

Read the short story. Then answer each question.

How to Find the Theme of a Text

Reading is fun! In addition to reading for fun, though, we can also analyze texts to learn more *from* the texts and more *about* the texts. One way we can do this with fiction books, passages, or poems is by identifying the theme.

The theme of a book is the “big idea” that runs throughout the text, connecting the characters and events. Many times, it has to do with what the main character learned over the course of the story. Most of the time, the theme of a book is not written out in the words, you have to use clues in the text to infer it. Themes can be ideas like friendship, bravery, love, honesty, good versus evil, or family. The theme might not be able to be said in just one word, though. It might be an idea such as, “Be careful what you wish for.” There may also be more than one theme in a story.

To start finding the theme, first you need to make sure you’ve read the entire text. Characters change throughout the story, so what you might think is the theme in the beginning might not be true at the end!



Grade 4 Reading Comprehension Worksheet

After reading the text, summarize the plot. What important events occurred during the story? What was the problem? How did the problem get resolved? How did the character(s) change? What did the character(s) learn?

Use the answers from those questions to see if you can spot a pattern. Did a lot of the plot revolve around friendship? Did many characters resolve problems with their families? Did hard work pay off for the main character? Did the main character learn the importance of fairness?

Once you've identified a "big idea," go through the text to find evidence that supports this idea throughout the entire text. If there was only one small problem with a character's family, then "family" might not be the theme of the text. You might find more evidence for friendship or bravery.

Now you are ready to find the theme of books, passages, and poems! Grab your favorite book and see if you can identify the theme.



Questions:

1. What is the theme of a text?

2. Why do you need to read the entire text before you determine the theme?

3. What does “*infer*” mean in the second paragraph? How do you know?

4. What are the four steps to finding the theme of a text?

5. How could a text have more than one theme?

Answers:

1. What is the theme of a text?

The theme of a text is the big idea that runs through the text.

2. Why do you need to read the entire text before you determine the theme?

You need to read the entire text before you determine the theme as the characters and story can change through the story, so what you thought was thought was the theme at the beginning of the story is something different at the end of the story.

3. What does “*infer*” mean in the second paragraph? How do you know?

Infer means to deduce or conclude. Many times the theme of a book is not written out in words, you have to make your conclusion of the theme from clues in the text.

4. What are the four steps to finding the theme of a text?

First, you need to read the entire text. Second, you summarize the plot by asking yourself a series of relevant questions. Third, you use the answers from those questions to see if you can spot a pattern, or theme. Fourth, once you've identified a big idea, go through the text to find evidence that supports this big idea.

5. How could a text have more than one theme?

Answers will vary.