Theme

Study Guide

You will have a formative test on theme on Friday, October 8.

Central Idea: What the text (story, poem, etc.) is mostly about.

Topic: Two or three words that sum up what the text is about.

Theme: The life lesson or message that the author wants the reader to understand.

* A complete sentence
* Examples: Don’t be greedy. Different people have different ideas about beauty. Change can be both sad and exciting.

**How do I identify the theme?**

Identify the most important details, then ask yourself: What is the lesson learned?

Most themes are implicit, or implied, and you have to infer them. To make a reasonable guess, you have to consider certain clues. The elements in the chart serve as clues to the theme.

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| Title | The title may hint at a theme by highlighting an important idea, setting, image, or character. Ask:* To what in the story does the title refer?
* What ideas does the title emphasize?
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| Plot and Conflict | A story’s plot often focuses on a conflict that is important to the theme. Ask:* What conflicts do the characters face?
* How are the conflicts resolved?
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| Characters and Actions | Characters can reflect a theme through their actions, thoughts, and words. Ask:* What do the main characters do and say?
* How do the characters deal with the conflicts?
* What lessons do the characters learn?
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| Setting, Images, and Stylistic Elements | The setting, images, and stylistic elements an author uses can suggest a theme. Ask:* What aspects of the setting does the author emphasize?
* What stylistic elements, such as traditional motifs, or recurring ideas, does the author include?
* What images stand out as especially memorable?
* What conflicts does the setting create?
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