

# THEME

# ELEMENT OF FICTION

SUBJECT/TOPIC	THEME	STATEMENT OF THEME	TEST STEMS
<p><b>Subject/topic</b> is usually <b>expressed in a word</b> (e.g., love, childhood, death).</p> <p>The subject is the <b>concept/idea</b> that is central to the work of literature.</p> <p>Readers may differ in what they identify as the subject of a selection. For example, some readers may say <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> is about the subject of love; others may say the subject is fate vs. individual responsibility; others that it has to do with pride.</p> <p>Readers need to be able to use the text (setting, plot, characterization) in order to justify their interpretation of the subject.</p> <p>The subject is not that same as the theme, although it is the kernel concept at the center of the theme statement.</p>	<p><b>Theme</b> is the <b>idea the writer wishes to reveal about a subject.</b></p> <p>It is an <b>observation about or insight into life and human behavior</b> that holds true in circumstances both within the story and in life in general.</p> <p>Theme is not something the author tacks on to a story or poem. It <b>grows naturally out of what the author believes</b> and the story that's being told.</p> <p>Theme is the <b>reader's discovery</b> of a truth about our own human experiences.</p> <p>A theme holds together a piece of writing.</p> <p>It focuses on the big topics in everyone's life: understanding the nature of love, accepting responsibility, understanding loss, dealing with ambition, discovering the joy and problems of friendship, discovering the cost of pride.</p> <p>A work can <b>have more than one theme.</b></p>	<p>Theme is <b>expressed as a statement</b> (usually a complete sentence), although it is seldom directly stated in a work of literature.</p> <p>The reader has to think about all the elements of the work and then make an inference or draw a conclusion based on information supplied by an author combined with the reader's own background knowledge.</p> <p>Questions to ask and think about in order to discover a theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the main <b>character</b> changed over the course of the story? What has he or she discovered by the story's end?</li> <li>• Which <b>scenes or passages</b> strike me as especially important to the story? What idea about life do they suggest?</li> <li>• What is the story's <b>title</b>? Does it reveal anything special about the story?</li> </ul> <p>The reader may not agree with the author's theme; however the reader should be able to analyze the elements of the selection and construct a theme based on them.</p> <p>Once the theme statement is articulated, the reader can evaluate it and express the degree to which he or she agrees or disagrees with it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is a theme of this story?</li> <li>▪ Which statement expresses the theme of the story?</li> <li>▪ Which is the primary theme in this selection?</li> <li>▪ What is one way the author of "_____ " emphasizes the theme in his poem?</li> <li>▪ The speaker in the poem would probably disagree with which of the following statements?"</li> </ul>