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This page is about the meaning, origin and characteristic of the symbol, emblem, seal, flag, coat of arms and invariant(s) of the symbol: **Amber**.

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When describing amber, using the word "gemstone" can seem particularly awkward, since amber is not technically a stone at all. Nonetheless, it has been used as ornamentation for thousands of years, and over that time has acquired a number of symbolic meanings.

Amber is actually composed of fossilized resin, a sticky substance found in numerous types of trees and plants. As the resin hardens, everything from air bubbles to insects can become trapped inside, which gives decorative amber part of its aesthetic appeal. The amber that many people are familiar with is a rich golden-honey color also known as Baltic amber, since it is most commonly found in areas around the Baltic Sea in northern Europe. While other colors of amber exist, such as the famous Dominican blue amber, it is the golden variety that carries the most symbolic significance.



Due to its color, one of amber's primary symbolic associations is with the sun; it was even once believed that amber was composed of sunlight that had solidified into hard material. The translucent quality of amber only added to this belief. The ancient Greek sun god Apollo was associated with amber, and in the Greek myth of Phaeton, the ill-fated charioteer who tried to drive the sun across the sky, amber was said to have formed from the tears that were wept over his unfortunate death.

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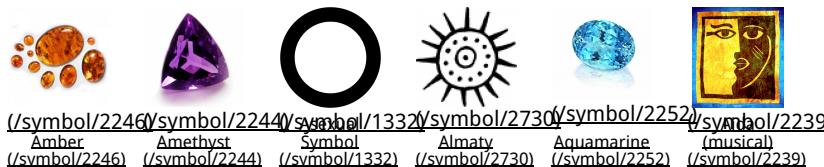
The concept of amber forming from divine tears is also present in Norse mythology. Freya, the goddess of love, was said to have wept bitterly while searching for her missing husband. When the tears she had wept fell to earth, those that hit the land turned to gold, but those that fell into the sea became amber. Since the Vikings and other peoples of far-northern Europe were certainly aware of the amber deposits around the Baltic Sea (it was a popular trade item), it's easy to see how the connection between the landscape and the myth could have been made.

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