

Theme

The Process of Discovering a Theme

1. Read the work.
2. Create a list of thematic topics.
3. Pick the top three.
4. Identify what the author thinks/feels about the topics.
5. Create a list of ideas of what the author thinks/feels.
6. Evaluate the list.
7. Pick the top three.
8. Create a sentence using the thematic topic(s) and what the author thinks/feels about those topics.

Formula for Discovering the Theme of a Work

Subject (what the work is about) + message (what universal truth is being communicated) = **theme**.

Express the theme in a complete sentence and avoid using clichés.

Where to Discover Theme

1. Through character

- Types of character
- Emphasis of author

2. Through plot

- By what happens to characters
- By what characters do - By whether characters are active or passive

3. Through motivation

- Reason behind character's motivation
- Emphasis on dominant motivations
- Character's understanding of own motives

4. Through setting

- Choice of environment
- Importance of environment

5. Through statements

- Direct statements by the author—in the narration
- Direct statements by the author's persona (speaker)
- Dramatic statements made by the characters

For a list of **common themes** found in literature, click [here](#).

ThoughtCo. published this great article explaining [how to discover the theme of a book or short story](#).