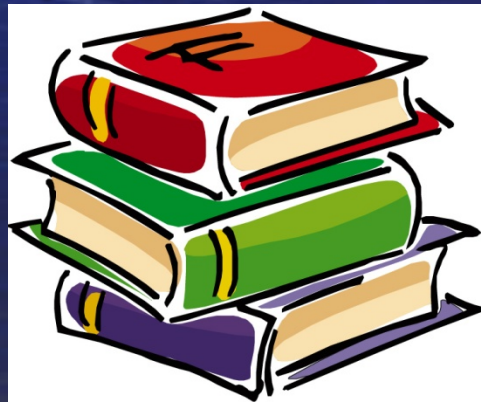


## NEXT GENERATION STANDARDS:

**STANDARD 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.**

# Finding Themes in Literature

A message to you from the author...



# THEME

- Like the author's message to you in a bottle...





# THEME

I Can identify theme in text by:

- Considering what does the author want to teach me about life (human condition) and how people generally behave (human nature)?
- In other words, what life lesson does the character learn and how does this connect to real life?
- By focusing on the life's challenges facing the main character(s), looking how this problem connects to people in real-life and figuring out what the author thinks the best way is to resolve this challenge.

# THE READER'S JOB:



- Part of your job as a reader is to understand what the author is trying to say.
- Writers seldom come out and tell you, “Hey, Reader! THIS is what I want you to GET from my writing.”
- You, as the reader, must make *inferences* and draw conclusions about what the author is trying to express.



# HEY! WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

- Of a literary work, that is!
- Themes are usually about BIG IDEAS. For example:
  - Freedom
  - Trust
  - Friendship
  - Good vs. Evil
  - And much, much more.



# SO WHAT IS THEME?



- Theme is the message from the author.
- Themes can be found **everywhere**:
  - Literature
  - Art
  - Movies
- The theme of a **fable** is its **moral**.
- The theme of a piece of literature is its **view about life and how people behave**.



# THIS IS THEME...



- ☐ Theme is the underlying meaning of the story.
- ☐ It is a universal **Truth**.
- ☐ It is a significant **statement** the story is making about the *human condition*. Essentially, the discussion of the human condition is **any thematic concern about we live our lives.**

# THEME AND LIFE'S CHALLENGES

- If you are asked to make a theme statement about a piece of writing, the easiest way to identify a **theme** is to look for some challenges that the main character (s) is facing in his or her life. Look for common problems that any person - you included - might face sometime in his or her life.



# THEME AND LIFE'S CHALLENGES

- So let's be more specific. What kind of issues connected to life's challenges or how we live our lives are we talking about? Well, **it can mean MANY different things!** Here are a *few* examples that come to mind:

# GET TO THE POINT:



- Theme is NOT the **TOPIC**.
- Theme IS the **POINT** being made about the **TOPIC**.
- Theme is a **statement** about **LIFE**.
- A **GOOD** theme teaches a **VALUABLE** lesson about life.



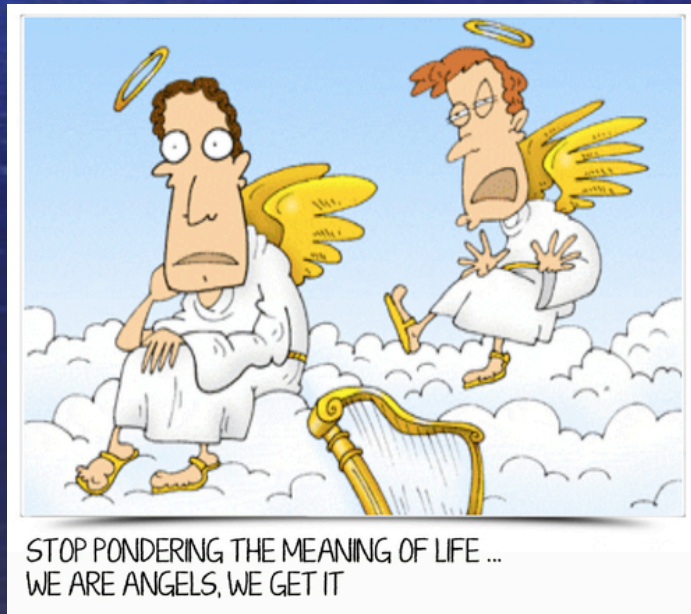
# THEME AND IDEA:

- The theme of a literary work is its **underlying central idea** or the **generalization** it communicates **about life**.



# THEME: THE MEANING OF LIFE?

- The theme expresses the **author's opinion** or **raises a question** about human nature of the meaning of human experience.





# FINDING COMMON GROUND

- The author's task is to communicate on a common ground with the reader.
- Although the particulars of your experience may be different from the details of the story, the general underlying truths behind the story may be just the connection that both you and the writer are seeking.



# YOU AND THEME



- An understanding of theme is dependent upon one's previous experience of life and literature.
- At the same time, theme in literature can enlarge one's understanding of life.



# BE AWARE:



- The theme never completely explains the story.
- It is only one of the elements that are needed to gain full understanding of the story.
- Literary texts can have more than one theme.

# FINDING THE THEME:

What is the topic or “BIG IDEA” of the work?

What do the characters say or do that relates to the topic?

What do these things tell you that are important to learn about life?

- The topic is...
- The BIG IDEA is...
- The characters say...
- The characters do...
- The text tells me...
- It is important to...



# COMMON LITERARY TOPICS (NOT THEMES):

- Freedom
- Friendship Patriotism
- Education
- Homelessness
- Prejudice
- Honesty
- Land
- Laws & Justice
- Survival
- Family
- Love & Hate
- Life & Death
- War & Peace
- Motherhood & Fatherhood
- Poverty & Wealth

# CHARACTERISTICALLY SPEAKING...

- Questions to ask yourself when thinking about theme and characters:
  - How does the character change?
  - What made him/her change?
  - What lessons did the character learn?
  - What are the characters' feelings about what happens in the story?
  - What conflicts do the characters engage in and what happens as a result?



# THEMES:

- WHAT IS THE THEME IN BEAUTY AND THE BEAST? (TRY TO AVOID CLICHÉ'S).



# SOME POSSIBILITIES:

- AT FIRST, IT MAY SEEM LIKE WE SHOULD NOT JUDGE OTHERS BY THEIR OUTWARD APPEARANCES...BUT THEN, WE REALIZE IT IS THAT EVERYONE IS CAPABLE OF LOVE AND BEING LOVED.
- OR ONE SHOULD NOT BE DECEIVED BY APPEARANCES SINCE TRUE BEAUTY LIES WITHIN.



# THEMES:

- WHAT IS THE THEME OF THE WIZARD OF OZ?



# THEMES:

- AT FIRST, IT MIGHT SEEM TO BE ABOUT FRIENDSHIP SINCE SHE MEETS UP WITH THREE GREAT COMPANIONS WHO JOIN HER ON HER JOURNEY BUT THEN WE REALIZE IT'S REALLY ABOUT LOOKING WITHIN YOURSELF TO FIND LIFE'S TRUE MEANINGS SINCE she learned to trust herself and that the answers to her problems lie within her. She benefited from the company of others but the solution of how to get back to Kansas could be found within all along. This journey, then, gave her much more insight into herself and taught her how to navigate an oftentimes treacherous and confusing adult world.



# THEME AND TOPIC MATCH UP:

1. Be careful how you treat other people; they may treat you the same. (REVENGE)
2. Face your fears and you can defeat them. (COURAGE)
3. Do not wish for what others possess. Be happy with what you have. (JEALOUSY)
4. Work for what you want in life and you can achieve any goal. (DREAMS)

# COMMON THEMES:

## Common Themes in Books

You will find that many books include a theme, or lesson, that is revealed as you read the story. Below are common themes you will find in your books.

<b>Acceptance</b>	These books have characters who respect & accept others' differences and beliefs.
<b>Courage</b>	These books have brave characters who have the strength to overcome a fear or accept a risk.
<b>Perseverance</b>	These books have characters who never give up even when facing difficult times.
<b>Cooperation</b>	These books have characters who work together to solve a problem or achieve a goal.
<b>Compassion</b>	These books have characters who want to make those who are suffering feel better.
<b>Honesty</b>	These books have characters who find that it is best to always tell the truth.
<b>Kindness</b>	These books have friendly characters who are generous and considerate of others.
<b>Loyalty</b>	These books have characters who trust each other and never turn their backs on their friends.

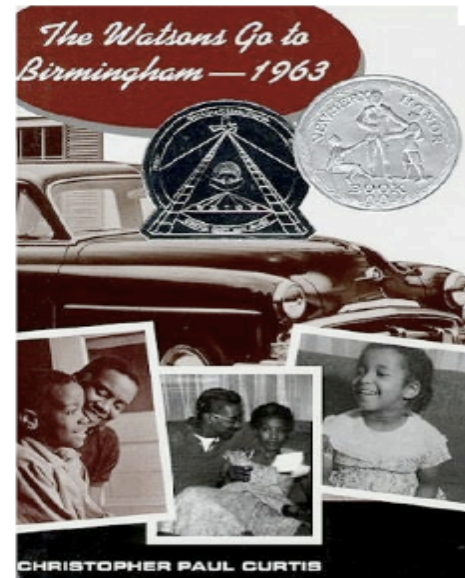


# MORE "MATURELY" STATED THEMES FROM CHILDREN'S AUTHOR:



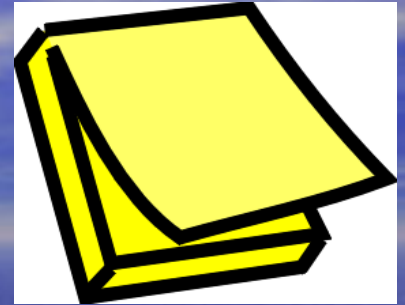
## 12 Common Themes in Literature

- ~ Man Struggles Against Nature
- ~ Man Struggles Against Societal Pressure
- ~ Man Struggles to Understand Spirituality
- ~ Crime Does Not Pay (A famous example is "The Tale Tell Heart"- Edgar Allen Poe)
- ~ Overcoming Adversity
- ~ Friendship is Dependent on Sacrifice
- ~ The importance of Family
- ~ Yin and Yang: Just when you think you have things figured out, a challenge arises and we have to balance it all out.
- ~ Love is the Worthiest of Pursuits
- ~ Death is Part of the Life Cycle
- ~ Sacrifices Bring Reward
- ~ Human Beings All Have the Same Needs (ex-good, bad, rich, or poor, we all need love)



What themes are present in The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963?

# SO TODAY IN YOUR INDEPENDENT BOOKS...



- THINK:

- What is the topic or “BIG IDEA” of the work?

The topic is...  
The BIG IDEA is...

- What do the characters say or do that relates to the topic?

The characters say...  
The characters do...

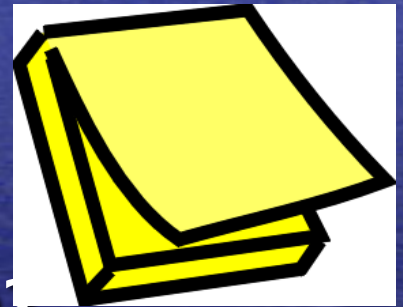
- What do these things tell you that are important to learn about life?

The text tells me...  
It is important to...



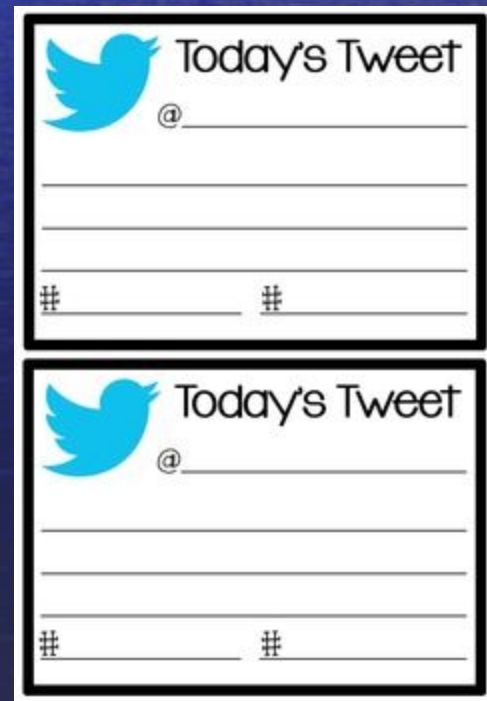
# REMINDER TO ASK YOURSELF AND MARK THESE PLACES THAT...

- Questions to ask yourself when thinking about theme and characters:
  - How does the character change?
  - What made him/her change?
  - What lessons did the character learn?
  - What are the characters' feelings about what happens in the story?
  - What conflicts do the characters engage in and what happens as a result?



# SELF-ASSESSMENT

- So if you would have to sum up, what is theme and how can you find it in a text, what would you say?



The image shows two identical forms stacked vertically, each designed to look like a Twitter post. Each form has a black border and contains the following elements from top to bottom: a blue Twitter bird icon, the text 'Today's Tweet', a line for an '@' handle, three horizontal lines for the tweet text, and a line for a hashtag starting with '#'. The forms are intended for a user to write their self-assessment response.