

# Episode 1: Semiotics, Signs, Signifier and Signified

Welcome to Popular Culture and Theory, joining you from the unceded lands of the Palawa people in what we now call Hobart. I'm your host, Ashley Remminga. One of the most important concepts to understand for this podcast is semiotics. So over the course of this and the following few podcasts, we will unpack a number of key terms that are essential to understand in relation to semiotics, social sciences, and this podcast. But to begin with, what is semiotics? Put simply, semiotics is the study of signs.

Although the origin of semiotics is somewhat disputed and debated, it is generally accepted that Swiss philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure had one of the most profound influences over the field of semiotics. So that's good and all, but it doesn't mean much if we don't understand what signs are. So what are signs? Signs are the basic unit of communication.

This is very vague and I've deliberately left it this vague as there is some misunderstanding surrounding what a sign is and what it isn't. But let's just pause for a moment and apply what we understand about signs to something a bit more familiar, a bit more accessible, Pokémon cards. Let's take an Eevee Pokémon card. So look at the face of the Pokémon card. In the top right hand corner of this card, there is a star-like symbol. So let's just take that general thing and call it our sign for the purpose of this discussion.

Now, here's a question for you. What part of that star makes it a sign? So as I mentioned, a sign is a basic unit of communication. So according to Saussure, signs are comprised of two parts, a signifier and signified. So this is where we sometimes get confused by what a sign is. So the

signifier is the physical component. This could be words or sounds. So many people will look at that corner image and think that is the sign because it is physical.

But that's not the case and we will unpack this further. The signified, which is the second term, is the meaning component of the sign. So it could be the completed image or the general concept that comes from this particular signifier.

So let's go back to that Pokémon card. The star symbol itself is the signifier. It's the visual component of the sign, whether that is the coloured circle, the star in it, that is the signifier. Now, the meaning of this particular sign is that the symbol represents this sense of being a normal type Pokémon. So we can say that this here is the signified.

We can associate that the signified is the meaning that we get from this particular symbol. So we're going to leave it there for this week. If you have any comments, concerns or questions, please reach out. If you enjoyed it or found it particularly useful, please make sure you like it and perhaps send it to your friends. Maybe they can learn something too.