

Finding Theme: Mini-Lesson

Classroom Work Packet

Exploring Theme

Basic Definition of Theme:

Theme is the central idea of a story. It is the moral or life-lesson that you understand from the story.

This message or meaning of a story belongs to you not the author.

Theme is not just about the characters or the story itself. A theme is a universal lesson that is much larger than the story it is in. It has to be an idea that applies to me, to you, to anyone!

Because it's a broader message, a theme cannot contain characters or the stories plot in it.

Understanding how to find the theme is an important real-world skill that can be applied in many different ways and help you make generalizations about the real-world!

Theme vs. Subject

There is a big difference between theme and subject.

A subject is a thing that can be expressed in a few words. It is an idea NOT an opinion.

Examples include: “love”, bravery”, “family bonds or “the importance of friendship.”

A theme is a debatable point of view based on the chosen subject that the writer expresses and then supports with evidence from the text.

Example:

“Family bonds” is a subject, not a theme.

Why is this phrase a subject and what does it need to be considered a theme?

Answer: It only presents an idea and lacks a point of view. We re-word the phrase so it’s an opinion.

“Family bonds are longer lasting than friendships.”

This is now an opinion and expresses a point of view, so it can now be considered a theme.

Common Subjects for Themes

Some of the better recognized themes can be based on the following common subjects:

Friendship

Power/Weakness

Survival

Poverty/Wealth

Family

Prejudice

Love/Hate

Laws/Justice

Life/Death

Honesty

Freedom

Belonging / Homelessness

Try it

Choose one of the subjects from the list and write a complete sentence that would express a point of view about it.

Examples:

Underestimating the power of nature can ruin your chances of survival.

Freedom is a right worth fighting for.

Prejudice is a major problem that affects everyone, not just the group being discriminated against.