



# Definition of Theme

# What is theme?

## Simple definition:

**Theme = a lesson or message of a story**

# What is theme?

## Complex definition:

**Theme = universal statement about the human experience expressed by a work of literature**

Let's break down this definition a little bit...

# What is theme?

Theme = **universal** statement about the human experience expressed by a work of literature



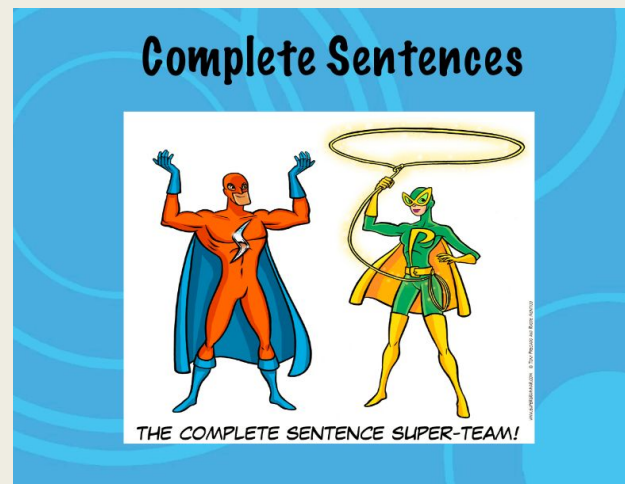
**“Universal”** means that a theme applies to the whole world, not just one part.



# What is theme?

Theme = universal **statement** about the human experience expressed by a work of literature

“**Statement**” means that the theme has to be a complete sentence, with a subject and a verb, not just a single word or topic.

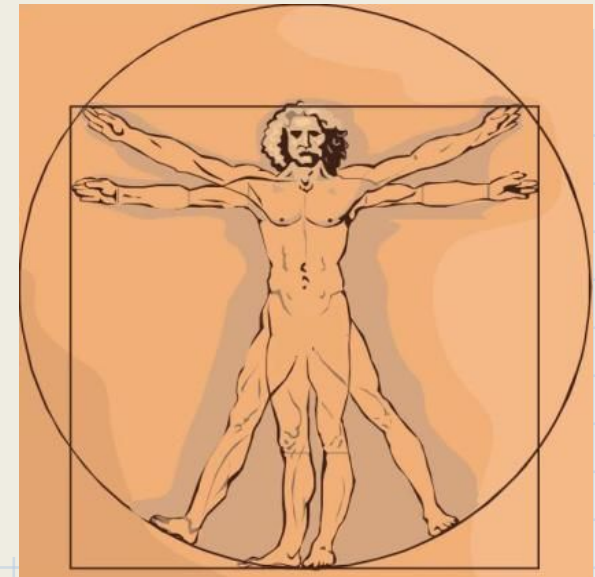


# What is theme?

Theme = universal statement about the **human experience** expressed by a work of literature



“**Human experience**” means that the theme should say something about people’s lives in general.



# What is theme?

Theme = universal statement about the human experience **expressed by a work of literature**

“**Expressed by a work of literature**” means that a theme can come from any piece of literature such as plays, novels, short stories, or poems\*.



\*Movies can also have themes, but this class, we're just going to focus on literature.

# What is a theme?

**Theme = universal statement about the human experience expressed by a work of literature**

And therefore a theme IS...

- an idea that could apply to anyone in the world
- a complete sentence
- about humans in general
- from a piece of literature like a novel or poem



# Examples of Theme Statements

- From Disney's *Lion King*
  - It's necessary to face your past in order to begin your future and grow as a person.
- From *Harry Potter*
  - Love and friendship has the power to overcome all.
- From *The Avengers*
  - Working together and utilizing everyone's strengths makes for a stronger team than individuals fighting alone.

# Other Info about Theme

- There can be more than one theme from a novel
  - Each reader may get something different from a text
  - As long as there is evidence to support your analysis of a text, then you're all set.
- Don't include "The author believes that.." as part of the theme
  - We already know it's what the author believes because it's the theme of his or her text!
- Theme statements should apply to the ENTIRE text, not just one part of the book
  - This is especially tricky with novels. Make sure to check that your theme statement is relevant in the beginning, middle and end of the novel.

# Theme or Not Theme

Now that you have a good idea of what a theme is, let's discuss what a theme is not.

Theme statements **ARE NOT...**

- a single work about a topic
  - ex: "racism"
- very specific argument that would only apply to one text
  - ex: "Harry Potter learned that good is better than evil."
- a cliché (overused phrase)
  - ex: It's better to forgive and forget
- Summary of the story
  - ex: "Lion King is the story of Simba who fights back against his evil uncle, Scar."

# Check for Understanding

1. What is the definition of theme?
  - a) a single word like “love” or “violence”
  - b) a universal statement about the human experience
  - c) a cliché
  - d) the first sentence of a book or a play
2. There is only ONE correct theme statement for each text.
  - a) True
  - b) False
3. A theme statement should be
  - a) generalization about people or the world
  - b) written in the last 5 pages
  - c) specific enough that it applies only to the text and nothing else
  - d) a summary of the story beginning with “The author believes...”

# Answers

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**\*\*If you didn't answer one of these questions correctly, go back and review this slide show again\*\***