

A **theme** is a message about **life** or **human nature**.

▶ A **theme** is revealed through the relationship of **characters**, **setting**, and **plot**.

Characters	Adapted from "The Lottery Ticket" by Anton Chekhov
Setting	<p>Ivan Dmitritch, a middle-class man, lived with his family in a modest home in Europe in the early 1900s. He didn't believe in lottery luck, but he noticed the number 9,499 on a ticket. "It's our series," said Ivan. "So we might have won," said his wife.</p> <p>Ivan thought about their relatives. He imagined they would beg for money if they found out about the ticket. If refused, they would curse and gossip about them. Ivan was filled with hateful thoughts, even finding his wife annoying. He thought, "She knows nothing about money and is stingy." Angry, he read the ticket number: "Series 9,499, number 46! Not 26!</p> <p>"Both hatred and hope vanished instantly, and Ivan and his wife suddenly felt their home was dark and small.</p>
Plot	<p>who the story is about.</p> <p>when and where the story takes place.</p> <p>the sequence of main events that make up a story.</p>
Theme	Money can bring out the worst in people.

CFU

Which theme could also fit with the story?
Explain.

A Companionship as salvation

B A person's greed will cause their downfall.

In your own words, what is theme?

- 1 Read the theme and the adaptation of the story.
- 2 Use the setting, character(s), and plot to analyze the theme.

Theme: Until faced with danger, you never know how courageous you are.

Background: Eighteen-year-old Henry Fleming has enlisted as a Private in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

Adapted from **The Red Badge of Courage**

by Stephen Crane

¹He realized it didn't matter what kind of soldiers he was going to fight, as long as they fought. ²The more serious problem was whether he would run from battle. ³Lying in his bunk, he tried to prove to himself that he wouldn't. ⁴He had never seriously questioned his bravery before. ⁵He had always assumed he would succeed without worrying about the details.

⁶But now he faced a significant fear: he might run in battle. ⁷He admitted he knew nothing about himself in war. ⁸Panic began to grow as he imagined fighting and the dangers ahead. ⁹His visions of glory now seemed impossible. ¹⁰He paced nervously, questioning his ability and feeling that his previous self-knowledge was useless.

Characters

who the story is about.

Setting

when and **where** the story takes place.

Plot

the **sequence of main events** that make up a story.

1. How does the **setting** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. The battle forces Henry to question how courageous he is.
 - B. The battle makes Henry become even more courageous.
 - C. The bunk makes Henry have more future dreams.
2. How does the **character** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. Henry is even more decided to participate in all battles..
 - B. Henry starts to doubt his own bravery.
 - C. Henry dreams of attaining glory because of his courage.
3. How does the **plot** contribute to the theme? (underline and write)

- 1 Read the theme and the adaptation of the story.
- 2 Use the setting, character(s), and plot to analyze the theme.

Theme: Changing your perspective can make boring tasks exciting.

Background: Tom is tasked with the dull job of whitewashing a fence on a sunny Saturday—a chore he dreads.

Adapted from **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer** by Mark Twain

¹Tom appeared on the sidewalk with a bucket of whitewash and a long-handled brush. ²He surveyed the fence and all gladness left him. ³Thirty yards of board fence nine feet high. ⁴Sighing, he dipped the brush and passed it along the topmost plank; repeated the operation; did it again.

⁵Jim came skipping out at the gate with a tin pail, singing "Buffalo Gals." ⁶Breaking off, he said, "Why, it's you, Tom! Ain't you got no fun about you?" ⁷Come on, let's go out and have some fun."

⁸Whitewashing's fun?" Tom asked with an eye on Jim. ⁹Jim shook his head. ¹⁰"No," he said, "I don't reckon it is. ¹¹Isn't this work?"

¹²"Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain't. ¹³All I know is it suits Tom Sawyer."

Characters

who the story is about.

Setting

when and **where** the story takes place.

Plot

the **sequence of main events** that make up a story.

1. How does the **setting** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. The long fence is seen by Tom as a means of earning money.
 - B. The long fence is seen by Tom as a burden.
 - C. The long fence is seen by Jim as nothing but work.
2. How do the **character(s)** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. Tom cannot convince Jim that whitewashing the fence is fun.
 - B. Jim wants to convince Tom to enjoy the day with him.
 - C. Tom's interaction with Jim shows him a new way to look at the whitewashing task.
3. How does the **plot** contribute to the theme? (underline and write)

Skill Closure

- 1 Read the theme and the adaptation of the story.
- 2 Use the setting, character(s), and plot to analyze the theme.

Theme: Love has not bounds.

Background: Jim and Della are husband and wife. Because they are poor, money must be spent to live, and not enough is left over for Christmas gifts.

Adapted from **The Gift of the Magi** by O. Henry

¹In a modest apartment, Jim and Della lived with much love but little money. ²With Christmas approaching, each wanted to give the other a special gift. ³Della cherished her long hair, and Jim prized his gold pocket watch. ⁴Della sold her hair to buy a chain for Jim's watch. ⁵Unaware of her sacrifice, Jim sold his watch to buy combs for Della's hair.

⁶On Christmas, they exchanged gifts. ⁷The moment was bittersweet₂ as they realized the sacrifices they had made for each other. ⁸Jim's watch was gone, and Della's hair was short,

1. How does the **setting** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. A small apartment where a Christmas celebration is taking place.
 - B. A small modest apartment during Christmas season.
 - C. A small apartment where many presents were exchanged.
2. How do the **character(s)** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - Della wants Jim to buy her a beautiful set of combs for her hair.
 - Della and Jim decide that they are too poor to give each other a gift.
 - Della and Jim want to give each other a gift but have little money.
3. How does the **plot** contribute to the theme? (underline and write)

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Concept Closure

Yosef determined that the **setting** of Christmas helped develop the theme because it was the motivating factor for Della to cut her prized possession, her hair, to show her love for Jim. Do you agree? Explain.

Summary Closure

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

Word Bank

theme
characters
setting
plot

- 1 Read the theme and the adaptation of the story.
- 2 Use the setting, character(s), and plot to analyze the theme.

Theme: Taking a risk for the greater good makes one brave.

Background: Oliver Twist grows up in poverty in England. In this passage, Oliver is 9 years old and living in a government workhouse for the poor.

Adapted from **Oliver Twist** by Charles Dickens

¹For three months, Oliver Twist and his friends endured extreme hunger. ²Eventually, their hunger grew so intense that one boy threatened to eat his roommate unless he received more food. ³The group decided to ask for more food, and Oliver was chosen to make the request. ⁴That evening, as the gruel was served and quickly eaten, the boys encouraged Oliver to speak up. ⁵Driven by desperation and hunger, Oliver approached the master with his empty bowl and bravely asked for more. ⁶The master, a robust man, turned pale with shock at Oliver's request. ⁷He stared in disbelief at Oliver. ⁸The room fell silent, filled with astonishment and fear. Oliver, persistent₂, repeated his request for more. ⁸The master reacted violently, attempting to hit Oliver and calling loudly for help.

Characters

who the story is about.

Setting

when and **where** the story takes place.

Plot

the **sequence of main events** that make up a story.

1. How does the **setting** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. A workhouse for the poor where boys are allowed to eat each other.
 - B. A workhouse for the poor where boys are suffering extreme hunger.
 - C. A workhouse for the poor where only young boys live
2. How do the **character(s)** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. Oliver Twist decides to share his food with all the hungry boys.
 - B. The hungry boys want to rebel against the Master.
 - C. Oliver Twist and other boys want more food, and a master who refuses to give them more
3. How does the **plot** contribute to the theme? (underline and write)

- 1 Read the theme and the adaptation of the story.
- 2 Use the setting, character(s), and plot to analyze the theme.

Theme: True greatness comes from what you do, not your social position.

Background: The story follows Sara Crewe, a young girl who transitions from wealth to poverty and back,

Adapted from **A Little Princess** by Frances Hodgson

¹Sara Crewe was once a top student at Miss Minchin's boarding school, but after her father died and she lost her fortune, her life drastically₁ changed. ²She lost her privileges and was made to live in a cold attic, working as a servant at the school where she used to be admired. ³Despite this, Sara stayed strong. One cold night, after a long day, ⁴Sara found a crumb of bread in her pocket. Instead of eating it herself, she thought of a starving stray cat nearby. ⁵She decided to feed the cat the crumb, the only food she had. ⁶Mr. Carrisford, a neighbor, saw her feeding the cat. ⁷Impressed₂ by her kindness, he started asking about her. ⁸Sara's small act of sharing led to unexpected events that greatly improved her life.

Characters

who the story is about.

Setting

when and **where** the story takes place.

Plot

the **sequence of main events** that make up a story.

1. How does the **setting** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. A boarding school where Sara is a top student.
 - B. A boarding school where Sara lives in poverty in a cold attic.
 - C. An attic where a cat lives.
2. How do the **character(s)** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. Sara Crewe and Miss Minchin who is her teacher.
 - B. Sara Crewe and a cat who lives in the attic with her.
 - C. Sara Crewe who used to be rich but now is poor and Mr. Carrisford who takes an interest in Sara because of her kindness.
3. How does the **plot** contribute to the theme? (underline and write)

- 1 Read the theme and the adaptation of the story.
- 2 Use the setting, character(s), and plot to analyze the theme.

Theme: The healing power of nature.

Background: Mary Lennox, a neglected and unloved child who, after being orphaned, is sent from India to live at her uncle's remote country estate in Yorkshire,

Adapted from **The Secret Garden** by Frances Hodgson

¹After her parents' death, Mary Lennox moved from India to the gloomy Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire. ²The large manor, filled with secrets and covered in mist, left Mary often alone. ³One day, she discovered a locked, abandoned garden. ⁴With the help of a robin, Mary found the key hidden under ivy. ⁵She then met Dickon, a boy who communicated with birds and foxes. ⁶Together, they started reviving₁ the neglected₂ garden. ⁷As the garden revived, so did Mary, becoming joyful as she tended the plants. ⁸Her cousin Colin, who had stayed indoors feeling weak, also joined and began to enjoy the outdoors.

Characters

who the story is about.

Setting

when and **where** the story takes place.

Plot

the **sequence of main events** that make up a story.

1. How does the **setting** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. India and an abandoned garden.
 - B. An abandoned garden with birds and foxes.
 - C. A bleak manor and an abandoned garden.
2. How do the **character(s)** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. Mary a nature loving girl; Dickon a feeble boy; Colin or Mary's cousin.
 - B. Mary an orphaned girl; Dickon a nature-loving boy; Colin a feeble boy.
 - C. Mary an orphaned girl; a gloomy manor; a neglected garden.
3. How does the **plot** contribute to the theme? (underline and write)

- 1 Read the theme and the adaptation of the story.
- 2 Use the setting, character(s), and plot to analyze the theme.

Theme: Despite a tough start, positive influences can lead to personal growth.

Background: In the unforgiving wilderness of the Yukon Territory during the Klondike Gold Rush, a wolf-dog hybrid named White Fang struggles to stay alive.

Adapted from **White Fang** by Jack London

In the harsh Yukon Territory during the Klondike Gold Rush, White Fang, a wolf-dog hybrid, fights to survive. Born wild, he quickly learns that only the strong survive, facing constant₁ battles that harden him. Captured by humans, his life changes as he moves between various owners, learning new rules and becoming increasingly fierce. However, his fate changes when Weedon Scott, a compassionate₂ man, rescues him. Scott sees the potential for goodness in White Fang and, with patience and kindness, slowly gains his trust. Over time, White Fang transforms from a fierce animal into a loyal and loving companion.

Characters

who the story is about.

Setting

when and **where** the story takes place.

Plot

the **sequence of main events** that make up a story.

1. How does the **setting** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. The place where various owners of White Fang were born.
 - B. The harsh environment of the Yukon Territory during the Gold Rush.
 - C. A place where the fate of White Fang changes.
2. How do the **character(s)** contribute to the theme? (underline and box)
 - A. White Fang a dog who was trained by various handlers to survive.
 - B. White Fang, a wild wolf-dog, who helps his owners dig for gold.
 - C. White Fang, an abused wolf-dog; White Fang's various owners mistreat him; Scott who realizes the goodness in White Fang.
3. How does the **plot** contribute to the theme? (underline and write)