**The Literary Element of Theme**

**The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ owns the meaning**

Theme is:

* the central idea or insight of a work of literature. In simple terms it’s the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* It’s universal, which means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* the idea, or opinion the writer wishes to convey about the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the novel, play, film, song, etc.
* an **opinion,** not a fact
* sometimes **ambiguous**, which means it’s open to interpretation. As long as a reader can provide \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for their interpretation, it’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* sometimes portrayed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which means that groups or characters represent larger ideas and the relationship between those ideas is an expression of the theme itself

Theme is NOT:

* the subject. It cannot be expressed in a single word
* the conflict

**Identifying the Theme in Five Steps**

To identify the theme, be sure that you’ve first identified the story’s plot, the way the story uses characterization, and the primary conflict in the story.

Use these steps to determine the theme for a work:

**Hints**

* What happens to the main character? If you are able to identify with the character then the theme is probably the lesson they learned.
* If there are characters or symbols representative of bigger ideas or concepts (like mankind), what are their relationships? How are they pitted against one another? Who wins? Why?
* Sometimes they are explicitly stated or hinted at by the title.

1. **Summarize the plot** by writing a one-sentence description for the exposition, the conflict, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution.
2. **Identify the subject of the work**.
3. **Identify the insight or truth** that was learned about the subject.
   * How did the protagonist change?
   * What lesson did the protagonist learn from the resolution

of the conflict?

1. State how the plot presents the primary insight or truth about the subject.
2. Write one or more generalized, declarative sentences that state what was learned and how it was learned.

**Theme Litmus Test**

* Is the theme supported by evidence from the work itself?
* Are all the author’s choices of plot, character, conflict, and tone

controlled by this theme?

Theme analysis for “Blood and Bone” by Will Varley