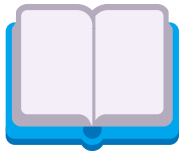
Name & Surname: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

FINDING THE THEME

Track ideas through character, setting, and plot



About 60 minutes Level ★★★☆☆

WHAT IS THEME?

A **theme** is the central **message** about life that a story develops. It is stated as a full sentence, not a single word, and it connects to what characters learn and how the plot ends.

- Topic is one word like friendship; **theme** is the full lesson, like friendship takes work and forgiveness.
- Central idea tells what a text is mostly about; **theme** adds what the author shows about that idea.
- Theme develops through **characters**, setting, and plot: watch choices, problems, and change.
- An **objective** summary retells key events in order without opinions, feelings, or I think.



TASK A /6

Explain the difference in each pair in your own words. Use the notes above to help.

Theme vs **Topic**

The difference is…

Central idea vs **Theme**

The difference is…

Objective summary vs **Personal response**

The difference is…

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RANKING THEME CLUES

Rank the clues that best help you find a theme.

KEY WORDS

theme: the life message of a story

objective: without personal opinions

setting: where and when a story happens

central idea: what a text is mostly about

evidence: quotes or details that prove an idea

plot: the main events in order

✂ TASK B

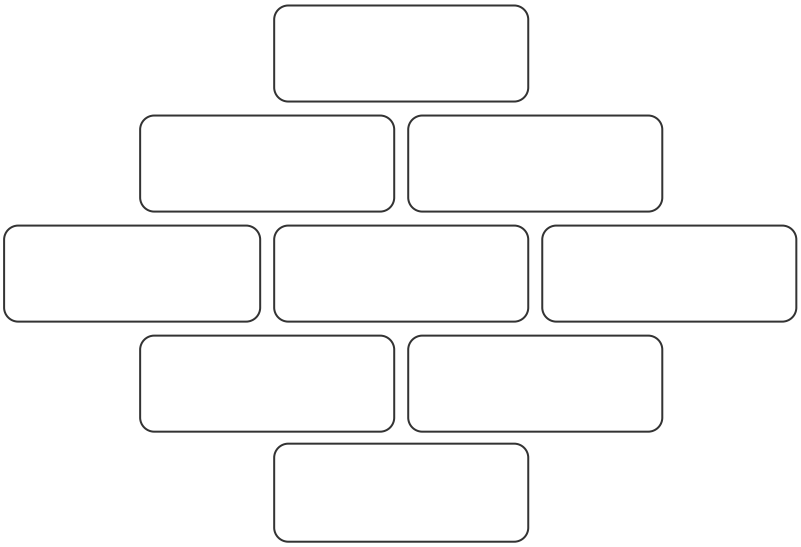
Cut out the cards and rank them in a diamond from most to least helpful. Add your own ideas on the two blank cards.

Which clues best reveal a story's theme?

✂ Cut out the cards.

how a main character changes	lesson the character learns at the end	how the conflict is solved
how setting creates problems	repeated objects, words, or ideas	what the narrator says directly
title and what it suggests	Your own idea	Your own idea

▲ **Most important**



▼ **Least important**

Why did you put your top card at the top?

.....

.....

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TRACKING THEME GROWTH

Read the passage and follow how its theme develops.

THE EMPTY LOT

1. In late August, an empty lot behind the middle school sat full of trash and dry weeds. A 14-year-old who had just moved to town walked past it every morning on the way to school. Everything felt strange and lonely, from the loud hallways to the new bus route. The lot matched how she felt inside: ignored and overgrown.
2. While unpacking, she found a small envelope of vegetable seeds saved by her grandmother. The next Saturday, she brought gloves and a trash bag to the lot and started clearing one corner. A neighbor watching from a porch called out that nothing would ever grow there. Instead of answering, she dug the hard soil, planted the seeds, and carried water in a bucket from home.
3. For two weeks, tiny green sprouts pushed up, and she began to hope. Then a heavy night storm flooded the lot and washed most of the sprouts away. She stood in the mud the next morning and wanted to quit and leave the lot like she wanted to leave the town. The neighbor returned, this time with two younger kids and dry soil in a wagon. They asked if they could help her replant.
4. They worked together all afternoon, building higher rows and sharing the watering job. By October, the corner was full of tomatoes and beans, and the neighbor families stopped to pick and talk. The 14-year-old still missed her old home, but she no longer felt invisible. She had learned that **belonging** grows when people keep trying and care for a place together.

TASK C

/2

Put the story in order. Fill any missing boxes using paragraph numbers to show how theme grows.

1. Paragraph 1: Setting shows loneliness - trash-filled lot and new town
2. _____
3. Paragraph 3: Plot tests theme - storm washes sprouts away
4. _____
5. Paragraph 4: Theme is clear - belonging grows when people keep trying together

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FINDING THE THEME

TASK D

/6

Box the command word, underline the topic, then plan and answer. Aim for 6 marks.

1. Box the command word **2. Underline** the topic **3. Count** the marks: how many points? **4. Plan**, then write

Using paragraphs 1-4, determine a theme of the passage and analyze how it develops through character, setting, and plot. Provide an objective summary. (6)

Command word	Topic	Points I need
.....	.....	.....

State theme as a sentence about belonging and effort → Explain character change from lonely to connected → Explain setting change from trash-filled lot to garden → Give objective summary of planting, storm, and replanting without opinions

My answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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WORDS AND CHECKS

Review vocabulary and check your understanding of theme.

TASK E — Example done for you — /5

Unscramble each word using its clue. Write the correct spelling.

E E T M H — life message of a story

THEME

T O L P — order of main events

G S N T E T I — where and when events happen

E H A C A T R C R — person who learns and changes

Y M M R U A S — short retelling of key events in order

E C I E V D N E — details or quotes that prove an idea

TASK F — Example done for you — /4

Tick true or false for each statement.

Statement	True	False
A **theme** can usually be stated as a full sentence, not just one word.	✓	
The **setting** can develop theme by creating problems characters must face.		
An **objective** summary should include opinions like I think and my favorite part.		
Theme often becomes clearer through how **characters** change and what they learn.		
The **plot** solution often shows the theme most clearly at the end.		

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PICTURES AND RESULTS

Use a picture and map causes to effects.

TASK G

Map how causes in the passage lead to effects for the reader.

Causes

- Lonely setting and trash-filled lot show the problem to solve
- _____
- _____
- _____

→ **Theme becomes clear in the passage** →

Effects

- Reader can state theme: belonging grows with effort and care
- _____
- _____
- _____

HOW DID I DO?

Circle a face for each line.

I can determine a theme as a full sentence.	☹ 😐 ☺
I can analyze how theme develops through character, setting, and plot.	☹ 😐 ☺
I can write an objective summary without opinions.	☹ 😐 ☺

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Answer sheet: Finding the Theme

Task A

1. Theme is a complete message about life, for example belonging grows when people keep trying together. Topic is the one-word subject, for example belonging.

2. Central idea tells what the text is mostly about. Theme states the life lesson shown through characters and events.

3. An objective summary retells important events in order without opinions. A personal response adds feelings like I liked it or it was boring.

Task B

Answers will vary.

Task C

1. Paragraph 1: Setting shows loneliness - trash-filled lot and new town
2. Paragraph 2: Character shows hope - clears a corner and plants seeds
3. Paragraph 3: Plot tests theme - storm washes sprouts away
4. Paragraphs 3 to 4: Character accepts help and replants with neighbors
5. Paragraph 4: Theme is clear - belonging grows when people keep trying together

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Task D

Command word: Determine

Topic: theme development through character, setting, and plot with objective summary

Points: State theme as a sentence about belonging and effort; Explain character change from lonely to connected; Explain setting change from trash-filled lot to garden; Give objective summary of planting, storm, and replanting without opinions

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Task E

1. THEME
2. PLOT
3. SETTING
4. CHARACTER
5. SUMMARY
6. EVIDENCE

Task F

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. True

Task G

Causes: Lonely setting and trash-filled lot show the problem to solve; Character keeps trying, plants seeds, and accepts help; Storm ruins sprouts, then neighbors replant together

Effects: Reader can state theme: belonging grows with effort and care; Reader can give objective summary without opinions; Reader sees how character, setting, and plot connect to message

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