

Theme

The Search for Meaning

happiness

fear

THEME

What's the author trying to teach me?

family

prejudice

What is a **Theme**?

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

In other words...

Theme is what the story teaches readers.

A satellite view of Earth from space, showing the Americas in the center. The image is set against a black background. The text is overlaid on the top and bottom of the image.

Theme = universal truth

The theme is usually something everyone goes through, a statement or a lesson about life.

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 Theme?



More Themes

- Bravery: Never give up.
- Friendship: Success comes with working together.
- Greed: Family and friends are worth a ton.
- Loyalty: True friends will tell you when you're wrong, and they'll never leave you.
- War: When man has suffered a loss, no one wins. War is necessary sometimes.
- Honesty: The truth will set you free.
- Kindness: It is better to give than to receive.

What is the **theme**?

Jenny was so excited. She had a pack of Starburst candy in her lunch and she had been looking forward to eating them all morning. When Jenny sat down to eat her candy, her *friend* Judy sat next to her. “Can I have the pink ones?” asked Judy. Jenny liked the pink ones best, but she thought Judy was funny and she wanted Judy to like her, so Jenny gave Judy all of her pink Starbursts. Then, Carrie sat on the other side of Jenny. “Let me get the red and the orange ones, Jenny. Remember when I gave you that chocolate?” Jenny didn’t remember that, though she did remember when Carrie ate a whole chocolate bar 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.



Big World of the Theme.
Applies to the **“Real”** World.

Themes are about the **big picture**.

Not “Yellow Starbursts taste bad”

Not “Judy and Carrie are bad friends.”

Think **BIGGER**.

Find “Real” World advice.



A diagram consisting of a large red semi-circle at the bottom of the slide. Inside the left side of this semi-circle is a smaller grey oval. A light blue arrow curves from the top of the grey oval to the right, pointing towards the text on the right side of the red semi-circle.

Small
World
of the
Story

Big World of the Theme.
Applies to the “Real” World.

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. Say what you think the theme is.
3. Explain 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.

Be careful how you use your resources,
because some things will never be
replenished once they are used.

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.