

Finding Theme

Begin with this sentence frame:

_____ is a story about _____ .

Put the title of the story/novel/play/poem in the first blank space.

The Scarlet Letter is a story about _____ .

In the second blank space, put a single word that says what the story is really about.

--no plot summary, which would look like this:

The Scarlet Letter is a story about a woman who has a baby out of wedlock.

--Instead, use a word such as *hypocrisy*:

The Scarlet Letter is a story about hypocrisy.

Now, rewrite the sentence and fill in the second blank as many times as you have words to put in there. A list of possible words for the sentence we've been using might look like this:

The Scarlet Letter is a story about

--hypocrisy

--sin

--redemption

--revenge

--penance

--love

--jealousy

These words each reflect a theme of this book.

Now make phrases out of the words you've listed for the second blank, such as:

--the desire for revenge

--the scourge of jealousy

Consider what the piece of literature says about these words/phrases. For example:

Animal Farm by George Orwell is about the abuse of power.

What does the book say about the abuse of power? Once you can answer that question, you have discovered a theme of the piece.

Use your words/phrases to write a thesis statement which reflects your answer to the "about" question.