

Theme refers to a message or lesson about **life** or **human nature**.

- ▶ **Theme** is **often not written** and **must be inferred** from text details.
- ▶ Details include **main events** and **character actions**.

Theme: Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Ethan and Lucy

¹Ethan liked Lucy more than any other girl in the school, but he didn't know how to show it. ²When she passed him in the school yard, he called her "lame Lucy." ³Lucy was shocked to receive an invitation to Ethan's birthday party. ⁴Lucy thought Ethan was just planning to play a mean trick on her, so she decided not to go. ⁵When Ethan realized that Lucy was not coming to his party, he was heartbroken.

Not an example of a theme:

Ethan learned that Lucy was not coming to the party.
Ethan was heartbroken.

Themes:

1. Never give up.
2. Love conquers₄ all.
3. Looks can be deceiving₅.
4. Crime does not pay.

Not examples of themes:

1. Please use your manners.
2. Fractions are important to learn.
3. Roberto is my friend.
4. The criminal was caught near the bank.

CFU

Which of these could be a theme in a text? Explain.

- A Following the rules will be rewarded.**
- B We follow rules at school every day.**

Which statement(s) below might be a theme? Explain.

- A Good will always win.**
- B My friend Carlos is nice to me.**

In your own words, what is a theme?

- 1 Read the text.
- 2 Identify details in the text that suggest the theme. (underline)
- 3 Determine the theme. (answer)

Charlotte's Web *excerpt from Chapter 1*

¹Charlotte stood quietly over the fly, preparing to eat it. ²Wilbur lay down and closed his eyes. ³He was tired from his wakeful night and from the excitement of meeting someone for the first time.

⁴Well," he thought, "I've got a new friend, all right! ⁵But what a gamble friendship is! ⁶Charlotte is fierce, brutal, scheming, bloodthirsty—everything I don't like. ⁷How can I learn to like her, even though she is pretty and, of course, clever?"

⁸Wilbur was merely suffering the doubts and fears that often go with finding a new friend. ⁹In good time he was to discover that he was mistaken about Charlotte. ¹⁰Underneath her rather bold and cruel exterior, she had a kind heart, and she was to prove loyal and true to the very end.

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of the text?

- A Wilbur learns that it is exciting to make new friends.
- B Wilbur learns that spiders like to eat insects.
- C Wilbur learns that it's wrong to judge someone before you know them.

Using details from the text, describe how the theme is revealed in the passage.

- 1 Read the text.
- 2 Identify details in the text that suggest the theme. (underline)
- 3 Determine the theme. (answer)

Charlotte's Web excerpt from Chapter 21

¹Charlotte stopped. ²A moment later a tear came to Wilbur's eye. ³"Oh, Charlotte," he said. ⁴"To think that when I first met you I thought you were cruel and bloodthirsty!"

⁵"Why did you do all this for me?" he asked. ⁶"I don't deserve it. ⁷I've never done anything for you."

⁸"You have been my friend," replied Charlotte. ⁹"That in itself is a tremendous thing. ¹⁰I wove my webs for you because I liked you.

¹¹"After all, what's a life, anyway? ¹²We're born, we live a little while, we die. ¹³A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies.

¹⁴"By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle."

2. Which sentence would be the best theme of the text?

- A Wilbur learns that Charlotte is not cruel and mean.
- B Wilbur learns that Charlotte has woven webs for him.
- C Wilbur learns that friendship is about helping each other.

Using details from the text, describe how the theme is revealed in the passage.

Skill Closure

- 1 Read the text.
- 2 Identify details in the text that suggest the theme. (underline)
- 3 Determine the theme. (answer)

Having It All

¹Cameron was born with a lot of money. ²He never had to work a day in his life, and he got everything he ever asked for. ³When he was six, Cameron wanted to go to a basketball game. ⁴His father paid professional players to come play with him. ⁵By the time Cameron turned twelve, his father bought him whatever gadget he asked for. ⁶When Cameron became an adult, he was unhappy. ⁷He had no friends, and his family was not close. ⁸He was surrounded by a bunch of possessions, but having a lot of things meant nothing to him.

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of the text?

- A Cameron learns that if you have money you don't have to work.
- B Cameron learns that money cannot buy happiness.
- C Cameron learns that being rich means you can buy anything you want.

Concept Closure

Write an explanation. Which details from the text help you determine the theme? Explain.

Summary Closure

What did you learn today about determining a theme in literature?

Word Bank

theme
message
life
human nature
main events

- 1 Read the text.
- 2 Identify details in the text that suggest the theme. (underline)
- 3 Determine the theme. (answer)

excerpt from **The Wizard Of Oz** by L. Frank Baum

¹“What makes you a coward?” asked Dorothy...

²“It’s a mystery,” replied the Lion. ³“I suppose I was born that way. ⁴All the other animals in the forest naturally expect me to be brave, for the Lion is everywhere thought to be the King of Beasts. ⁵I learned that if I roared very loudly every living thing was frightened and got out of my way. ⁶Whenever I’ve met a man I’ve been awfully scared; but I just roared at him, and he has always run away as fast as he could go. ⁷If the elephants and the tigers and the bears had ever tried to fight me, I should have run myself – I’m such a coward; but just as soon as they hear me roar they all try to get away from me, and of course I let them go.”

⁸“But that isn’t right. The King of Beasts shouldn’t be a coward,” said the Scarecrow. ⁹“It is my great sorrow,” returned the Lion, wiping a tear from his eye with the tip of his tail.

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of the text?

- A Dorothy and Scarecrow learn that the Lion roars loudly to scare everyone away.
- B Dorothy and the Scarecrow learn that even big animals can be fearful.
- C Dorothy and the Scarecrow learn that looks can be deceiving.

Using details from the text, describe how the theme is revealed in the passage.



Listening

Theme: "Everything seems from another world."

Answer Yes or No if the sentence is useful in determining the theme.

1	I counted to ten before I followed him outside.	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
2	...everything seemed unreal, as if I were asleep and dreaming.	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
3	The gaslights showed in the fog only as dull spots of light	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
4	...appear out of grayness and then disappear.	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
5	The whole world seemed to have become unglued.	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
6	If ever there was a night for monsters to be out, this was the night	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

Which details in the sentences helped you know the theme?



Reading

Read the passage. Then, decide which theme best fits the story. (answers may vary).

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs - Beautiful young Snow White marries a handsome young man despite attempts by her evil stepmother to be rid of her. *Theme* ____

Beauty and The Beast - A spoiled prince is cursed and turned into a hideous beast. He holds a beautiful girl captive. Although afraid at first, the beautiful girl soon learns she enjoys the beast. Her acceptance of the beast breaks the curse, turning him back into a prince. *Theme* ____

The Mermaid Summer - a brother and sister live in a fishing village. The village is cursed by a spiteful mermaid, and the children's grandfather is forced to leave town. The children decide to figure out how to break the curse and bring their grandfather back. *Theme* ____

- A Love is blind and don't judge a book by its cover.
- B Good wins over evil.
- C Be brave and face your fears.
- D Family is important and we must sacrifice for them.

Read the text. Identify details that suggest the theme.
Determine the theme. Explain.

adapted from **The Ugly Duckling**

¹One spring, a mother duck's eggs hatched. ²One of the ducklings was gray instead of white, much larger than the others, and very clumsy. ³She loved him anyway, but all the other animals made fun of him. ⁴The ugly duckling became so sad that he ran away. ⁵He wandered, all summer and fall looking for a where he fit in.

⁶Then one day, he found a group of swans swimming in a pond. ⁷The swans were so beautiful; he got into the water to take a closer look. ⁸They invited him to join them and that's when he saw his reflection in the water. ⁹He saw that he was as beautiful as them. ¹⁰The ugly duckling turned out to be a swan after all.

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of the text?

- A The ugly duckling learns that swans are beautiful.
- B The ugly duckling learns that everyone has a place where they belong.
- C The ugly duckling learns that he looks different than a duck.

2. Using details from the text, describe how the theme is revealed?

Read the text. Identify details that suggest the theme. Determine the theme.

*adapted from **Mulan***

¹A young woman named Mulan lived a long time ago in China.

²During this time, China was at war. ³All men were ordered to fight in the war. ⁴Mulan's father was included in this order, even though he was well into old age. ⁵Mulan feared that he would not live through the war due to his age. ⁶She asked the other soldiers if she could go to war in his place, but she was laughed at and turned away. ⁷The soldiers could not fathom₁ a woman fighting as a warrior. ⁸Determined not to be defeated, Mulan decided she *would* join the soldiers no matter what she had to do.

⁹Mulan trained in secret, day and night, for weeks to learn how to fight. ¹⁰She stole her father's battle armor₂ before joining the soldiers.

¹¹Dressed as a man, the soldiers had no idea she was a woman. ¹²And Mulan proved to be a skillful soldier who helped China win the war.

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of the text?

- A** Mulan learns that women cannot do what men can do.
- B** Mulan learns that she must transform into a soldier.
- C** Mulan learns that when you work hard, you can accomplish great things.

2. Using details from the text, describe how the theme is revealed in the passage.

3. Select which themes below also fit the story of Mulan. Circle all that apply. Be prepared to defend your answer with details from the text. (answers will vary)

- A.** Looks can be deceiving.
- B.** Treat people the way you want to be treated.
- C.** Crime does not pay.
- D.** Family is the most important thing.
- E.** Honesty is the best policy.
- F.** Never give up.