Sixth Grade – Language Arts
Activity: Identifying Themes

Students will do a quick introduction activity about themes and then read a biography about Roberto Clemente.

Theme – What is it?

Theme is a tremendously important part of understanding the world around us. Without figuring out the theme (or the moral or lesson), there is no purpose to reading. Every story has a theme. The theme is the important message the author wants to teach readers.

A theme is a __________________ message or truth about life.
A theme is a ______________________________________ that the character(s) and/or reader learn.

Theme is the __________________________ message expressed in a story.
  • A ________________ theme is expressed directly by the author.
  • An ________________ theme is suggested, or state indirectly through what happens to the characters.
  • A ________________ theme, or a recurring theme, is a message about life that expressed regularly in many different cultures and time periods.

The theme is a ________________, it is NOT a word!

Here are some common themes found in literature:

• Good is stronger than evil.
• Nature is more powerful than humans.
• Treat others the way you want to be treated.
• Honesty is always the best policy.

How do you find a theme?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Vocabulary

This will be used later.

1. Scout (verb or noun): To spy on or explore carefully in order to obtain information.
2. Pennant (noun): A flag denoting a sports championship or other achievement.
3. Rickety (adjective): Poorly made and likely to collapse.
4. Humanitarian (noun): Concerned with or likely to promote human welfare (the well-being of humans).

Read the Roberto Clemente biography, and then answer the questions after.

Roberto Clemente Biography

Birth: Roberto Walker Clemente was born in Barrio San Anton in Carolina, Puerto Rico on August 18, 1934.

Best Known For: Roberto Clemente is remembered today as one of the game's best all-round right fielders, with one of the best arms in baseball. Often referred to as "The Great One," Clemente was the first Latin American player elected to the baseball Hall of Fame.

Early Life: Roberto Clemente was the youngest of the seven children of Melchor and Luisa Clemente. His father was a foreman on a sugarcane plantation, and his mother ran a grocery store for plantation workers. His family was poor, and Clemente worked hard as a youngster, delivering milk and taking other odd jobs to earn extra money for the family. There was still time, however, for his first love - baseball - which he played on the sandlots of his home town in Puerto Rico until he was eighteen years old.

In 1952, Roberto Clemente was spotted by a scout from the professional hardball team in the Puerto Rican town of Santurce and offered a contract. He signed with the club for forty dollars per month, plus a five hundred dollar bonus. It wasn't long before Clemente caught the attention of the major league scouts and, in 1954, he signed up with the Los Angeles Dodgers who sent him to their minor league team in Montreal.

Professional Career: In 1955, Roberto Clemente was drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates and started as their right fielder. It took a few years for him to learn the ropes in the major leagues, but by 1960 Clemente was a dominant player in professional baseball, helping lead the Pirates to win both the National League pennant and the World Series.

Family Life: On November 14, 1964, Roberto Clemente married Vera Cristina Zabala in Carolina, Puerto Rico. They had three sons: Roberto Jr., Luis Roberto and Roberto Enrique, each born in Puerto Rico to honor their father's heritage. The boys were just six, five and two, respectively, when Roberto Clemente met his untimely death in 1972.
Statistics & Honors: Roberto Clemente’s had an impressive lifetime batting average of .317, and is one of only a few players to have collected 3,000 hits. He was a powerhouse from the outfield too, throwing out players from over 400 feet. His personal records included four National League batting championships, twelve Gold Glove awards, the National League MVP in 1966, and the World Series MVP in 1971, where he batted .414.

Roberto Clemente - No. 21: Shortly after Clemente joined the Pirates, he chose No. 21 for his uniform. Twenty-one was the total number of letters in the name—Roberto Clemente Walker. The Pirates retired his number at the start of the 1973 season, and the right field wall at the Pirates' PNC Park is 21 feet high in honor of Clemente.

A Tragic Ending: Tragically, Roberto Clemente's life ended on December 31, 1972 in a plane crash while en route to Nicaragua with relief supplies for earthquake victims. Always the humanitarian, Clemente was on the plane to make sure the clothing, food and medical supplies weren't stolen, as had happened with previous flights. The rickety plane went down off the coast of San Juan shortly after takeoff, and Roberto's body was never found.

For his “outstanding athletic, civic, charitable, and humanitarian contributions,” Roberto Clemente was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by the United States Congress in 1973.

Questions

Although this biography is clearly a chronology (it is done in order of time; it is a timeline), it also possesses a theme. What do you believe the theme of this biography is?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Underline the four vocabulary words that were given to you earlier.

Underline at least TWO lines that you think express the theme of the biography. What should the reader learn about Roberto Clemente by reading his biography?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Answer Key

1. Essential
2. Lesson or moral
3. Central
4. Stated
5. Implied
6. Repeating
7. Sentence
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