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In many parts of ancient Europe, the Oak tree was a revered symbol. Besides the tree itself, individual components such as acorns and leaves held their own unique significance, and oaks were also associated with numerous deities.

To properly understand the symbolism of the oak, we must first examine its physical nature. Oak trees can live to a very advanced age, and the wood derived from them is hard and dense with a strong grain. In these contexts, the oak can be

seen as a symbol of longevity, as well as representing strength and power. This physical strength has also given the tree an association with heroism, and the club of the ancient Greek hero Heracles (the more famous 'Hercules' is the Roman version of his name) is said to have been made of oak wood.

Among the Celts, groves of oak trees were considered sacred places where worship was carried out. The trees were also strongly associated with the Druids, a revered class of men who combined the roles of priest, lawgiver, teacher and healer in Celtic society. In fact, the Welsh word for oak, "duir", has a similar etymological root to the word "druid", further emphasizing the connection between the men and the tree.

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What's This?





Because oak trees have a tendency to attract lightning (due to their size), they have often been associated with thunder gods, including the Greek Zeus, the Norse Thor, the Celtic Donar and the Slavic Perun (the latter also known as Perkons, Perkunas and Percunis). In her capacity as a forest goddess, Artemis was also associated with the oak. Outside of Europe, one location where the oak was also revered was in Japan. There, oaks were symbols of protection and brought good luck. During the New Year, oak branches were placed above the entrances to houses as an appeal to the gods.

In later centuries, the oak tree continued to be an important symbol in parts of Europe, and the tree's components (mentioned earlier) took on symbolism of their own. During the Victorian Era, for example, acorns became a feature of mourning jewelry. Since these little fruits would one day grow into mighty trees, they symbolized a feeling of rebirth and renewal, no doubt a comfort to the friends and relatives of the departed. The Oak was also adopted as the national tree of many European countries, including England, France, Germany, Moldova, Poland and Lithuania. In the United States, oak leaves took on a military association, where various colors and arrangements of the leaves (sometimes incorporating acorns) can denote rank.

Categories: Celtic Symbols (/category/22), Greek Symbols (/category/1), Plants, Trees and Flowers (/category/58), Religious Symbols (/category/5).

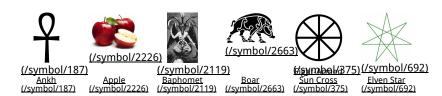
Oak (/symbol/2313) is part of the Paganism (/group/31) group.

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Contemporary Paganism, Modern Paganism, or Neopaganism, is an umbrella term referring to a variety of contemporary religious movements, particularly those influenced by or claiming to be derived from... read more » (/group/31)





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