

How to Write a Theme Statement

The _____ by _____
(genre) (title) (author)

is about _____ and reveals that _____ .
(topic/abstract concept) (assertion about humanity)

Blanks Key

- **genre:** What kind of writing is it?
- **title:** What is the title?
- **author:** Who is the author?
- **topic/abstract concept:** An abstract noun that describes a general topic of the text.
- **assertion about humanity:** What does this text tell us about the general topic and how it applies to the experiences of humanity?

Helpful Hints

- Avoid the word “you” and its derivatives in the theme statement. It is about how the text reflects humanity, not about the reader.
- Format the title in your theme statement properly. Novels, plays, and films should be underlined (if handwritten) or in italics (if typed). Short stories, poems, essays, and articles should be in quotation marks.
- If you don’t know the author of a text, leave out that section of the theme statement.
- Your topic/abstract concept should focus on one idea. This means it is usually one word. Compound words may work if they refer to a single idea, such as “self-discovery,” “sibling-rivalry,” or “pyrrhic victory.”
- Your assertion about humanity CANNOT be a restatement of the plot or actions in the work you are examining.
- When writing your assertion about humanity, focus on the lesson or message the work shares regarding the topic. So, if your text is about “self-discovery,” what lesson about self-discovery does it portray?

Examples

The film The Lion King by the Disney Company is about responsibility, and reveals that the true mark of maturity is accepting our duties and the consequences for our mistakes.

The novel Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is about tradition, and reveals how custom and ceremony bring a community together.

The play Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare is about fate, and reveals that a person’s choices can lead to consequences that are completely beyond his control.

The novel Life of Pi by Yann Martel is about imagination, and reveals its power to help individuals deal with traumatic events.

The play The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams is about denial, and reveals how dreams and desires can push a person to ignore reality.

The Lord of the Rings film trilogy is about fellowship, and reveals the power of brotherhood and community to overcome terrible trials.

The novel All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque is about isolation, and reveals the alienating effects of warfare on man.

Abstract Concepts for Theme Statements

absence	cruelty	frailty	kindness	peace	service
abundance	curiosity	freedom	knowledge	perseverance	sexism
adoration	death	friendship	law	potential	skill
adventure	deceit	generosity	leadership	poverty	slavery
aggression	deception	goodness	liberty	power	solitude
anarchy	dedication	grace	limitation	pride	sophistication
anger	defeat	greed	loss	privation	sorrow
anxiety	defiance	grief	love	privilege	speculation
apathy	democracy	guidance	loyalty	progress	strength
art	depravity	happiness	luck	racism	stupidity
awe	depression	hate	lust	reality	submission
beauty	deprivation	helplessness	maturity	rebellion	success
belief	despair	holiness	memory	redemption	surprise
bigotry	determination	honesty	mercy	regret	survival
bravery	dictatorship	honor	misconception	religion	sympathy
brutality	disappointment	hope	misery	resilience	talent
chaos	disbelief	humiliation	modesty	resistance	temptation
charisma	discrimination	humility	monarchy	revenge	terror
charity	disgust	humor	morality	righteousness	tolerance
childhood	dreams	hurt	mortality	rivalry	trust
chivalry	education	imitation	motivation	romance	truth
choice	ego	immortality	narcissism	rumor	uncertainty
comfort	envy	improvement	need	sacrifice	victory
communication	equality	indulgence	necessity	sadness	want
communism	evil	industrialization	neglect	sanity	war
compassion	failure	infatuation	obedience	seclusion	wariness
competition	faith	insanity	obsession	security	weakness
confidence	fascination	insecurity	omens	seduction	wealth
consumerism	favoritism	integrity	opinions	segregation	weariness
contentment	fear	intelligence	oppression	self-control	wisdom
courage	feminism	jealousy	pain	selfishness	wit
crime	foolishness	joy	patience	sensitivity	wonder
criticism	forgiveness	justice	patriotism	separation	worry