

## Theme Worksheet – *To Kill a Mockingbird*

A thematic idea is an idea about the world that a piece of writing, song, or movie brings to mind. A theme statement is a complete sentence about that idea which connects to both that creative piece, and life in general.

### General Format Rules for Theme Statements

#### A theme statement:

1. is a complete sentence.
2. is stated positively.
3. is connected to the major events of the novel.
4. is connected to the world.
5. is not too general, vague, or clichéd.
6. is not written as an order.

#### Examples:

##### Connected to “Gore”

- Creativity used with intelligence and great acting ability can triumph over brute strength.

##### Connected to “The Blue Bead”

- Physical danger is so commonplace in some people’s life that they ignore it and instead focus on the small treasures or rewards they find.

#### Non-Examples: Connected to *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Loss of innocence
- Children can’t stay innocent forever.
- Mad dogs should be shot.
- Tom Robinson is a good man.
- Children lose their innocence.
- Don’t judge a book by its cover.

### How to create theme statements

- A. List some of the major events of the novel. You could summarize the work with one sentence each for the following: exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.
- B. Identify the main subjects of the work.
- C. Figure out what you think the author is trying to tell the reader about those events. What is the insight or truth that is learned about the subject? Here are a sampling of questions you could ask:
  - a. Are the protagonists happy about the events? Why/why not?
  - b. Are kind people being punished?
  - c. Do you think these kinds of things happen/have happened in the world?
  - d. What do you think about them?
  - e. What lesson did the protagonist learn from the resolution of the conflict?
- D. Write some statements which comment on these ideas. You will usually need to rewrite your theme statements **AT LEAST TWICE** to have a theme which captures the complexity of the work **AND** adheres to the guidelines for good themes.

**Check** that your theme statements follow the format guidelines listed above. Here are some suggestions:

- a. A good theme statement will make a person reading it think, “Ah, that is so true.” about life in general.
- b. If a reader/listener is tempted to say, “That sounds like a good story”, you probably explained the plot instead of a theme.
- c. Can you explain your theme using evidence from the work? Does your theme connect to the major ideas of the work?

**Your Practice:**

- A. List some of the major events of the novel.
  - a. Exposition -
  - b. Conflict -
  - c. Rising action -
  - d. Climax -
  - e. Falling action -
  - f. Resolution -
  
- B. Identify the main subjects of the work.
  - a. -
  - b. -
  - c. -
  - d. -
  - e. -
  - f. -
  
- C. Figure out what you think the author is trying to tell the reader about those events. What is the insight or truth that is learned about the subject?
  - a. Are the protagonists happy about the events? Why/why not?
  - b. Are kind people being punished?
  - c. Do you think these kinds of things happen/have happened in the world?
  - d. What do you think about them?
  - e. What lesson did the protagonist learn from the resolution of the conflict?
  - f. Other thoughts
  
- D. Write some statements which comment on these ideas.
  - a. Remember to Revise!

**Check** your theme statements