

Identifying Themes in Literature

Modern Literature

Carothers/Hanson

Goal

Once you have a universal theme in mind, you must narrow it down to a theme statement. This statement represents the **idea the writer wishes to convey about the subject—the writer's view of the world or observation about human nature**

Investigate

Brainstorm aspects of the story that seem to relate to your universal theme. Look at the following areas: title, character, plot, point of view, symbols, allusions, and patterns.

Compose

Write one or more generalized, declarative sentences that state what was learned and how it was learned.

Test

- Is the theme supported by evidence from the work itself?
- Are all the author's choices of plot, character, conflict, and tone controlled by this theme?

Possible universal themes to get you started

- abuse of power
- action vs apathy
- beating the odds
- beauty
- coming of age
- corruption
- courage
- effects of the past
- faith
- fall from grace
- family
- fate
- fear
- fear of failure
- freedom
- friendship
- greed
- hate
- heritage
- heroes
- honesty
- innocence
- justice
- love
- loyalty
- manipulation
- mothering
- nature
- need for change
- obligation
- parent-child relationships
- peace
- peer pressure
- perseverance
- Power of the mind vs authority
- prejudice
- price of progress
- pride
- quest for knowledge
- religion
- revenge
- secrecy
- security/safety
- seizing the moment
- survival
- the overlooked
- the road not taken
- war
- winners and losers

Universal Theme:



Title: *Explain how the title might indicate or emphasize some important aspect of the universal theme*

Character: *List the protagonist's lessons learned, struggles, motivations, and anything else that seems to set him/her apart from the rest*

Plot: *List significant events and conflict that occur. Explain how conflicts are dealt with or resolved*

Point of View: *List the narrator's comments about other characters and lessons learned. Explain how the narrator is involved with significant events and conflicts*

Symbols, Allusions, & Patterns: *List any symbols, etc. that relate to the universal theme*



Theme Statement: