

## Notes on Theme

Students should be familiar with the following information in order for your theme lesson plan to be effective:

- Theme is the central idea or message in a literary work. It is an observation about human life.
- Themes are rarely stated directly. They must be inferred.
- The theme is revealed by the way characters change in a story, conflicts in the story, and statements made by the narrator or characters.
- Understanding theme involves understanding plot, characters, and setting.

## Strategies for Teaching Theme

1. **Discuss Plot** by analyzing cause and effect and identifying major and minor conflicts.

**Example:** The primary conflict pits best friends against each other.

2. **Analyze character motivation** by noting which characters are dynamic and which ones are static. Look for evidence regarding character motives. Evaluate the character's personality.

**Example:** Both boys are motivated by their love of boxing and their friendship.

3. **Visualize setting** by evaluating what effect the setting has on the characters and on the mood of the story.

**Example:** Where the two boys have grown up highlights how important boxing has been for them.

## Analyzing Theme in Literature

Theme is the unifying or dominant idea in a work of art.

**Directions:** Fill in the chart below. In the left column is written a theme from the story you are reading. In the middle column, identify a specific example from the story. In the right column, explain how your example fits that theme.

Theme	Specific Example	Explanation
<b>Positivity of Sports</b>	"While some youngsters were into street negatives, Antonio and Felix slept, ate, rapped, and dreamt positive. Between them, they had a collection of fight magazines second to none..."	It is strongly suggested that the two fighters' passion for boxing and focus on their sporting goals have kept them out of trouble.
<b>Positivity of Sports</b>		
<b>Importance of Friendship</b>		
<b>Importance of Friendship</b>		
<b>The Double-Edged Sword of Competition</b>		

## Analyzing Theme in Literature

Theme is the unifying or dominant idea in a work of art.

**Directions:** Fill in the chart below. In the left column is written a theme from the story you are reading. In the middle column, identify a specific example from the story. In the right column, explain how your example fits that theme.

Theme	Specific Example	Explanation
<p><b>Positivity of Sports</b></p>	<p>“While some youngsters were into street negatives, Antonio and Felix slept, ate, rapped, and dreamt positive. Between them, they had a collection of Fight magazines second to none...”</p>	<p>It is strongly suggested that the two fighters’ passion for boxing and focus on their sporting goals have kept them out of trouble.</p>
<p><b>Positivity of Sports</b></p>	<p>“No matter what the decision, they knew they would always be champions to each other.”</p>	<p>Sports clichés exist for a reason. In this case, both young men learn that regardless of the outcome, they are champions for giving it their all and moving forward.</p>
<p><b>Importance of Friendship</b></p>	<p>“Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas were both seventeen years old. They were so together in friendship that they felt themselves to be brothers. They had known each other since childhood, growing up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the same tenement1 building on Fifth Street between Avenue A and Avenue B.”</p>	<p>The story’s title and its first paragraph place an immediate emphasis on friendship. The establishment of the friendship makes the ensuing information about their upcoming fight more of a plot twist or obstacle than the central focus of the story.</p>
<p><b>Importance of Friendship</b></p>	<p>“Each youngster had a dream of someday becoming lightweight champion of the world. Every chance they had, the boys worked out, sometimes at the Boys’ Club on 10th Street and Avenue A and sometimes at the pro’s gym on 14th Street. Early morning sunrises would find them running along the East River Drive, wrapped in sweat shirts, short towels around their necks, and handkerchiefs Apache style around their foreheads.”</p>	<p>We have another early example of the two young men’s friendship overrides the sporting aspect of the story. Do the two train together because they’re friends or are they friends because they train together? The story affirms the former.</p>
<p><b>The Double-Edged Sword of Competition</b></p>	<p>“Now, after a series of elimination bouts, they had been informed that they were to meet each other in the division finals that were scheduled for the seventh of August, two weeks away—the winner to represent the Boys’ Club in the Golden Gloves Championship Tournament.”</p>	<p>One of the things that keeps these friends so close is their focus on the same goal. It’s likely as training partners that they push each other to achieve more. Now they must face each other in the ring. Only one boxer moves closer to his goal.</p>

