Exploring Theme

Basic Definition of Theme:

Theme is the **central idea** of a story. It is the **moral** or **life-lesson** that you understand from the story.

This message or meaning of a story belongs to **you** not the author.

Theme is not just about the characters or the story itself. A theme is a universal lesson that is much larger than the story it is in. It has to be an idea that applies to me, to you, to anyone!

Because it’s a broader message, a theme cannot contain characters or the stories plot in it.

Understanding how to find the theme is an important real-world skill that can be applied in many different ways and help you make generalizations about the real-world!
Theme vs. Subject

There is a big difference between theme and subject.

A **subject** is a thing that can be expressed in a few words. It is an idea **NOT** an opinion.

Examples include: “love”, bravery”, “family bonds or “the importance of friendship.”

A **theme** is a debatable point of view based on the chosen subject that the writer expresses and then supports with evidence from the text.

**Example:**

“Family bonds” is a subject, not a theme.

Why is this phrase a subject and what does it need to be considered a theme?

Answer: It only presents an idea and lacks a point of view. We re-word the phrase so it’s an opinion.

“Family bonds **are longer lasting than friendships.**”

This is now an opinion and expresses a point of view, so it can now be considered a theme.
Common Subjects for Themes

Some of the better recognized themes can be based on the following common subjects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendship</th>
<th>Power/Weakness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>Poverty/Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Prejudice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love/Hate</td>
<td>Laws/Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life/Death</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Belonging / Homelessness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try it

Choose one of the subjects from the list and write a complete sentence that would express a point of view about it.

Examples:

*Underestimating the power of nature can ruin your chances of survival.*

*Freedom is a right worth fighting for.*

*Prejudice is a major problem that affects everyone, not just the group being discriminated against.*