



Developing A Theme Statement

Adapted from Olson, C.B. (2011). Teaching Secondary English Learners to Understand, Analyze, and Write Interpretive Essays About Theme. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, (54) 4, 245-256.

TOPICS are the general subjects of the text. Topics often deal with character traits like bravery, jealousy, and honor. They may also deal with aspects of humanity—things that are part of life—like friendship, love, survival, and death.

Some topics that can lead to themes

arrogance	friendship	perseverance
belief	generosity	power
bravery	hardship	pride
brotherhood	heroism	revenge
courage	hope	risk-taking
death	honor	resilience
despair	injustice	sacrifice
destruction	jealousy	selflessness
determination	love	spirit
endurance	nobility	survival
faith	persistence	trusting

Important Literary Elements to Help Identify Topics and Determine Themes:

Characters

- What is revealed through the characters' thoughts or statements?
- Do the characters stand for something beyond themselves (an archetype)?

Plot

- What actions do the characters take?
- What is the journey? Are they in control of their lives, or are they controlled by fate?

Motivation

- What drives the characters' actions?
- What motives dominate the characters?

Values

- What are the values of the characters in the story?
- What values does the author promote through the actions of the characters?

THEME is a message in a work of literature that provides an author's insight or opinion about life, human nature, or how the world works. It is the **SO WHAT?**

Theme = Topic + Author's Message about the Topic

There can be multiple themes in a work of literature.

Themes are always supported by evidence in the story.

THEME: Theme is more than one word and states the author's message about life, human nature, or how the world works.

Developing theme statements- Generic Examples:

faith	Faith can give people strength to persevere.
belief	Sometimes people have to believe in something even if they can't see it.
hope/ endurance	If a person has hope, he can endure great hardship.
heart	Some things are seen with the eyes; others are felt by the heart.

Use this space to jot down ideas about topics you have identified in the excerpt from Book XII. Then, brainstorm some ideas on what the author is saying about each topic. What might the author's message about each topic be?

Create one THEME statement:

Cite the textual evidence used to develop this theme:

