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## Symbols in *Tristram Shandy*

### ① Hobby - Horses

*Tristram Shandy* uses the word "hobby-horse" to embrace a wide variety of attitudes and pastimes, from a lawyer's fondness for flowery language to Uncle Toby's model fort-building.

The connotations of "hobby-horse", however, are somewhat broader: the word can describe almost any sort of intellectual or recreational passion including political causes and academic subjects.

*Tristram* argues that one can learn a lot about a person by observing his/her hobby-horse. This concept guides his description of the major characters of the novel. He portrays the character of his father, Walter, Uncle Toby and their mutual friend, Parson Yorick splendidly and provides us relatively little in the way of traditional biographical detail. The reader learns that Walter used to be a merchant and that he is in his 50s when *Tristram* is born. Walter Shandy's obsession with book learning of all types and his deep desire on applying this learning to everyday life when it is totally impractical are depicted vividly.

In *Tristram's* view, the benefit of hobby-horses is their tendency to keep people too busy to do much harm to one another. *Tristram* is delighted when people burn off their excess energy on harmless pastimes. He is particularly delighted when England's politicians



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spend time and attention on their hobby-horses, since this keeps them from getting into worse forms of mischief, such as corruption and scanda

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### Nose

Mr. Walter Shandy's ~~was~~ obsession with the book-knowledge leads him into the realm of the absurd. When a new concept draws his mind, he stocks his library with many books on the subject. He does the same when he decides to name his son. Actually he wants to apply the bookish knowledge on everything. However, his investigation of noses is perhaps the most peculiar. Tristram has given the description of noses in the third volume of the novel.

Tristram's nose which is "crush'd... as flat as a pancake" during childbirth ~~is~~ is the subject of deep concern for Mr. Walter Shandy. Dr. Slop was given the responsibility to stand by the room where Tristram is born but it is ~~because~~ because of Dr. Slop, the damage is done to the nose of the new-born baby. Tristram declines to say whether Slop is hoping to actually repair the damage or only to profit up so Walter will not notice.





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Yristram spends many pages talking about their size, shape, and status as a symbol of manhood. He, even, in an episode of the Shandy family history, insists that a man's nose must be of a given length in order to please his wife. Otherwise, she will demand extra compensation when the marriage-contract is drawn up.

Then, in Swankenbergius's Tale (vol. 4) Yristram portrays the protagonist's prominent nose as an object of borderline erotic fascination for the women of Strasburg. Yristram, having made the joke, warns the readers repeatedly against reading too much into his discussion of noses.

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