

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 <u>Anton Chekhov</u>
who the story is about.	IVAN DMITRITCH , a middle-class man who lived with his family in a modest home in Europe in the early 1900s .
Setting	Ivan Dmitritch had no faith in lottery luck, but as though in mockery of his skepticism, his eye was caught by the figure 9,499! "It is our series," said Ivan Dmitritch. "So there is a probability that we have won," said his wife .
when and where the story takes place.	Ivan Dmitritch thought of their relations. All those wretched would come crawling about as soon as they heard of the winning ticket. If they were refused money, they would swear at them, and slander them. Ivan Dmitritch now filled with repulsive and hateful thoughts. His wife, too, struck him as repulsive and hateful. Anger surged up in his heart against her, "She knows nothing about money, and so she is stingy." Annoyed at his wife he glanced quickly, and read out the remaining numbers: "Series 9,499, number 46! Not 26!"
Plot	Hatred and hope both disappeared at once , and it began immediately to seem to Ivan Dmitritch and his wife that their rooms were dark and small.
the sequence of main events that make up a story.	
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.
- 2 Read the text.

a Identify the characters, setting, and plot. (write)

b Identify phrases that support the theme. (underline)

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.

The Red Badge of Courage
Stephen Crane

¹However, he perceived now that it did not greatly matter what kind of soldiers he was going to fight, so long as they fought, which fact no one disputed. ²There was a more serious problem. ³He lay in his bunk pondering upon it. ⁴He tried to mathematically prove to himself that he would not run from a battle.

⁵Previously he had never felt obliged to wrestle too seriously with this question. ⁶In his life he had taken certain things for granted, never challenging his belief in ultimate success, and bothering little about means and roads. ⁷But here he was confronted with a thing of moment. ⁸It had suddenly appeared to him that perhaps in a battle he might run. ⁹He was forced to admit that as far as war was concerned he knew nothing of himself. ¹⁰A sufficient time before he would have allowed the problem to kick its heels at the outer portals of his mind, but now he felt compelled to give serious attention to it. ¹¹A little panic-fear grew in his mind. ¹²As his imagination went forward to a fight, he saw hideous possibilities.

¹³He contemplated the lurking menaces_s of the future, and failed in an effort to see himself standing stoutly in the midst of them. ¹⁴He recalled his visions of broken-bladed glory, but in the shadow of the impending tumult he suspected them to be impossible pictures.

¹⁵He sprang from the bunk and began to pace nervously to and fro. ¹⁶“Good Lord, what’s th’ matter with me?” he said aloud. ¹⁷He felt that in this crisis his laws of life were useless. ¹⁸Whatever he had learned of himself was here of no avail. ¹⁹He was an unknown quantity. ²⁰He saw that he would again be obliged to experiment as he had in early youth. ²¹He must accumulate information of himself, and meanwhile he resolved to remain close upon his guard lest those qualities of which he knew nothing should everlastingly disgrace.

Characters	
Setting	
Plot	

Analyze the relationship of characters, setting, and plot. (write)

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.

- 1 Read the theme.
- 2 Read the text.
 - a Identify the characters, setting, and plot. (write)
 - b Identify phrases that support the theme. (underline)

Theme: Love and happiness are more important than material things.

Background: During the nineteenth century, women's futures depended on their choice of a husband. Marmee, the March girls' mother, has a conversation with her daughters, Meg and Jo, in their home after Meg returned from a stay at a rich family's home.

Little Women

Louisa May Alcott

"I want my daughters to be beautiful, accomplished, and good. ²To be admired, loved, and respected. ³To have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married, and to lead useful, pleasant lives, with as little care and sorrow to try them as God sees fit to send. ⁴To be loved and chosen by a good man is the best and sweetest thing which can happen to a woman, and I sincerely hope my girls may know this beautiful experience. ⁵It is natural to think of it, Meg, right to hope and wait for it, and wise to prepare for it, so that when the happy time comes, you may feel ready for the duties and worthy of the joy. ⁶My dear girls, I am ambitious for you, but not to have you make a dash in the world, marry rich men merely because they are rich, or have splendid houses, which are not homes because love is wanting.

⁷Money is a needful and precious thing, and when well used, a noble thing, but I never want you to think it is the first or only prize to strive for. ⁸I'd rather see you poor men's wives, if you were happy, beloved, contented, than queens on thrones, without self-respect and peace.

⁹"Poor girls don't stand any chance, Belle says, unless they put themselves forward," sighed Meg. ¹⁰"Then we'll be old maids," said Jo stoutly. ¹¹"Right, Jo. ¹²Better be happy old maids than unhappy wives, or unmaidenly girls, running about to find husbands," said Mrs. March decidedly.

¹³... Leave these things to time. ¹⁴Make this home happy, so that you may be fit for homes of your own, if they are offered you, and contented here if they are not. ¹⁵One thing remember, my girls. ¹⁶Mother is always ready to be your confidante, Father to be your friend, and both of us hope and trust that our daughters, whether married or single, will be the pride and comfort of our lives."

Characters	
Setting	
Plot	

Analyze the relationship of characters, setting, and plot. (write)

Theme: Love and happiness are more important than material things.

Background: During the nineteenth century, women's futures depended on their choice of a husband. Marmee, the March girls' mother, has a conversation with her daughters, Meg and Jo, in their home after Meg returned from a stay at a rich family's home.

Skill Closure

- 1 Read the theme.
- 2 Read the text.
 - a Identify the characters, setting, and plot. (write)
 - b Identify phrases that support the theme. (underline)

Theme: Love has no 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.

(excerpt from) **The Gift of the Magi** O Henry

¹"I had my hair cut off and sold, because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. ²It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? ³I just had to do it. ⁴My hair grows awfully fast. ⁵Say `Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy."

⁶"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that fact yet, even after the hardest mental labor...

⁷"Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. ⁸He enfolded his Della. ⁹Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? ¹⁰A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. ¹¹Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

¹²"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. ¹³I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. ¹⁴But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

¹⁵For there lay The Combs--the set of combs that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. ¹⁶Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. ¹⁷They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession.

Characters	
Setting	
Plot	

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.
- 2 Read the text.

a Identify the characters, setting, and plot. (write)

b Identify phrases that support the theme. (underline)

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

Background: The Poor Law of 1834 stipulated that the poor could only receive government assistance if they moved into government workhouses. Residents of those workhouses were essentially inmates whose rights were severely limited by numerous regulations. Oliver Twist grows up in poverty in England. In this passage, Oliver is 9 years old and living in a government workhouse.

Oliver Twist

Charles Dickens

¹Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook-shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. ²He had a wild, hungry eye; and they implicitly believed him. ³A council was held; lots were cast who should walk up to the master after supper that evening, and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist. ⁴The evening arrived; the boys took their places. ⁵The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served out; and a long grace was said over the short commons. ⁶The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered each other, and winked at Oliver; while his next neighbors nudged him. ⁷Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. ⁸He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own temerity: ' ⁹Please, sir, I want some more.' ¹⁰The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. ¹¹He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. ¹²The assistants were paralyzed with wonder; the boys with fear. ¹³'What! ' said the master at length, in a faint voice. ¹⁴'Please, sir,' replied Oliver, 'I want some more.' ¹⁵The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arm; and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

Characters	
Setting	
Plot	



Reading

Read the story.

Read *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant.

Then, fill out the graphic organizer. Answer the questions.

<https://americanliterature.com/author/guy-de-maupassant/short-story/the-necklace>

Characters

Setting

Plot

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of “The Necklace”?

- A** In friendships, it's best to share.
- B** Always repay a debt, especially to friends.
- C** Hard work is of not worth if you earn nothing in return.
- D** Valuing objects does not lead to lasting happiness.

2. How does the relationship between the characters (Mathilde Loisel, Monsieur Loisel) help develop the theme? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (responses may vary)

3. How does the setting (18th century France) help develop the theme? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

4. How does the plot help develop the theme? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (responses may vary)



Reading

Read the story.

Read *The Bet* by Anton Chekhov.

Then, fill out the graphic organizer. **Answer** the questions.

<https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/Bet.shtml>

Characters

Setting

Plot

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of “The Bet”?

- A** Bankers and lawyers have materialistic personalities.
- B** Making bets can be dangerous for all involved.
- C** Knowledge and wisdom are more important than material things.
- D** Isolation will make people reject society and wealth.

2. How do parts of the story (characters, setting, and plot) help develop the theme?
Use notes from the graphic organizer. (answers may vary)

3. Why does the banker weep at the end of the story? Is he moved by the prisoner's decisions to reject everything material? Or is he just crying from relief at not having to kill him and getting to keep his money?

4. Over the 15 year prison term, books are the only way that the lawyer gathers experience of the outside world. Is reading about topics in a book the same as experiencing something in real life? Which provides true knowledge or wisdom?



Reading

Read the story.

Read *The Last Leaf* by O. Henry.

Then, fill out the graphic organizer. Answer the questions.

<https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LasLea.shtml>

Characters

Setting

Plot

1. Which sentence would be the best theme of “The Last Leaf”?

- A** Never bet your own life on nature.
- B** Love of another can be stronger than love for self.
- C** Staying positive during tough times is the best way to survive.
- D** People with very little money are sometimes selfish.

2. How does the relationship between the characters (Sue, Johnsy, and Mr. Behrman) help develop the theme? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

3. How does the setting (early 20th century New York) help develop the theme? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

4. How does the plot help develop the theme? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.