

Fourth Grade – Language Arts

Activity: Theme

Directions: Read the short story below. Think about the theme and the author’s message as you read. (Hint: think about what the character learns) Then answer the questions that follow.

The Lion and the Mouse

Once when a Lion was asleep a little Mouse began running up and down upon him; this soon woke up the Lion, who placed his huge paw upon him, and opened his big jaws to swallow him.

"Pardon, O King," cried the little Mouse: "forgive me this time, I won't ever forget it: who knows how I may be able to help you one of these days?"

The Lion was so tickled at the idea of the Mouse being able to help him, that he lifted up his paw and let him go. Some time after the Lion was caught in the rope of a hunting trap.

Just then the little Mouse happened to pass by, and seeing the sad plight in which the Lion was, went up to him and soon gnawed away the ropes that bound the King of the Beasts. "Was I not right?" said the little Mouse.

Little friends may prove great friends.

1. Is the author’s message explicit (the author tells you what you’re supposed to learn) or implicit (you have to figure out the lesson)? _____
2. One of the themes of this story is most likely:
 - a. Fear
 - b. Responsibility
 - c. Anger
 - d. Greed



The Dog and His Bone

A hound dog found a bone and held it tightly in his mouth. He growled at anyone who tried to take it away. Off into the woods he went to bury his prize.

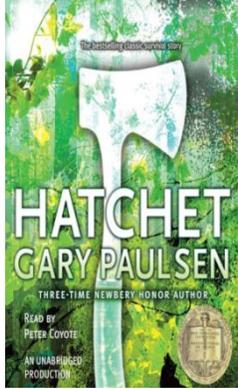
When he came to a stream, he trotted over the bridge and happened to glance into the water. He saw his own reflection. Thinking it was another dog with a bigger bone, he growled at it. The reflection growled back.

"I'll get THAT bone too," thought the greedy dog, and he snapped his sharp teeth at the image in the water.

Alas, his own big bone fell with a splash, out of sight, the moment he opened his mouth to bite!

1. Is the author's message explicit (the author tells you what you're supposed to learn) or implicit (you have to figure out the lesson)? _____
2. One of the themes of this story is most likely:
 - a. Fear
 - b. Responsibility
 - c. Anger
 - d. Greed
3. The author's message is:

Directions: Look at the book covers and read the descriptions below. Choose the best answer for the questions that follow. Explain why you chose your answer in complete sentences.

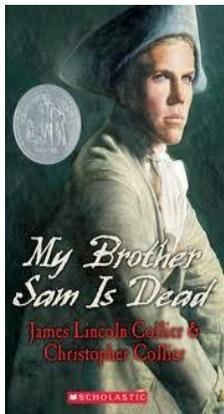


The book *Hatchet* is the story of a boy named Brian who is on the way to visit his father when the pilot of the small plane he is in has a heart attack. Brian lives through the crash, but he now has to survive in the woods of Canada all alone until he is rescued. How will he do it?

1. Which of the following is most likely a theme of the book *Hatchet*?

- a. Differences
- b. Friendship
- c. Loneliness
- d. Be Yourself

Explain why you chose the answer you did in a complete sentence.



All his life, Tim Meeker has looked up to his brother Sam. Sam's smart and brave -- and is now a part of the American Revolution. Not everyone in town wants to be a part of the rebellion. Most are supporters of the British -- including Tim and Sam's father. With the war soon raging, Tim know he'll have to make a choice -- between the Revolutionaries and the Redcoats . . . and between his brother and his father.

2. Which of the following is most likely a theme of the book *My Brother Sam is Dead*?

- a. Choices
- b. Friendship
- c. Rights
- d. Time

Explain why you chose the answer you did in a complete sentence.

What else could be a theme of My Brother Sam is Dead? State the theme in a complete sentence.

Directions: Read the short story below. Then answer the questions that follow.



1. One of the themes of this story is most likely:
- a. Truth
 - b. Responsibility
 - c. Hatred
 - d. Family

The Ant and the Grasshopper

In a field one summer's day a Grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart's content. An Ant passed by, working hard to move an ear of corn he was taking to the nest.

"Why not come and chat with me," said the Grasshopper, "instead of toiling away and working so hard?"

"I am helping to store food for the winter," said the Ant, "and I recommend you to do the same."

"Why worry about winter?" said the Grasshopper. "We have got plenty of food right now." But the Ant went on its way and continued its hard work. When the winter came the Grasshopper had no food and found itself dying of hunger, while it saw the ants handing out corn and grain from the stores they had collected in the summer. Then the Grasshopper knew how foolish he had been.

What do you think the author's message is in this story? Write it in a complete sentence.

1. The theme of the story is:
 - a. A summary of the story
 - b. What the story is mainly trying to teach you about
 - c. The main events in the story
 - d. The title of the story

2. Readers figure out the theme or author's message of a story by:
 - a. Thinking about what the characters learned
 - b. Figuring out each of the elements of fiction
 - c. Reading the story over and over
 - d. Using reading strategies like predictions and connections.

A Little League Monday Night

Steve Cutchen

We've looked awful for two games.
Not Rangers baseball...
Heartbroken season.

And it's the White Sox tonight.
They're undefeated. Braggarts.
Confident with reason.

Are we equals? Can we be?
We're younger, smaller.
But defense, we're the best! Or we were...

Outfield speed. Solid gloves.
Leather flashes on the infield
Inhaling the grounder.

That's Gusball. Pitch for ground balls.
The White Sox? Power pitching.
It's our nine against one.

With their hurlers, who can blame them?
Fielders become fans.
And they've won.

Mighty KC leads off. Early rally.
Rangers Three! TJ pitching. "STRIKE!"
He's never looked better.

After two, three to one. Anticipation.
But go quietly? They won't.
Steady Rangers... In comes Decker.

Decker. Intimidation.
Rocket fastball.
Knee-buckling change.

We get one! Four to one!
Top of six.
Their last at-bat remains.

With two on, two outs and two strikes on the batter
A smash to the outfield,
two runs, four to three!

An error! Tie game!
advantage White Sox,

Who is speaking? Is he or she confident about their Little League team (the Rangers)? Who are they playing tonight? What is special about the speaker's team?

Rangers angry.

Frustrated, Infuriated. One strike away.
Can they recover? Play smart?
Will they crack when pressed?

Gathering wits, determination.
"Get to Decker! No excuses!
We want their best!"

TJ's cooked, but Clay's strong
With Gus ball grounders
White Sox done, first extra inning

Michael walks, A pick-off missed!
FAST! On to second!
Could this be our beginning?

The throw to second's wild! To third!
One out! They've got to go home!
Tag on a fly, like the wind on the ground!

David comes to the plate
Is the squeeze play on?
Tension! Will he get the bunt down?

White Sox? No close games.
Never been here.
They've never battled.

They are used to winning
Especially with Decker
And now they're rattled.

The pitch gets by!
Far enough to send Michael? He goes!
Catcher, Pitcher chase the ball.

It's close, Umpire lurking,
Four bodies converge, scramble, slide
From out of the dust, "SAFE" is the call!

That's it! The games over!
Undeclared no more
Decker, modern Casey, feels defeat's flame

And the Rangers, victorious.
Heros to family and friends!
Little League baseball, life's lessons, life's game.

What is happening in the game now? How are the White Sox feeling? How are the Rangers feeling?

Who won the game? What does the win teach us? THIS IS THE THEME. Is only the big, undefeated team capable of winning?

Think of your favorite song. What is the theme of the song? What is it trying to teach you?

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