

What is the THEME?

The theme of a story is the underlying message in the story. Many times, people confuse the main idea or the summary of a story with the theme of a story or passage. The main idea is a short summary of the events, while the theme is an inference that relates to the underlying message or lesson in a story. The theme is *not directly stated, but is implied*.

The reader must think about the character's experiences and choices to infer the theme of the story.

When a reader is attempting to infer the theme, it is helpful to ask...

1. What is the BIG idea in this story?
2. What larger message is the author trying to convey?
3. What did the author want the reader to understand?

Common Themes Found in Literature

Acceptance	
Adversity	
Change vs. Tradition	
Compassion	
Confidence	
Cooperation	
Courage	
Determination	
Diversity	
Equality	
Fairness	
Family	
Forgiveness	
Friendship	
Growing Up	
Hope	
Jealousy	
Judgment	
Kindness	
Loyalty	
Peace and War	
Perseverance	
Prejudice	
Survival	
Teamwork	
Trust	

Theme

The message, lesson, or moral of a story.

Never give up on the things that are important to you.

Do not give in to peer pressure.

Be thankful for what you have.

Use your imagination to solve a problem.

Main Idea

What the story is mostly about.

Jana was not the best speaker in the class, so she knew she would have to work hard to earn a spot on the debate team.

Maria helped her father fix cars on the weekends even though her classmates told her "fixing cars is for guys."

The boys didn't have enough money for the chips, so they stuffed them in their bags, and security cameras caught their theft.

It was a rainy day, so Mom had to get creative to keep the kids from getting bored.

1. Choose the best theme for this passage.

"I don't want a new baby brother!" whined Kim.

"Honey, you don't have a choice. He will be here next month," mom said rubbing her big belly.

Kim couldn't believe that she would have to be around a loud, slobbery baby. Plus, the thought of sharing anything, especially attention from her mom and dad, with a new baby didn't sound fun at all!

"You will be one of the most important people in his life!" mom exclaimed. "He will need you to look out for him and to teach him new things!"

"Hmm, I guess that's true. I will be showing him a lot of new things. Maybe it won't be all that terrible having a little rugrat running around here," Kim replied with a sigh. "Just don't expect me to change his diapers!"

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Passage 1

What is this passage mostly about (main idea)?

Kim is not happy about having a baby brother, but she changes her mind when her mother convinces her that she will be an important part of his life.

What is one possible theme (written as a sentence) for this passage?

Feeling important can help us accept change more easily.

Feeling important can help us accept changes in our family more easily.

2. Choose the best theme for this passage.

Georgia decided to take a sewing class, but felt very frustrated when she couldn't sew a straight line on the first day.

"This looks so easy, but it's not! Clearly I'm just terrible at sewing!" she complained.

Even though she felt frustrated, she continued to go to class week after week. Each week, her sewing instructor helped her. By the last week of class, Georgia finally completed a project all by herself! She created a rectangular pillow for her bed... with four *mostly perfect* straight lines.

Passage 2

What is this passage mostly about (main idea)?

Georgia continues to go to sewing class, even though she couldn't sew a straight line on the first day. She completes a pillow all by herself on the last day of class, with nearly perfect straight lines.

What is one possible theme (written as a sentence) for this passage?

Don't give up on the things you like to do.

Working hard and persevering is a great way to get better at something you like to do.

Never give up and you will be able to accomplish anything.

