

Identify Theme in a Text

4th-5th grades

Overview

In this build series, students reflect on the “big ideas” in a fictional text. They will describe a key theme from a text and identify the same theme in another fictional text or story. They will also make personal connections to a theme and talk about why it is engaging to readers.

Connect to Curriculum

This build series can be part of classroom activities that involve:

Reading for Literature:

- Determining the theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text.
- Referring to parts of stories when speaking about a text, using appropriate vocabulary.
- Describing how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences the way events are described.
- Comparing and contrasting stories in the same genre based on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Reading: Foundational Skills:

- Reading on-level text with purpose and understanding.

Writing:

- Composing an opinion on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and/or information.
- Recalling information from experience or gathering information from print and digital sources.

Language:

- Demonstrating understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Before You Begin

Assess and encourage prior learning by:

- Introducing and defining key vocabulary: *character*, *plot*, *setting*, *style*, and *theme*.
- Focusing on one particular story.
- Reading a story or watching a movie as a class and discussing the themes that can be found in it. It is a good idea to use short stories for this discussion.
- Brainstorming a list of common themes found in stories, movies, and television shows of different genres.
- Creating a word wall of common themes so students can refer back to this list as needed.



Tip:

Consult the Quick Start Guide of this activity pack for ideas on classroom management and organization.



Vocabulary:

- **character:** a person in a story, play, or novel
- **plot:** the events that make up a story
- **setting:** the time and location in which a story takes place
- **style:** the manner in which the author tells the story
- **theme:** the central topic, subject, idea, or concept that the author is trying to point out

Build and Share

Have students build and share their models by following the steps outlined in the Challenge Cards provided with this activity.



Reflect on the Experience

Encourage students to record and reflect on their models and ideas.

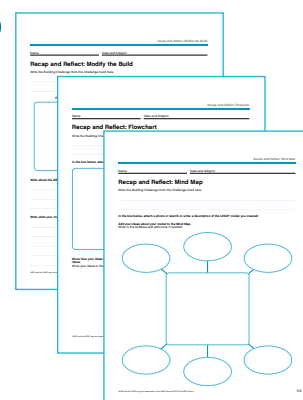
Extensions

After completing the build series, encourage further learning by:

- Choosing a character from the story and examining how he or she sees this theme by writing and performing a monologue for him/her. (Dramatic Arts)
- Rewriting the same story with the same characters or scenario but with a different theme. (Language Arts)
- Creating a collage that represents the theme of the story using colors, shapes, pictures, or textures that illustrate the theme. (Visual Arts)
- Creating a timeline from the story outlining events that relate to the central theme. (Language Arts)

Facilitating Questions:

Notes:



Tip:

Use one of the Recap and Reflect Worksheets available in the Support Materials section of this activity pack to document the build experience.

Topic: Identify Theme in a Text

1 Think about



These four building tasks will help you express your thoughts and ideas about the themes of a story you have read.

Build: Build a model that represents one of the themes you noticed in the story you read.

Building Time: 3-4 minutes

Share: When the building time is up, take turns telling each other about what you have built.

Keep your model on your own building plate.

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Topic: Identify Theme in a Text

2 Remember



Now that you've thought about a theme in a specific story, it is useful to recall another story you have read, watched, or heard.

Build: Build a model that represents another story, movie, or song with the same theme.

Building Time: 3-4 minutes

Share: When the building time is up, take turns telling each other about what you have built.

Keep your model on your own building plate.

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3 Imagine



Now you will use your imagination and creativity to think about your own life story.

Build: Build a model that represents a theme that you would use if you were writing a story about yourself and your life.

Building Time: 3-4 minutes

Share: When the building time is up, take turns telling each other about what you have built.

Keep your model on your own building plate.

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4 Conclude



Now you will build a model that sums up what you have learned so far.

Build: Build a model that represents why you think the theme from the story you read is interesting or engaging for readers.

Building Time: 3-4 minutes

Share: When the building time is up, take turns telling each other about what you have built.

Keep your model on your own building plate.

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