# Theme Notes

A theme is an idea or philosophy. It is a viewpoint about life, the human condition that is universal. It applies to all of us – or at least most of us. Society as a whole can relate.

The theme of a book is a universal idea or message that stretches through an entire story. A theme may show up in a pattern (such as reoccurring examples of beauty in simplicity) or a theme may come through as the result of a buildup (tragedy of war). It is often a lesson that we learn about life or people.

The following list contains examples of subjects and motifs that appear in popular literature. If you find that one of the subjects below relates to your book, ask yourself what message the author is sending about that subject. This message is a theme. If you have trouble understanding themes or discerning the theme of a book you are reading, you may find it useful to consider the following ideas. Is the author saying something about the topics below?

 Beauty of simplicity

 Capitalism – effect on the individual

 Change of power - necessity

 Change versus tradition

 Chaos and order

 Character – destruction, building up

 Circle of life

 Coming of age

 Companionship as salvation

 Convention and rebellion

 Dangers of ignorance

 Darkness and light

 Death – inevitable or tragedy

 Desire to escape

 Destruction of beauty

 Disillusionment and dreams

 Displacement

 Empowerment

 Emptiness of attaining false dream

 Everlasting love

 Evils of racism

 Facing darkness

 Facing reality

 Fading beauty

 Faith versus doubt

 Fate and free will

 Fear of failure

 Good versus bad

 Greed as downfall

 Hazards of passing judgment

 Heartbreak of betrayal

 Heroism – real and perceived

 Hierarchy in nature

 Identity crisis

 Illusion of power

 Individual versus society

 Injustice

 Isolation

 Isolationism - hazards

 Knowledge versus ignorance

 Loneliness as destructive force

 Losing hope

 Loss of innocence

 Lost honor

 Lost love

 Love and sacrifice

 Man against nature

 Manipulation

 Materialism as downfall

 Motherhood

 Names – power and significance

 Nationalism – complications

 Nature as beauty

 Oppression of women

 Optimism – power or folly

 Overcoming – fear, weakness, vice

 Power and corruption

 Power of silence

 Power of tradition

 Power of wealth

 Power of words

 Pride and downfall

 Progress – real or illusion

 Quest for discovery

 Quest for power

 Rebirth

 Reunion

 Role of men

 Role of Religion – virtue or hypocrisy

 Role of women

 Self – inner and outer

 Self-awareness

 Self-preservation

 Self-reliance

 Social mobility

 Technology in society – good or bad

 Temporary nature of physical beauty

 Temptation and destruction

 Totalitarianism

 Vanity as downfall

 Vulnerability of the meek

 Vulnerability of the strong

 War – glory, necessity, pain, tragedy

 Will to survive

 Wisdom of experience

 Working class struggles