

Kate Michaud
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Lesson Title: Identifying Theme Using Supporting Evidence

Author: Kate Michaud

Grade: 5th

Learning Objective:

I can identify the theme topic and theme statement of a story using supporting evidence.

Unit ELT:

Understands how a character's thoughts, words, and actions impact the other characters, the plot, and the theme of the text.

Curriculum Connection:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

This lesson builds on the last literacy lesson, in which I explained the concept of theme, showed a Pixar short to the class, and we brainstormed theme topics, statements, and evidence as a group.

Assessment:

Written Response — Formative: Students will be assessed based on the independent work they do after their book group meets. This independent work involves picking one theme from their book and finding and writing about 2-3 pieces of specific evidence from the book that support the theme. I will know that students have achieved the learning target if they provide at least two pieces of evidence that directly support their chosen theme. [Here](#) is the actual assessment.

Knowledge of Students:

All of our students are relatively strong readers, particularly in their fluency and comprehension, which will help in this lesson. For this lesson, students need to be familiar with the concept of a moral or lesson, which I believe all of our students are.

They need to be able to attend for the length of a read aloud and mini-lesson. This may be difficult for a few students, so I will keep the timing tight and lesson engaging. They also need to be familiar with their group's book (Hatchet or Fear Place) and its main topics, which all students should be. A few of our students are slow with processing; I will try to relieve this barrier by asking purposeful questions that will help lead their thinking. I'll also reiterate more complex concepts (like theme statements) in a variety of ways, with the aim of reaching every student.

Strategies to engage learners:

- Read aloud
- Group brainstorm
- Small group work
- Poster creation/graphic organizer
- Wait time
- Calling on students at random and on raised hands

Lesson Procedure: 11:25-12:20

- **11:25** Whole class on rug
- Slide 3 of presentation: Read and explain learning target
- Remind concept of theme
 - Theme Topic: what the story is about
 - Theme Statement: the lesson or moral of the story (they are universal)
- Have students think about theme as I read
- **11:30** Read picture book (A Chair for My Mother) aloud [hook/activator]
- **11:35** Whole group: brainstorm & list topics (Family, Community)
 - Give wait time, call on both raised hands and students at random
- **11:40** Whole group: brainstorm & list related theme statements (Families work together to support each other; Communities take care of each other in times of need)
 - Give wait time, call on both raised hands and students at random
 - If struggle, ask questions:
 - Who are the main characters of this story?
 - How do they treat each other?
 - How does this book make you feel?
 - What does this book make you want to do?
- **11:48** Read book again, for evidence
- **11:53** Brainstorm & list evidence
- **11:59** Reiterate concept of theme
 - Theme Topic: what the story is about

- Theme Statement: the lesson or moral of the story
- **12:00** Send Hatchet to work and then meet; send Fear Place to meet
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Meet with The Fear Place book group

- **12:00** *on a big piece of paper*: Brainstorm The Fear Place topics & theme statements
 - If struggle, ask questions:
 - What relationships are important in this book?
 - Look at Doug's traits. Do any of them show up often?
- **12:05** As a group, create poster on theme of group's choice (option: "family/family members take care of each other")
 - Brainstorm evidence of thoughts/words/actions that support theme, especially from recently read chapters
- **12:10** Reiterate concept of theme
 - Theme Topic: what the story is about
 - Theme Statement: the lesson or moral of the story
- **12:11** Independent post-group work: Have each student pick 1 theme & find 2-3 pieces of evidence independently. They will write these down and turn in the paper as an assessment

Resources Needed:

- Slides:
 - https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1GUHGG2VclC4thp05OMBaDKE93ljKmYnb_w5PgGccCxg/edit?usp=sharing
- A Chair for My Mother
- The Fear Place
- Promethean board & Mrs. Cloutier's daily slideshow (including my slide)
- Poster paper
- Markers
- Paper for assessments

Other adults in the room:

- Anna Cloutier - helping with classroom management, adding ideas as she sees fit, working with Hatchet group the same way I will work with Fear Place

Lesson Reflections:

The lesson went well, as evidenced by students' participation during the lesson and during book group discussions about theme. Students' success in correctly

completing the formative assessment also shows that the lesson was effective in communicating what theme is and how to search for theme and evidence of theme in a text. Students seemed engaged and interested in the topic, which I think was due in part to the way I delivered the lesson. Every student contributed at least one idea during the brainstorms, and they generated even more thoughts than I had expected. They also came up with a stronger theme than I had planned, so I switched my plan in the moment and used their idea rather than mine.

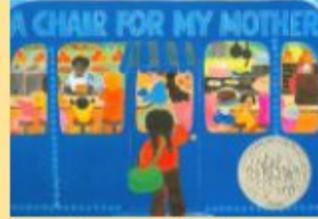
At the last minute and with the help of my mentor, I decided to only read the picture book once. I think that this was a good decision; reading it twice may have lost some students' attention, and they were able to recall and process enough from just one reading of the book.

I felt (and my supervisor noticed) that I was speaking too quickly at the beginning of the lesson, when reminding them about the concept of theme. (After that part, I noticed my speed and slowed down for the remainder of the lesson, which was good.) If I could teach this lesson again, I would slow that part down, especially since I was introducing the main point of the lesson. I would also provide my book group with a poster-sized list of our brainstormed themes as soon as our group meeting was over, so that they could use it to pick a theme to use in the assessment.

In teaching this lesson, I was surprised to learn that my students are just as interested — almost captivated — by read alouds of picture books as much younger students are. They are more capable than I had thought of taking tasks like the read aloud and brainstorm seriously. I also learned that my students gravitate more toward generating theme *statements* than theme *topics*; I think this is because they are very familiar with the concept of a moral or lesson, so theme statements make sense and come easily to them.

I learned that I tend to underestimate older elementary students, particularly their attention span and interest-level in more childlike activities. Additionally, I learned that I am capable of revising my plan in the moment and fluidly based on how students are responding to a lesson or activity (brainstorming themes).

Theme



Learning Target: I can identify the theme topic and theme statement of a story using supporting evidence.

Theme Topic:

what the story
is about

Theme Statement:

the lesson or moral of
the story

Evidence from
the story
supports the
Theme Statement