

Prose

Lecture 7

Themes

The importance of themes; The titles of books; How authors show their interests; Common themes; The function of symbols; Important words; Moral words; The construction of plots; Important speeches; Important events; The treatment of ordinary events; Writing about themes

By

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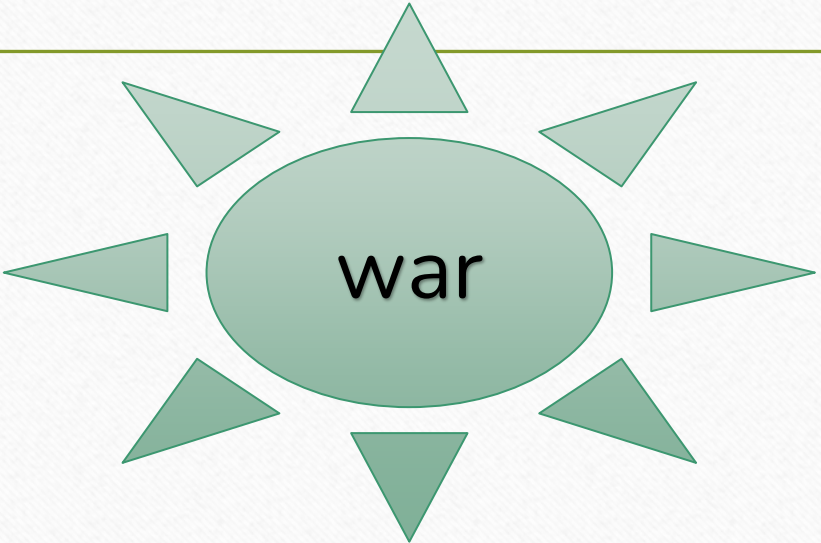
Contents

- The importance of themes;
- The titles of books;
- How authors show their interests;
- Common themes;
- The function of symbols;
- Important words;
- Moral words;
- The construction of plots;
- Important speeches;
- Important events;
- The treatment of ordinary events;
- Writing about themes

Have you ever watched a film
and wondered what the point of
the film was or why it made such
an impression on you?

Patriotic

Heroism



Glory of
war

Destruction

What do you think?

- The battle between good and evil;
 - Justice
 - Betrayal
 - life and death struggles
 - Friendship
 - Family,
 - Community
- Love,
 - Power,
 - Fear,
 - Courage,
 - Happiness,
 - Success,
 - Trust,
 - Freedom and war

Why do we need a theme?

- Why do you come to cinema?
- Is that important?
- What is the function?

How important?

A theme is the central idea that drives a story. It serves as the foundation for an author to develop their fictional work.

(Aminuddin, 2002, p. 91)

Ideas or Themes?

- **Idea** refers to the general and abstract thinking. It is about *concept, thought, opinion, and principle* (Roberts, E. V., & Zweig, R., 2012, p. 371).

Theme seems to be the major idea. It is also called the central or dominant idea (Kirszner, L. G., & Mandell, S. R., 2007, p. 314).

The HOW & WHAT

A story must be about something; it has a **point—a theme** (Sylvan, B., Morton, B., & William, B., 2008, p 103)

It's about **WHAT**
too!

It's not only about
HOW!

Questions!

- What is this book about?
- What is this movie about?

I have read the book!

Will you retell the
story?

Answer!

The author's interest in?

The author's vision

The concerns of author

The author's views

Finally, consider this!

What is significant about the things that go on in the book?

The importance of themes

Authors carry us to see that books add up to something, or say something, or show us something about human life (Gill, R, 1995, p 188). What happens in a story is the plot, while what the happenings **add up** to is the theme (Sylvan, B., Morton, B., & William, B., 2008, p 103).

How themes develop

- Through the development of characters,
- Dialogue,
- Settings, and
- The movement of the plot.

(Gill, R, 1995, p 189)

The importance of themes

- Note that in understanding the structure of a novel, we need to realize that themes are interconnected with other aspects of the novel, such as characters, plot, and setting. These things are tailored into the fabric of the story, contributing to its overall meaning and impact. Thus, we need to recognize the interrelationship of themes to gain a deeper understanding of the author's intentions and the message he wants to convey.

What's next?

The variety of ways in which the themes
emerge

What's next?

Theme is a technique to consider a story's meaning in addition to what is only shown on screen. These are the things that stay with us and make a movie or book more relatable to us as viewers. Without a theme, neither the plot nor the actions of the characters would have a direction to follow.

What's next?

They must be recognized by the reader, who must also observe how the author has arranged certain components in the text to give rise to them.

The range of ways that a book's ideas manifest themselves.

1. The titles of books
2. How authors show their interests
3. Common themes
4. The function of symbols;
5. Important words;
6. Moral words;
7. The construction of plots;
8. Important speeches;
9. Important events;
10. The treatment of ordinary events

The Title

- Why this name?
- Why this topic?



Is there any important insight
provided by the name or topic

Now think of these titles!

- *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* by George Eliot



Names, places, and objects **symbolic significance.**

- Many symbols are used to depict the central themes, such as walking sticks, forests, sunsets and nights, and faint shadows. It can be interpreted as someone who deviates from the path of faith, the result is that evil is everywhere.

(Kirszner, L. G., & Mandell, S. R., 2007, p. 316-318)

Names, places, and objects **symbolic significance.**

- Usually symbols that mark a theme are used repeatedly, or used at important moments.

Example:

In *Bleak House*, as a symbol at a crucial moment. Similarly, *Mansfield Park* presents another symbolic moment when Fanny Price must choose between two necklaces. One is given by her brother William, whom she loves, and the other by Mary Crawford, which Edmund believes she should choose for politeness. However, when Fanny tries to thread Mary's necklace through the cross, it doesn't fit. This simple act carries symbolic significance, indicating that Fanny is not suited for the Crawford's lifestyle. She ultimately chooses the necklace from Edmund, symbolizing a better fit for her world.

(Gill, R, 1995, p 192-193)

Note

Selecting a name or title signifies that the complete lifestyle it embodies is one of its primary concerns.

The Authors' interests

- There are some ways authors display their interest:
 - Provide such a detail writing about a particular aspects in the story (e.g. Characters' development/ changes in a character) (Kirszner, L. G., & Mandell, S. R., 2007, p. 316-318)
 - Provide space to some things (the portrayal of a character's traits, emotions, and motivations).

(Gill, R, 1995, p 190-191)

Narrator's or character's statement

- The narrator or story character often hints at the theme without stating it explicitly, usually conveyed throughout the story.

(Kirszner, L. G., & Mandell, S. R., 2007, p. 316-318)

The arrangement of events

- The way the events in the story are presented, through foreshadowing and flashbacks, reveals relationships between one event and another, and these relationships in turn help reveal possible themes.

(Kirszner, L. G., & Mandell, S. R., 2007, p. 316-318)

The construction of plots

- The way a novel is written can provide insights into its appropriateness to the theme. The chosen construction, plot, and order of the novel serve as expressions of its themes.

(Gill, R, 1995, p 195-196)

A story's conflict

- Idealism, the world or society, husband or family, and conflicts with other characters can be clues to its theme.

(Kirszner, L. G., & Mandell, S. R., 2007, p. 316-318)

The point of view of a story

- The point of view of first person, third person
- A first-person narrator talk about his crime and attempts to justify these actions.
- A third-person narrator's voice can also help convey the theme of the story explicitly by describing the situations.

(Kirszner, L. G., & Mandell, S. R., 2007, p. 316-318)

Common themes

- Love, growing up, war, or conflict.
- Think of how the author organize the events
- Any particular viewpoint?

(Gill, R, 1995, p 109-191)

Important words

- Authors can give expression to the themes of novels by stressing certain words. ESPECIALLY in the climax.

- In *Hard Times*.

'Bitzer,' said Mr Gradgrind, broken down, and miserably submissive to him, 'have you a heart?' 'The circulation, Sir,' returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, 'couldn't be carried on without it.'

→ → →

- What HEART here means?
- Could be about . . . ?
- Think it literally and contextually.

(Gill, R, 1995, p 194)

Moral words

- The words we use can carry judgments and convey moral values. Authors often use moral words in the dialogue of their characters to invite us to make judgments about them. This technique helps to develop the depth and complexity of the characters in a story. In *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen

The horror of a mind like Fanny's, as it received the conviction of such guilt, and began to take in some part of the misery that must ensue, can hardly be described. At first, it was a sort of stupefaction; but every moment was quickening her perception of the horrible evil.

(Gill, R, 1995, p 194-195)

Important speeches

- Characters' dialogue is a valuable tool for understanding the themes of a novel. While some characters may speak more than others, it is important to pay attention to the significance of their speeches. This does not mean disregarding other characters' dialogue, but rather identifying the speeches that are particularly relevant.

Important events

Focus on:

- What happens
- What is said

Do you find the important events in the climax?

The treatment of ordinary events

- Even in activities that seem ordinary, the theme of a book can be present. Readers often appreciate the way writers express the deep meaning that can be found in everyday actions.

About themes

- Finally, the theme is not considered equivalent or a substitute for the whole story.

Let's wrap them up!

- Is the titles of the novels appropriate with what you are studying?
- Are what authors concentrate on and what they leave out showing what the central interests of their novels are?
- Are there any symbols that express the theme of the book?
- Why the novelists you are studying have written the books in that way?
- Do the central speeches and events of the novels you are studying, bring out how they express their themes?
- Finally, relate the themes of the novels you studying and work out in writing your reactions to what the novelists are saying.

Let's conclude

- What have we learnt?
- Why do we need this?

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Thank you

See you in the next meeting!