

Common Themes

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
- Communication – verbal and nonverbal
- 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
- Family – blessing or curse
- Fate and free will
- Fear of failure
- Female roles
- Fulfillment
- Good versus bad
- Greed as downfall
- Growing up – pain or pleasure
- Hazards of passing judgment