

Lesson Title:

Theme

Grade Level:

5

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will identify a theme in literature.
- Students will understand how themes apply to life.

Learning Modalities Targeted: Visual Auditory Kinesthetic/Tactile**Warm-Up:**

- Display the Warm-Up questions one at a time and ask students whether or not the statement is a theme.
- Students may give a “thumbs up” for theme or “thumbs down” if it is not a theme.
- Allow some discussion among students when there is not a unanimous consensus, but do not tell who is right at this point.

Materials Needed: Notebooks, pencils/pens, butcher paper, markers, class set of whiteboards, dry erase markers, tissues, Warm-Up questions, Lesson Idea Theme Statements, New Word Graphic Organizer, “The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing” passage, Theme Graphic Organizer.

Procedure:

1. Display the Lesson Idea Theme Statements, and ask students what they all have in common: People should follow their dreams; Difficult situations test how loyal a friend is; Let forgiveness heal past hurts; Reward is not as great without someone to share it with.

2. Jot down responses until a good description of *theme* can be made. Share with the class that they have just put together a good description of *theme*. Explain how a theme is a message about life and/or human nature that an author shares with a reader through the events in a story. Point out that themes never contain characters' names or describe what happens in the story. They are general statements and can be applied to real-life situations. Sometimes, the author directly states the theme, but most of the time, readers must figure out the theme themselves by examining the events of the story. Continue the discussion as students fill out a "New Word Graphic Organizer" for the word *theme*.
3. Display or distribute "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing." Have a volunteer read aloud while students read silently. Have students think about the theme of the story as they read. Ask students to write the theme of the story on their whiteboards. Call on a student with the right answer to share his/her theme. Then, ask the student to point out events in the story that led to his/her answer. Call on another student with a different correct theme to share his/her answer. Have him/her point out supporting details as well. Explain that stories can have more than one theme. Possible themes for "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing" are:
 - Things do not always go as planned.
 - Liars are eventually discovered.
 - Those who are evil eventually get what they deserve.

Ask students to apply the themes to real-life situations. For example, ask them to share times in their life when "things did not go as planned."

Independent Practice:

- Divide the class into groups of 3. Assign each group a different story that students have already read. Give each group a large piece of butcher paper. Have each group use markers to write a theme of the story and details from the story that support the theme. Allow students to write details in words or draw simple pictures.
- Once students are finished, each group will present their findings to the class.

Closing Activity:

- Review the definition of *theme*.
- Revisit the Warm-Up activity and have students re-evaluate their answers. Have students supply possible theme statements to correct statements that are not thematic.

Advanced Learner Option**Procedure:**

1. Have students change an event (e.g., the ending) in “The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing” to change the story’s theme.
2. Students may trade papers to guess each other’s new themes.

Struggling Learner Option

Procedure:

1. Show students how to use the “Theme Graphic Organizer” to find a story’s theme. (The Theme Graphic Organizer Answer Key shows how the organizer would be filled out for “The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing.”) The organizer breaks down the theme-finding process into four steps:
 - Find a one-word topic for the theme.
 - Find examples of the topic in the story.
 - Form a theme statement by combining the topic with the examples in the story.
 - Apply the theme statement to real-life situations. (In other words, name a time when this theme proved to be true in real life.)
2. Guide students in using the graphic organizer for one story. Allow the students to work independently to find a theme for another story.
3. To help the students get started, provide them with the first step (a one-word topic for the theme). Alternately, help students outline the sequence of events to help them come up with the one-word topic.

Extension Activities

- Provide students with a list of common themes. (Use the Lesson Idea Theme Statements or provide new statements.) Have students choose one theme and map out a story idea that would convey the theme.
- Working in small groups, give each group of students the same theme statement. Have students create a short skit to act out a scene that conveys the theme. Have groups present their skits, then discuss how the same theme can be conveyed in different ways.

ELL Teaching Tips

- **Key Lesson Language: general** – thumb, dreams, loyal, friend, forgiveness; **academic** – theme, character
- **Flashcard support** – For tasks where students need to produce original responses, provide flashcards with partial answers to support students in engaging in the task. As students write the theme of the passage shared in step 3 of the main Procedure section, allow them to use flashcards with sentence starters to help write their response.
- **Adapted text** – Provide a version of the text for the task with adaptations for lower language levels. For the Independent Practice, ensure that an adapted version of each text is available for students who need extra scaffolding. The adapted version of each text should clearly relay the theme to the reader.

1. Loving others is the most important thing.
2. In the story “Three Little Pigs,” the third pig’s house is strongest because he works the hardest.
3. My friends are always there for me when I need them.
4. Mistakes can teach valuable lessons.
5. *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George is about Sam’s struggle to survive in the Catskill Mountains.

Answer Key

1. Loving others is the most important thing. **yes, theme**
2. In the story “Three Little Pigs,” the third pig’s house is strongest because he works the hardest. **no, possible theme: Hard work always pays off.**
3. My friends are always there for me when I need them. **no, reword to general statement. Possible theme: Friends will always be there when they are needed.**
4. Mistakes can teach valuable lessons. **yes, theme**
5. *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George is about Sam’s struggle to survive in the Catskill Mountains. **no, possible theme: Hard struggles build character.**

People should follow their dreams.

Difficult situations test how loyal a friend is.

Let forgiveness heal past hurts.

Reward is not as great without someone to share it with.

Definition in own words:

Examples

New Word

Non-Examples

Picture (What it looks like):

The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

by Aesop

Passing by a meadow one day, a wolf saw a flock of sheep in the field. "I want to eat one," he snarled hungrily. "How can I get close to them?" Then he had a brilliant idea. He found an old sheepskin and covered himself with it so that he looked just like a sheep.

He walked casually down to the sheep in the field and joined the flock. Sheep are not particularly bright, so they thought he was one of them and were not scared. Not even the shepherd who was watching the sheep noticed the wolf. The wolf decided to wait until nightfall to eat the sheep because he knew the shepherd would go home by then.

At the end of the day, however, a farmer came to buy a sheep for dinner. The farmer looked at all of the sheep and, wanting to choose the biggest one, chose the wolf to be his dinner.

Struggling Learner Activity**Answer Key (Answers will vary.)**Title of Story: The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing **Theme Topic:**

Planning

**Supporting Details for Theme:**

The wolf comes up with a plan to get close to the sheep because he wants to eat one. He dresses up as a sheep and blends in with them. His plan does not succeed, however, because a farmer thinks he is a sheep and takes him home for dinner.

**Theme Statement:**

Things do not always go as planned.

**Application to Real-Life Situations:**

When I was in the fourth grade, my family planned to go to Disney World for the summer. However, my dad lost his job, and we could not afford to go to Disney World anymore. We ended up just going to the local amusement park, but I still had a lot of fun. Then my dad found a better job!

Title of Story: _____

Theme Topic:



Supporting Details for Theme:



Theme Statement:



Application to Real-Life Situations: