

Theme - A story's essential meaning; a full statement expressing what the story reveals

Examples:

"The Story of An Hour" is about marriage, and reveals that marriage is an unnecessary social construct that limits personal freedom.

"The Story of An Hour" is about fulfillment, and reveals that freedom is more important to self-fulfillment than romantic love.

Theme is:

a full statement of message. Theme is not one word. "Love" is not a theme. Ask yourself, What does the story reveal about love? and the answer to that would be a theme.

universal. Theme is not only true for the characters in the story. A good theme is NOT "Mrs.

Mallard didn't love her husband." Ask yourself what the story is revealing THROUGH the character rather than what is the story revealing ABOUT the character.

in your own words. Theme is not a cliché or something you found online. "Never judge a book by its cover" is a cliché and is not a good theme.

a truth or a revelation. Theme is not advice to the reader. Avoid a theme like "Don't get married!"

To create a theme:

1. Ask yourself what concepts are explored in the story. ex. love, freedom, tradition, societal expectations, marriage, friendship, self-love, identity, free-will, agency, etc. Choose one of these concepts to discuss.

2. Ask yourself what message the story is revealing about that concept. The answer to this is your theme.

Formula!

The story (title of story) is about (concept), and reveals that (message).

ex. The story "The Story of An Hour" is about societal expectations, and reveals that one must ignore societal expectations in order to achieve self-actualization.

Poetry Defined

Writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm (Merriam-Webster)

"patterned arrangement of language"

"rhythm"

"express and evoke specific emotions"

Breaking Down a Poem

Identify expectations based on the title.

Listen to the poem.

Translate the poem/read it literally

Define unfamiliar words.

Look up unfamiliar references (allusions).

Ask yourself who, where, when, and what happens.

Identify figurative language.

Consider how the form and sound aid meaning.

Formulate a theme. Does the speaker's experience represent a common human experience?

What is it?

Talk about it with someone else.

On Her Loving Two Equally
I.

How strongly does my passion flow,
Divided equally 'twixt two?
Damon had ne'er subdued my heart,
Had not Alexis took his part;
Nor could Alexis powerful prove,
Without my Damon's aid, to gain my love.

II.

When my Alexis present is,
Then I for Damon sigh and mourn;
But when Alexis I do miss,
Damon gains nothing but my scorn.
But if it chance they both are by,
For both alike I languish, sigh, and die.

III.

Cure then, thou mighty winged god,
This restless fever in my blood;
One golden-pointed dart take back:
But which, O Cupid, wilt thou take?
Damon's, all my hopes are crossed;
that of my Alexis, I am lost.
-Aphra Behn, 1684

Theme and Tone

Theme: The poem's message or purpose

Tone: The attitude of the poem.

Describe the theme and tone of the poem on the right.

"Unfortunate Coincidence"

By the time you swear you're his,

Shivering and sighing,

And he vows his passion is

Infinite, undying -

Lady, make a note of this:

One of you is lying.

- Dorothy Parker

Diction: Denotation and Connotation

Diction: the author's word choice

Syntax: the way words are put together

Denotation: the "dictionary" meaning of the word.

Connotation: What the word suggests or implies

What are the denotations and connotations of these words?

Childlike, Youthful, Childish, Young

Confident, Secure, Proud, Egotistical

Exercise: Describe someone who talks a lot using words that have a positive connotation, and words that have a negative connotation.

Figures of Speech

Simile: A direct comparison using like or as

"Life is like a box of chocolates"

"cute as a kitten," "happy as a clam"

Metaphor: An indirect comparison that does not use like or as

"My husband gives me an A for last night's supper."

“Conscience is a man’s compass.” – Vincent Van Gogh

Personification: Treating an abstraction as if it had human qualities

“Because I could not stop for Death – He kindly stopped for me.”

“Chaos is a friend of mine.” – Bob Dylan

Figures of Speech

Paradox: A contradiction that reveals a truth

“I, a child, very old”

“I can resist anything but temptation.” – Oscar Wilde

“I must be cruel to be kind.”

Anaphora: The repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases

“What the hammer? what the chain?”

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness”

Apostrophe: The speaker addresses a real or imagined listener who is not present

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,

How I wonder what you are.”

Figures of Speech

Overstatement (Hyperbole) and Understatement

“I had to wait in the station for ten days-an eternity.”

“I have to have this operation. It isn’t very serious. I have this tiny little tumor on the brain.”

Synecdoche: A part of something represents the whole

“Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad bright Sun”

“Boots on the ground”

Metonymy: Something that is closely linked to a particular thing that represents that thing

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.”

Sounds

Alliteration: repetition of initial consonant sounds.

Assonance: repetition of vowel sounds

Onomatopoeia: Words that sound like what they describe.

Rhyme

Rhyme Scheme: pattern of end rhymes

Free verse: Does not follow a rhyme scheme or use regular meter.

Internal rhyme: rhyme that occurs in the same line

Slant/near rhyme: Slightly off. All and bowl, for instance.

Meter

How we measure poetry.

Foot: basic unit of poetic meter

Iamb: An unstressed or unaccented syllable followed by a stressed or accented one. Believe, she went

Trochee: stressed followed by unstressed meter, Homer

Anapest: two unstressed followed by a stressed comprehend, after you

Dactyl: A stressed followed by two unstressed. Dinnertime

The Sonnet

lines and usually in iambic pentameter.

Petrarchan 8-6

Shakespearean 4-4-4-2