

# Theme

## Feature Menu

What Is Theme?

Universal Themes

Finding the Theme

Making a Judgment

Practice



Previous

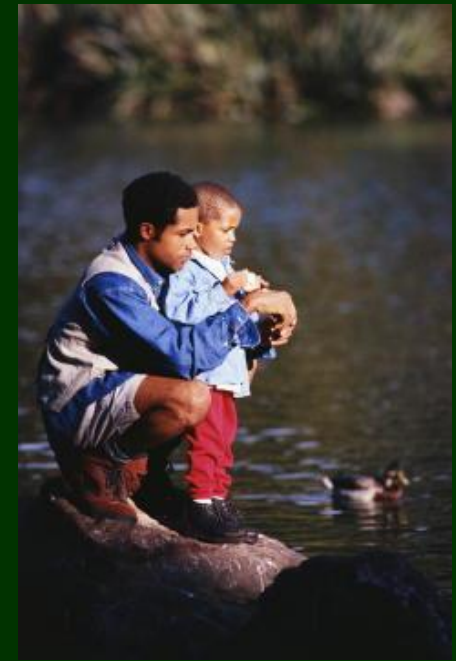
Next

Collection  
Menu

Exit

# What Is Theme?

What makes a story linger in our hearts and minds long after we've read it? Often it is the idea on which the story is built—its **theme**.



# What Is Theme?

**Theme**—the central **idea**, or **insight**, about **life** or **human behavior** that a story reveals ▼

Living a simple life leads to greater personal freedom. ▼

The deepest loneliness is sometimes felt when we are among friends.



Genres



Previous

Next

Feature  
Menu

Exit

# What Is Theme?

In most stories, the theme is not stated directly. Instead, it is revealed to us through the **characters' experiences**.



[End of Section]



Previous

Next

Feature  
Menu

Exit

# Universal Themes

Different writers from different cultures often express similar themes. ▼

- A theme is a **generalization** about life or human nature. ▼
- Certain types of experiences are **common** to all **people** everywhere.



Previous

Next

Feature  
Menu

Exit

# Universal Themes

## Universal themes

- come up again and again in literature ▼
- deal with basic human concerns—good and evil, life and death, love and loss ▼
- shine a light on our common experiences ▼
- can help guide us through our lives
- express a **message** or **truth** about life that is common to everyone



# Universal Themes

## Examples

- Too much pride can destroy a person
- Crime does not pay
- Don't judge people until you have seen life from their point of view
- It is better to tell the truth than to lie
- You can't always get what you want



# Universal Themes

## Quick Check

### Stories

The Little Red Hen

Beauty and the Beast

The Three Little Pigs

The Ugly Duckling

The Frog Prince

Match these familiar stories to the appropriate universal theme.

**A** It pays to work hard and plan ahead.

**B** Appearances can be deceiving.

Answer

[End of Section]



Previous

Next

Feature  
Menu

Exit

## Finding the Theme

Keep the following guidelines in mind when you want to find and state the theme of a work. ▼

**The theme is not the same thing as the subject.** ▼

- The **subject** is simply the **topic**. It can be stated in a single word, such as *loyalty*. ▼
- The **theme** makes some revelation about the subject and should be expressed **in a sentence**:  
“Loyalty to a leader is not always noble.”



# Finding the Theme

Writers often express theme through what their **characters learn**. ▼



- Does the main **character** change? ▼
- Does a character realize something he or she did not know before?



# Finding the Theme

## Conflict helps reveal theme. ▼

- What is the **conflict**, or struggle between opposing forces, that the main character faces? ▼
- How is the conflict resolved? ▼

### Conflict

Two friends find a wallet. One friend wants to return it to the owner; the other wants to keep it. ▼

### Resolution

They return the wallet and share a small reward. ▼

### Theme

People are often rewarded for making the right moral decision.



# Finding the Theme

**Sometimes the title gives clues.** ▼

- Does the title have a special meaning? ▼
- Does it point to the theme? ▼

**The theme applies to the entire work.** ▼

- Test your statement of the theme. Does it apply to the whole work, not just to parts of it?



# Finding the Theme

**There is no single way to state the theme.** ▼

- People may express the same theme in different words. ▼
- There may be different opinions about what the main theme is. ▼
- The most meaningful literary works often have **more than one** theme.



Previous

Next

Feature  
Menu

Exit

**The End**

