**Symbols and Symbolism in *The Stone Angel* by Margaret Laurence**

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**The statue of the stone angel** symbolizes the legacy of pride in Hagar’s family. Her father bought it “in pride to mark the bones and proclaim his dynasty, as he fancied, forever and a day” (3). From the very beginning of the book this symbol constantly reminds readers about Hagar’s proud heritage and her relationship with her father which was marked (and in many ways marred) by both of their senses of pride. It is also an interesting symbol throughout the book because eventually it gets knocked over and damaged and serves as a reminder of the [tragic nature of the life](http://www.articlemyriad.com/stone-angel-death-salesman-compared/) it represents. Just as Hagar begins to reflect as she nears her final days. By the end of The Stone Angel  it is a ruined reminder of how a life spent standing firm and upright has not led her anywhere and like her pride, it is wounded and harmed.

**Water** is an important symbol throughout the text because it is the giver of life and offers Hagar a chance to grow and develop. There are many times in which it is mentioned and when she says, after forgetting to purchase some, saying, “I have not had a drop of water since—I can’t remember how long it’s been” this is a statement about her inability to literally “drink” from life and be nurtured from it. Instead of having water all around her she is dry and hollow, just like the sunflowers in the garden she had that died because they, like her, were unable to drink and live fully. Water is something that is free and flowing, which is the exact antithesis of Hagar. It is used repeatedly as a symbol to show all the opportunities Hagar had to drink (or live) but did not take.

Like water, **flowers** are also an important symbol in the novel because they too represent life, although in this case, they show two ways of living it. Hagar has a garden of strictly planted flowers that she tries hard to maintain and keep straight and perfect but eventually this does not work as they are choked out. Meanwhile, there are numerous examples of wildflowers throughout the text and these seem to grow freely and without problems. These two types of flowers; those that are perfectly arranged and maintained and those that grow in the wild represent the two ways Hagar could live her life. Throughout her lifetime, however, she is most associated with the finely cultivated flowers and tries her best to keep them perfect even though the wildflowers might have been more beautiful.

The **plaid pin** is a symbol of Hagar’s pride about her family’s background as well as symbolic of her desire to have a relationship with her children. As this [thesis statement for “The Stone Angel”](http://www.paperstarter.com/stoneangel.htm) about symbols also suggests, it is also an important symbol because she treats the pin like holy relic while her relationships with others crumble and thus it is also symbolic of her attachment to material goods. The act of giving such a coveted possession to her son, John, is symbolic of her desire to pass down something valuable to her children but this fails when John does not seem interested. When it is finally gone she laments the pin but even more so, the failed relationships associated with it—most notably with her father and son.

In a collage of the symbols discussed here, the most prominent would be the stone angel itself and it would be placed directly in the middle with the other symbols branching out from it. This is because it represents pride and because of that legacy of pride, Hagar is who she is and thus her other character quirks are part of this. At the very top position above the stone angel would be the symbol of water. It would be placed at the top because it shows the pinnacle of freedom and ease which is always looming over Hagar but so high that she cannot quite reach it, no matter how much she needs it. On either side of the stone angel image would be two sets of flowers; one of them wild and one of them cultivated. These would be under the water (as if to receive life from it) and on either side of the angel to show the two paths Hagar could have taken in her life. On the bottom of the collage would be the plaid pin, which would be placed there to accentuate the devalued position of material things that she sees late in her life. She would see that it was the least important and would instead think of the relationships associated with the thing rather than the thing itself.

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