

DEVELOPING A THEMATIC STATEMENT



WHAT IS A THEME?

A theme is a message or main idea that the writer wants the reader to remember after reading his/her work. Most stories, plays, novels, and poems have more than one theme. Some works, like mysteries, might be intended primarily for entertainment and not have a clear theme.



WHAT IS A THEMATIC STATEMENT

A thematic statement is a complete sentence (or two) that express a theme. A thematic statement could serve as a thesis in a thematic essay.



WHAT IS A THEME NOT?

1. A theme is not ONE WORD. That is a topic.

Bad example 1: The theme was love. **NO!**

2. A theme is not a definition

Bad example 2: Love is when you have feelings for someone. **NO!**

3. A theme is not specifically about one story or character; rather, it is universal.

Bad example 3: Greasers and Socs don't get along.
NO!



SOME GOOD EXAMPLES

Topic: Love

Theme: Unconditional love withstands any obstacle.

Topic: Hope

Theme: Hope can help a person to survive any dark time.

Topic: Courage

Theme: It is important to have courage to express your individuality.

Topic: Jealousy

Theme: Jealousy can cause lasting damage to individuals and relationships.



PRACTICING THEMATIC WRITING

Think back to the short story “Thank You Ma’m” and the radio clip “A Victim Treats His Mugger Right”.

Make a list of 5-10 things the two stories have in common.



STEP 1: FIND A MAIN TOPIC THAT IS
CONTAINED IN BOTH THE SHORT STORY AND
THE RADIO CLIP.
CHOOSE ONE BELOW OR COME UP WITH YOUR
OWN!

Common topics for themes include:



Courage	Honesty	Unhappiness
Death	Identity	Wealth
Family	Love	War
Freedom	Prejudice	Respect
Friendship	Trust	Stereotyping
Growing Up	Truth	Sacrifice
Hate	Violence	Innocence



STEP 2: WRITE A STATEMENT BASED ON YOUR TOPIC


Helpful reminders

- ❖ A **THEME** is a statement about a topic
- ❖ Theme involves making a point about a topic
- ❖ If your topic was racism, your thematic statement might be: racism is caused by ignorance and insecurity



STEP 2: CONTINUED

SAMPLE

Topic: Racism 

*Thematic Statement: Racism is caused by ignorance
and insecurity*



Write down your topic: _____

Thematic statement: _____



STEP 3: CHECK THAT YOUR THEMATIC STATEMENT IS UNIVERSAL

Could this thematic statement apply to everyone (in the world? In this classroom?)

Where have you seen this theme in your life? If you can't relate, come up with a situation you *could* encounter where you'd observe this theme.

Write your situation:



If you can relate, it's probably universal!



STEP 5: GROUP WORK

1. Share your thematic statements with your group. Decide which thematic statement you think is strongest, or most easily supported by the text and the radio clip.



STEP 4: CONNECT YOUR THEMATIC STATEMENT TO THE TEXT

1. Find a quote that supports your thematic statement (don't forget to record page number):

2. Write 2-3 sentences of commentary explaining HOW this quote supports your thematic statement.

