

# The 12 Most Common Themes in Literature

By Rachel Mork at <http://www.life123.com/parenting/education/children-reading/12-most-common-themes-in-literature.shtml>

- 1. Man Struggles Against Nature:** Man is always at battle with human nature, whether the drives described are sexual, material or against the aging process itself.
- 2. Man Struggles Against Societal Pressure:** Mankind is always struggling to determine if societal pressure is best for living. Check out books like *Revolutionary Road* or *Mrs. Dalloway* for examples of characters who know how society says they should live, but feel society's dictation is contrary to what makes them happy.
- 3. Man Struggles to Understand Divinity:** Mankind tries to understand and make peace with God, but satisfaction is elusive and difficult.
- 4. Crime Does Not Pay:** A popular theme played out in books throughout time is the concept that honesty is honored and criminals will eventually be caught. *Crime and Punishment* and "The Telltale Heart" are two stories written on this theme.
- 5. Overcoming Adversity:** Many books laud characters who accept a tough situation and turn it into triumph. Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* exemplifies a shrewd person who finds a way to come out on top despite failed relationships and an economic depression after the Civil War.
- 6. Friendship is Dependant on Sacrifice:** This is the idea that you can't have friends if you don't act like a friend.
- 7. The Importance of Family:** Sacrifices for family are honored and explored, as are the family bonds that survive adversity.
- 8. Yin and Yang: Just when you think life is finally going to be easy, something bad happens to balance it all out.**
- 9. Love is the Worthiest of Pursuits:** Many writers assert the idea that love conquers all, appealing to the romantic side of us.
- 10. Death is Part of the Life Cycle:** Literary works with this theme show how death and life are intricately connected.
- 11. Sacrifices Bring Reward:** Sacrifices and hard work pay off in the end, despite the challenges along the way.
- 12. Human Beings All Have the Same Needs:** From Montagues to Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet* or the characters in S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, book after book asserts that rich or poor, educated or dumb, all human beings need love and other basic needs met.