

Identifying the Theme(s)

Everything you read has at least one theme. A theme is a central idea (or ideas) or meaning of a work. Typically, a theme is an abstract concept, such as love, war, revenge, etc., and is brought to life through the characters, setting, actions, tone, language style, and so on. One of the first keys to understanding a work of literature is to identify its theme(s). Tips to uncover the theme of a literary work includes:

- **Summarizing the entire story in one sentence.**
- **Identifying the subject:** The subject is a topic that acts as the foundation for a work of literature, such as marriage in Nasser's Egypt. The theme is the author's opinion expressed about the subject. For example, the author could be highlighting their dissatisfaction with the narrow confines of Egyptian bourgeois marriage during that period.
- **Identify the insight that was learned about the subject:** Mainly, how does the protagonist change and what does the protagonist learn from the conflict resolution?
- **Identify how the theme is developed:** Is it blatant or subtle?
- **What actions, events or symbols are used to make the theme evident to the reader?**
- **What is the author trying to say about the theme or themes you have noted?**
- **Write one final, declarative sentence that states what was learned and how it was learned.**