is to run to the other line and break the chain

(formed by the linking of hands).

If the person called fails to break the chain, this player joins the team which called “Red rover”.

However, if the player successfully breaks the chain, this player may select either of the two “links” broken by the successful run, and send them to join the team that had been called out. The other team then calls out “Red rover” for a player on the first team, and play continues.

When only one player is left on a team, he or she must try and break through a link. If he or she does not succeed, the opposing team wins. Otherwise, they are able to get a player back for their team.

(from Wikipedia).

RED FOR CONSERVATISM AND/OR COMMUNISM

European revolutionary movements of the 19th century adopted red as the symbol for the fight against oppression. Red was the color of the blood shed by Leftist workers in their struggle against both monarchy and capitalism. In contrast, in the U.S., red is the color of the conservative right-leaning Republican party.



Red is versatile, unique and attention-getting. It can be murderous or life-giving; angry or loving; pale pink or deep crimson. Seeing red can raise your blood pressure, or convey prosperity and wealth. Red, like all colors, is literally in the eye of the beholder.