

Learning to write thoughtful, detailed, specific theme sentences is a key part of studying a literary work, and will serve as the basis for analytical essay answers.

THEMES

WHAT IS A THEME?

The **THEME** of a literary work is the author's **CENTRAL MESSAGE** about a topic or subject; it should be expressed in a sentence, and be a general statement about life, human nature, or the human experience.

Theme **CANNOT BE EXPRESSED IN A SINGLE WORD**: that would be a subject or topic. In *The Great Gatsby*, wealth, status, regrets, the American Dream etc., are all topics. The theme would be the answer to the question: what is Fitzgerald saying about these topics?



How to write a theme statement:

TIPS

- 1 Identify the TOPIC:** This can be in a single word which the literary work deals with: usually something abstract (love, hate, ambition, power, prejudice etc.).
- 2 Decide what IDEA the author is conveying about the topic:** This might take some thinking, discussing, and researching. Essentially this is where your own thoughts and analysis come in.
- 3 Express the theme in a full SENTENCE:** Now you draft your theme sentence by writing out clearly what the essential message is that the author is conveying: this should be a universal point (not tied to the specific characters and events of the text).
- 4 EDIT your theme sentence:** You may need to draft, re-draft, and edit your sentence to make it as detailed, clear, and accurate as possible.

Ask yourself: what are the conflicts faced by the characters? Any inner battles?

First establish is the topic (e.g. prejudice) positive or negative? Then answer the question: why?

To start with, complete this format: "Fitzgerald presents the idea that... (topic)... is... (opinion)...because... (analysis).

Maybe even ask a friend to read it. Read it out loud. Try to get rid of any unnecessary words.

Write theme statements for each of the following topics:

The American Dream:

Society & Class:

Memory & the Past:

Disillusionment:
