

Freemasonry – A to X

MW Bro. Rod Ponech

Most of us know what Freemasonry means to us as individuals, but few of us can explain it in anything other than mundane and simple phrases which can never do justice to the complexities of our ancient craft. Having said that, and having acknowledged that Freemasonry may be all but impossible to define or explain, let's attempt to do just that by looking at the A to X of Freemasonry.

Apron	The Badge of a Mason. More ancient than the golden fleece. More honourable than the "Star or Garter". Symbolic of innocence from the lamb from which it comes.
Brotherly Love	Godly men "love their neighbours" and show a love for all mankind. In our fraternity – we have a special love for our brethren. Brotherly Love inculcates the bonds and obligations which define our responsibilities to our brothers
Cardinal Virtues	Basis of our order. The four tassels in the Lodge room – Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice.
Degree	A specific part or fraction of the whole. One 360th of a circle. Masonic Instruction and advancement is done by "Degrees" implying that each is only a small portion of the whole.
Esoteric	In Freemasonry the "Esoterics" are the secret or hidden parts available only to the initiated as opposed to the Exoteric or common parts available to all.
Fortitude	The second of the four Cardinal Virtues. The virtue displayed by the first Master in being willing to forfeit his life rather than betray the trust reposed in him. Such "Fortitude" is the foundation of Freemasonry
The letter "G"	Great Architect of the Universe. Grand Geometrician of the Universe. The Speculative Mason's Symbol for the Universal Deity allowing each brother to define his personal belief, yet denying no righteous man his membership.
Hele	To cover up. There was a recognized trade of being a heler who covered with roof tiles, straw, sod etc. Today we would call them "roofers". In Freemasonry we hele, cover, or keep secret.
Inculcated	A term used to mean "to teach" or to find meaning within each lecture, degree and lesson in Freemasonry has a universal truth and law "inculcated" within it.
Jachin	The right hand pillar at King Solomon's Temple. When combined with the other "Boaz", the two offered "stability" to the structure. From two words combined "Jah" a poetic version of Jehova and "Jechin" which translates as to build or establish Jachin therefore means to establish with God's help
Keepers (of the House)	From the book of Ecclesiastes "keepers of the houses shall tremble" A reminder of the failures of the human body. Keepers often allegorically represent the arms and legs. The teaching which emphasizes "build also a spiritual temple for yourself". As the physical one you occupy will cease

Landmarks	<p>In ancient times all property was defined by permanent landmarks, property between the river and the crest of the hill - etc. The landmarks were boundaries which never changed. Freemasonry has its never changing boundaries. While a complete list of Ancient Landmarks for our order has never been universally agreed upon, all Regular Speculative Freemasons will agree on the four universally acknowledged Landmarks of the Order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a man • Free by birth • Of mature age • And under the tongue of good report
Master	<p>Master Builder – qualified in intellect and training. Master of the Lodge – qualified to do the work of the Lodge teacher of morals, through symbolism utilizing: myth, legend and allegory. Master Mason – the highest degree in Freemasonry</p>
Northeast Angle	<p>The position of the foundation stone. The basic starting point in Freemasonry. The first and most important lesson of Freemasonry – “should you at any future time encounter a brother in circumstances of distress who claims your assistance you will cheerfully embrace the opportunity of practicing that virtue which you now profess to admire”</p>
Obligation	<p>A covenant of brotherhood and friendship, under a solemn oath of fidelity and loyalty. The pledge of secrecy, given in the name of God, where perjury is subject to severe penalties (both symbolic and “real”.)</p>
Progressive	<p>The “progressive nature of our science” whereby advancement is made only by the mastery of one step at a time</p>
Quran	<p>An example of another “volume of the sacred law”. In this case for those of the Muslim faith. Reminding us that the universality of our science allows each Mason to maintain his personal beliefs. Bro. Rudyard Kipling wrote of a meeting he attended with seven sacred books upon the altar.</p>
Rough Ashlar	<p>One of the three immovable jewels in the Lodge room with the perfect ashlar and tracing board for the brethren to moralize on. Symbolic of our state of imperfection and the moral process of Freemasonry as we chip away one character flaw at a time. The never ending process of self improvement</p>
Speculative	<p>The philosophy of Freemasonry as a speculative art as contrasted to the science of the operative mason. In a Lodge we teach in symbolic terms drawing on operative tools, to express the laws of morality and the improvement of humanity</p>
Tyler	<p>A more recent term for a Heler (coverer of buildings / roofer). As the protective roof tiles secured the structure when completed so the Tyler of the Lodge secures and protects the Lodge when at work allowing none to enter but those qualified to do so (both prior to and during the meeting).</p>
Unity	<p>The “Mystic Tie” of Freemasonry. United around the globe in a common fraternity of brotherly love though there is no international governing body, no rules, regulations, or constitution yet, in unity we all recognize one another, and fulfill our duties of charity and compassion regardless of race, religion, nationality or any other “man-made” divisive element</p>
Vouching	<p>To step forward as an individual and confirm another’s membership in the Craft can only be done by due trial, strict examination, or sure information. However, if vouched for – then accepted without reservation the necessary element of fraternal acceptance world wide</p>
Winding Staircase	<p>Symbolically “The journey of a Mason”. Drawn from the 15 or more steps to the temple of Solomon often used as a metaphor for the progression by degrees. Also the title of a Play designed for informing the uninitiated.</p>

Yield	The process of surrendering one’s self. The acknowledgement of a higher authority or “Power”. The process which brings us all to the same level
Zion	The mountain or hill in Palestine on which Jerusalem was built. Symbolically used to denote the ultimate goal or “Heaven”

I know you were all counting down the letters (if only to estimate how much longer I might be going). Many of you were even speculating on what the next letter might refer to (we call this participation or engagement of the audience)

And yes, it does appear that I do not know my alphabet, however - I did not miss the letter “X.” I purposefully saved that important element to the very last.

The “X” “Factor”	<p>A single, undefined meaning that each man carries of his membership in the Order of Freemasonry – be it friendship, brotherhood, equality, acceptance, morality, code of conduct, relief, charity, love, fraternity, liberty, or a relationship which cannot be summed up in a single word or a simple phrase. Each Freemason has a personal understanding of what it means to be a Mason and this diversity of thought within a universal acceptance of one another is what makes our order, both unique yet open to the common man. For each of us there is an “X Factor” in our brotherhood.</p> <p>Brethren – do not overly complicate the meaning of Freemasonry – keep it simple, and follow the basic “A to X” of the order. However - do not, at the same time, - overly simplify. Think deeply and ponder just what it means to you as an individual to be a Freemason. To the outside world (the uninitiated) our fraternity must never be viewed as menacing, secretive or conspiratorial. To us as Freemasons, our fraternity must ever be worked at, and developed as the most complex and demanding aspect of our vary lives and souls.</p> <p>Remember – for Freemasonry “A to X” it is the personal “X Factor” which makes it uniquely special. The true meaning of what Freemasonry is must be defined by each one of us Individually, within our hearts and minds</p>
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This paper was presented by MW Bro. Rod Ponech, the 100th Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Alberta at the 49th Phoenix District meeting held at King George Masonic Temple on November 29, 2006. While residing in Edmonton, MW Bro. Ponech is an honorary member of Kind George Lodge No. 59 in Calgary, Alberta and attends whenever possible.