

## Theme Review

The purpose of this assignment is to become conscious of the theme(s) in your Worldbuilding Narrative Treatment and develop them into central questions which will give you an initial direction for the Research Essay phase of the project. Note: Steps 3-6 require written responses.

Steps:

- 1.) Create a Google doc titled **LastName\_FirstName-Research Essay Brainstorm** and share it with [english@freestyleacademy.rocks](mailto:english@freestyleacademy.rocks). (Even if you have been working in a group, you'll need to make your own doc.)
- 2.) Read the following explanations of *theme*:
  - a.) A theme is an idea or point that is central to a story, which can often be summed up in a single word (for example, love, death, betrayal). Typical examples of themes of this type are conflict between the individual and society; coming of age; humans in conflict with technology; nostalgia; and the dangers of unchecked ambition. A theme may be exemplified by the actions, utterances, or thoughts of a character. Themes often explore historically common or cross-culturally recognizable ideas, such as ethical questions, and are usually implied rather than stated explicitly.
  - b.) Themes can be divided into two categories: a work's thematic concept is what readers "think the work is about" and its thematic statement being "what the work says about the subject."
- 3.) Take a moment to review your Narrative Treatment. Reread it if necessary! What are the *themes* in this story? Brainstorm thematic concepts (single words/phrases) that you detect in your story (see 2a above for examples). In other words, what is this work about?
- 4.) Next, consider what this work says about the subject. Choose one of the thematic concepts and translate it into a thematic statement.
- 5.) Consider TV producer John Yorke's take on the purpose of *theme*: "Theme is the *drama* in a work. All dramas are arguments about the nature of the world." How does your story's conflict make an argument about the nature of the world—the *real* world? (Even if you've created a fantasy world, push yourself to determine what the conflict of this story says about our current world.)

6.) Finally, translate at least one of your story's themes into a question. Here are some final thoughts to guide this step:

- a.) "A theory is posited, an argument explored and a conclusion reached. That, in a nutshell, is what 'theme' is. It's often confused with subject matter, but while the two things can be similar they are not always the same thing. The subject matter of [the film] *Crash* is race, but its theme is 'Is isolation an obstacle to empathy'?" (Yorke).
- b.) When we plug Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* into this model, we have a novel about multiple subjects (race, community, religion, power, environmental disaster) and multiple themes (Is accepting change, including destruction, necessary for survival? What is the role of empathy in uniting a community? Does religion help or hinder humanity's future?).