

**Notes on THEME:**

Theme Definition

[Theme](http://literarydevices.net/tag/theme/) is a recurring idea that the author presents throughout the work and is a tool the author uses to represent the author’s opinion about that idea (author’s message). It may be stated directly or indirectly (inference). It most closely resembles a category of thought.

## Major and Minor Themes

Major and minor themes are two types of themes that appear in literary works. A major theme is an idea that a writer repeats in his work, making it the most significant idea in a literary work. A minor theme, on the other hand, refers to an idea that appears in a work briefly and gives way to another minor theme. Examples of theme in Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice” are matrimony, [love](http://literarydevices.net/love/), friendship, and affection. The whole [narrative](http://literarydevices.net/narrative/) revolves around the major theme of matrimony. Its minor themes are love, friendship, affectation etc.

## Presentation of Themes

A writer presents themes in a literary work through several ways. A writer may express a theme through the feelings of his main character about the subject he has chosen to write about. Similarly, themes are presented through thoughts and conversations of different characters. Moreover, the experiences of the main character in the course of a literary work give us an idea about its theme. Finally, the actions and events taking place in a narrative are consequential in determining its theme. It is up to the readers to explore a theme of a literary work by analyzing characters, plot, and other [literary devices](http://literarydevices.net/literary-devices/).

## Theme Examples in Literature

Example #1

Love and friendship are frequently occurring themes in literature. They generate emotional twists and turns in a narrative and can lead to a variety of endings: happy, sad or bittersweet.

The following are famous literary works with love and friendship themes:

[*Romeo and Juliet*](http://literarydevices.net/tag/romeo-and-juliet/) by William [Shakespeare](http://literarydevices.net/tag/shakespeare/)

*Wuthering Heights* by [Emily Bronte](http://literarydevices.net/emily-bronte/)

*Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy

*Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen

*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

Example #2

The theme of war has been explored in literature since ancient times. The literary woks utilizing this theme may either glorify or criticize the idea of war. Most recent literary works portray war as a curse for humanity due to the suffering it inflicts.

Some famous examples are:

[*Iliad*](http://literarydevices.net/tag/iliad/)*and Odyssey* by Homer

*War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy

*Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell

*A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway

*Arms and the Man* by Bernard Shaw

*A Band of Brothers: Stories from Vietnam* by Walter McDonald

Example #3

Crime and mystery are utilized in detective novels. Such narratives also include sub-themes such as “crimes cannot be hidden”, “evil is always punished” etc.

Some well-known crime and mystery theme examples are:

*The Murders in the Rue Morgue* by [Edgar Allan Poe](http://literarydevices.net/edgar-allan-poe/)

*Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle

*Bleak House* by Charles [Dickens](http://literarydevices.net/tag/dickens/)

*Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie

*Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown

Example #4

Revenge is another recurrent theme found in many popular literary works. A character comes across certain circumstances that make him aware of his need for revenge. The outcome of his action is often bitter but sometimes they may end up being satisfied.

Examples are:

[*Hamlet*](http://literarydevices.net/tag/hamlet/) and [*Macbeth*](http://literarydevices.net/tag/macbeth/) by William Shakespeare

*The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas

*The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest* by Stieg Larsson

*A Time to Kill* by John Grisham

## Function of Theme

Theme is an element of a story that binds together various other essential elements of a narrative. It is a truth that exhibits universality and stands true for people of all cultures. Theme gives readers better understanding of the main character’s conflicts, experiences, discoveries and emotions as they are derived from them. Through themes, a writer tries to give his readers an insight into how the world works or how he or she views human life.