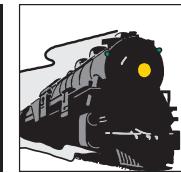


Do You Speak Hobo?

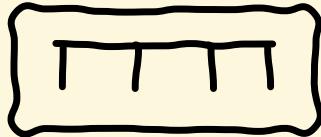


National
Railroad
Museum

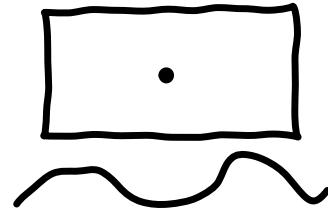


Hobos used a special sign language to communicate with each other. Their symbols talked about conditions on the road: where to find a safe place to sleep, a good handout or even if the police were active in a town. There are more than 60 different hobo symbols.

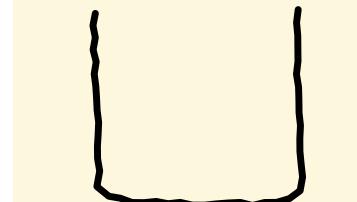
Let's see if you can speak hobo. Study the symbols below and select the correct meaning. The answers are on page two.



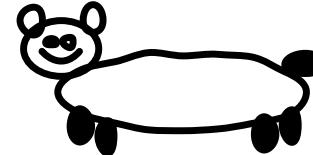
1. Mean or Bad Dog
 Sleep in Barn



2. Fast Road
 Bad Water



3. Good Water
 Dangerous Railroad



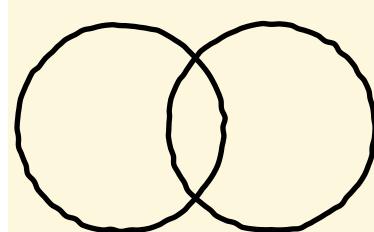
4. Beware of Dog
 Good Place
for a Handout
(Kind Lady Lives Here)



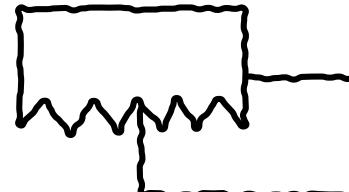
5. Camp Here
 Police Active



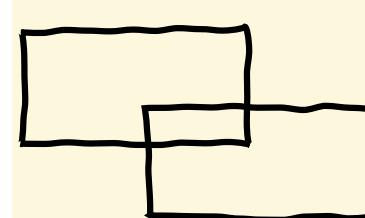
6. Police Inactive
 Sleep in Barn



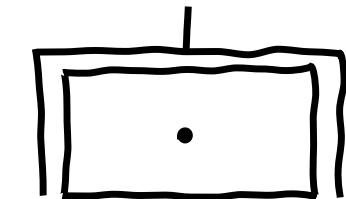
7. Unsafe Place
 Hobos Arrested
on Sight



8. Rough Road
 Cowards!
*(Will Give to
Get Rid of Hobos)*



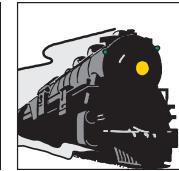
9. Be Afraid
 Stay Out



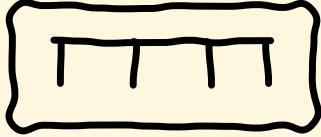
10. Tunnel Ahead
 Dangerous
Neighborhood

Do You Speak Hobo?

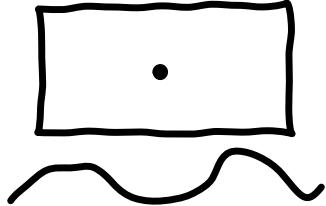
(Answers)



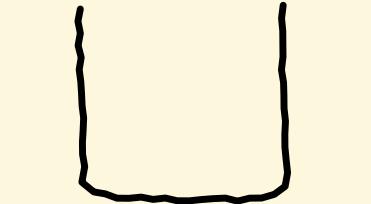
National
Railroad
Museum



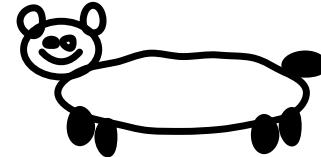
- 1. Mean Dog or Dogs in Garden:**
To keep would-be hobo garden robbers from plucking the vegetables from the garden plot, dogs would be staked or left free to roam within its boundaries. Hobos who experienced such an unpleasant surprise would warn others who may have their eye on the ingredients for their evening's meal.



- 2. Bad water:**
Don't drink the water here, it will make you sick. Sanitary conditions and poor waste disposal into streams and other bodies of water were poorly regulated and this symbol gave warning to all.



- 3. Good water, Good Place to Camp:**
Miles between towns were often many. It could take days to reach your next destination. Finding a safe place to camp undisturbed that had good clean water nearby and had plenty of firewood made the perfect camp. Finding this symbol was a relief, especially after a long walk.



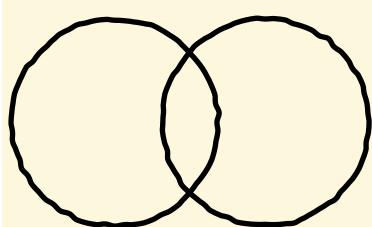
- 4. Kind Lady Lives Here:**
Hobos who found or left this mark could rely on a bite to eat with nothing expected in return. These women were generally the welcoming "mothering" type of individuals who found great compassion for respectful hobos. Think of a soft, loving pussy cat.



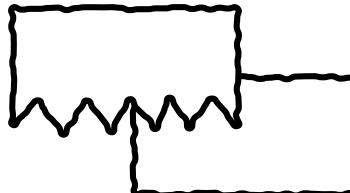
- 5. Police/Authorities Are Active/Alert:**
Police and political figures of some towns tried to keep their town hobo free and were constantly on the lookout. A hobo who was fortunate enough to spot this symbol could save themselves a lot of trouble. This symbol looks like an open eye.



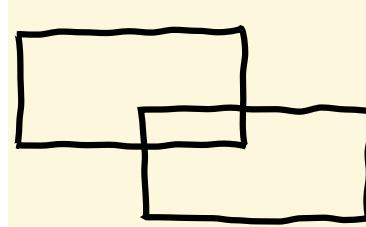
- 6. Police/Authorities Are Not Active/Alert:**
The opposite of #5. A closed eye.



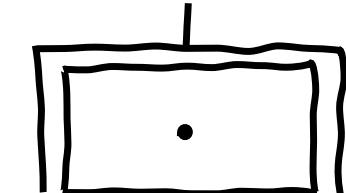
- 7. Hobos Arrested on Sight:**
Think of this symbol as the bars on a jail. For a hobo, the freedom to travel and move about was a prized possession. To have it taken away through jail was very bad.



- 8. Cowards, Will Pay/
Give To Get Rid of You:**
Hobos had a tendency to cause fear in some households or places that had little or no protection. These people would gladly offer food or money rather than deal with the confrontation of a hobo.



- 9. Be Afraid:**
This symbol, similar in meaning to #10, marked places that hobos should avoid.



- 10. Dangerous Neighborhood/Place:**
This sign was a severe warning to stay away at all cost. To proceed further would be to risk bodily harm or worse. Move on quickly.