

Theme

The Search for Meaning

Objectives:

- To identify literary theme as a message or insight about life.
- To differentiate between direct and implied themes.
- To identify themes in reading passages.

Question:

- Can you apply the lessons you learned to other experiences?
- How would reading about life lessons in literature engage readers?

What is theme:

- We read literature not just for entertainment, but also for insights about life.
- The theme of a literary work is the central message or insight it reveals about life or human nature.
- All the elements of a novel, story, poem, essay, or play work together to communicate its theme.
- Insights are clear perceptions or views of something based on knowledge
- NOT ALL themes are LESSONS but they all contain an element of new understanding about life.

Important to KNOW!

- Theme is different from the topic (or subject) of the work.
- For instance, the topic of story may be friendship or conflict. Theme goes beyond the topic to reveal the broader insight- Perhaps a comment about loyalty or about sacrifice.

Theme:

- Here are some examples of these recurring themes:
 - Be loyal to your friends.
 - Show courage in the face of danger.
 - Be true to yourself despite what others say or do.
- Many universal themes cross cultural lines, meaning it would work for one group of people but not another.
- For example, in some cultures the importance of loyalty might be higher than individuality.

Understanding Theme:

Direct Theme	Sometimes, an author directly states the theme.
Implied Theme	Most themes are implied or not directly stated. The reader has to INFER
Theme	Central Message or insight the story reveals about life or human nature.
Universal Theme	Recurring themes that happen often.

What is a Theme?

Theme: Life lesson, meaning, **moral**, or message about life or human nature that is communicated by a literary work.

In other words...

Theme is what the story teaches readers.

Themes

A **theme** is **not a word**, it is a **sentence**.

You don't have to agree with the theme to identify it.

Examples

Money can't buy happiness.

Don't judge people based on the surface.

It is better to die free than live under tyranny.

What is the theme?

Jenny Puchovier was so excited. She had a pack of Starburst in her lunch and she had been looking forward to eating them all morning. Lunch finally came and Jenny sat down to eat her Starbursts when her *friend* Yudy sat next to her. "Let me get the pink ones," asked Yudy. Jenny liked the pink ones best, but she thought Yudy was funny and Jenny wanted Yudy to like her, so Jenny gave Yudy all of her pink Starbursts. Before Jenny was done giving Yudy the pink ones, Carrie sat on the other side of Jenny. "Let me get the red and the orange ones, Jenny. Remember when I gave you that Snickers?" Jenny didn't remember that, though she did remember when Carrie ate a whole Snickers in front of her, but Jenny thought Carrie was cool, so she gave her the red and the orange Starbursts. Now that she only had the yellow ones, Jenny wasn't so excited about eating starbursts anymore.

Example Answers

You can't buy friends.

You have to take care of yourself.

Not everybody is your friend.

Identifying Themes

Themes are not explicit (clearly stated).

Themes are implied.

Themes are bigger than the story.



Themes are about the big picture.

Not "Yellow Starbursts taste bad"
 Not "Yudy and Carrie are bad friends."
 Think **BIGGER**.
 Find "Real" World advice.



Review

1. Theme is what we can learn from a story.
2. Themes must be inferred.
3. Themes are about the **BIG** world.

Practice

1. We'll read each story.
2. Write what you think the theme is.
3. Write another sentence explaining what happens in the story that leads you to believe this.

How does the small world of the story connect to the big world theme?

Once there was a mean little boy who lived in a small village. This mean little boy loved to mess with people, so one day he ran up to a sheep herder and shouted, "WOLF! WOLF! A wolf is attacking the town!" The sheep herder grabbed his staff and ran to defend the town, but realized he had been fooled when the boy started pointing and laughing at him. "Ha ha! I made you jump," said the boy. Then the boy ran up to a farmer and shouted, "WOLF! WOLF! A wolf is attacking the town!" The farmer grabbed his pitchfork and ran to defend the town, but when the boy started pointing and laughing at him, he realized he had been tricked. As the boy went back to his family's farm laughing about the funny trick he played, he saw a real wolf in his father's chicken coop. As the wolf ate all of his father's chickens, the boy screamed over and over again, "WOLF! WOLF! Please help us!" But nobody came to help him.

Example Answers

Don't ask for help unless you really need it.
 Don't play tricks on the people around you.

Angie loved to draw. She made colorful designs of people's names with bright hearts & flowers, but she lost own markers, so she borrowed her teacher's. The school day was ending, but Angie wanted to keep coloring, so she took the teacher's markers home and lost them in her messy room. She came back to school the next day and wanted to color again, so she asked the teacher for more markers. The teacher replied, "Sure, Angie, but this is my last pack." Angie said she would be careful, but by the end of the day the markers were scattered all over the floor and the custodian swept them up and disposed of them. When Angie came in the next day, she asked the teacher for more markers, but she was disappointed to find that there weren't any more. "I don't know where all of my markers went," said the teacher, "but I don't have them." Angie had to draw her pictures with drab pencils.

Example Answers

Take care of shared resources.
Some things will not replenish after they are exhausted.

Jenny hated reading class. She didn't understand point of view or figurative language, and not knowing how to do the work frustrated her. She asked the teacher for help, but he spoke so fast and used such big words that she still couldn't understand. The teacher asked if she understood, and she nodded her head, but she didn't. Jenny's friend Katie knew that Jenny was having trouble, and, rather than just giving Jenny all of the answers, Katie explained to Jenny how to solve the problems. Katie spoke clearly and at Jenny's level, and Jenny was happy that she finally learned how to do the work. Later in the week, Katie was having trouble in math class. She didn't understand coordinates and was really frustrated. Seeing that Katie was having problems, Jenny, who understood math very well, taught Katie coordinates. Both girls made honor roll that quarter.

Example Answers

Cooperation is the key to success.
We can all do better when we work together.

Theme Poster/Slide : Create a "poster" on 1 google slide or piece of small construction paper based on one of the following TOPIC WORDS from The Giver.

Your poster must contain:

- ▶ The TOPIC word, featured prominently.
- ▶ A well-written and clear theme statement (what about the subject do you learn from the story).
- ▶ A dictionary definition of the subject word that is appropriate to the novel.
- ▶ A quotation from a movie, book, song or poem which features the theme word and enhances your understanding of its importance.
- ▶ A symbol (illustration/visual) of the word and an explanation of its relevance to the theme.
- ▶ A six to eight sentence explanation of the importance of the theme word and how it has an effect on people's lives and how it is important in the book.

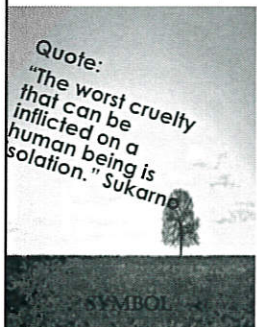
TOPIC WORD EXAMPLES:

Honesty	Love
Friendship	Family
Wisdom	Isolation
Diversity	Courage
Integrity	Choices
Perfection	Rebellion
Independence	War

TOPIC WORD: ISOLATION

DEFINITION: the complete separation from others

Quote:
"The worst cruelty that can be inflicted on a human being is isolation." Sukarno



SYMBOL

THEME STATEMENT:
REFLECTION BECOMES CLEAR THROUGH ISOLATION

Explanation:

- ▶ In *The Giver*, certain duties required isolation. To gain knowledge and wisdom, for example, is to separate oneself from those without such abilities. This is in part because learning requires solitary reflection, and in part because it's hard to identify with anyone who doesn't share the same wisdom. Being isolated also increases the pain of suffering; with no one to share the weight, the burden is that much greater. Isolation may be necessary a times in life to reflect and grow but ultimately once reflection has been attained wisdom is revealed.