A Visual Exploration of Theme
Picture the Theme

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Grade Level	8th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-4 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	120 minutes

Essential Question

How do literary elements contribute to the theme of a text?

Summary

In this lesson, students will critically examine how literary elements contribute to the theme of a text. Students will explore universal theme sets by examining pictures and engaging in the Four Corners strategy. Students will then identify a universal theme within a text by using the Why-Lighting strategy to analyze its setting, imagery, diction, and characterization. Finally, students will create a multi-genre representation of text's theme before engaging in a Gallery Walk to view other students' creations. This lesson can be used as a companion to the lesson "Growing Themes."

Snapshot

Engage

Students will analyze a variety of pictures to identify theme.

Explore

Students will collaboratively reflect on theme using the Four Corners strategy.

Explain

Students will use Why-Lighting and a graphic organizer to annotate and document literary elements within a text.

Extend

Students will apply their knowledge of literary elements and theme by creating a multi-genre visual project.

Evaluate

Students will engage in the Gallery Walk/Carousel strategy to reflect on various visual representations of theme.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.7.W: Create engaging multimodal content (i.e., alphabetic, aural, visual, gestural and/or spatial) that intentionally addresses an audience and accomplishes a purpose.

Attachments

- [Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme.docx](#)
- [Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme.pdf](#)
- [The Outsiders Passages—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.docx](#)
- [The Outsiders Passages—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [The Outsiders Passages—A Visual Exploration of Theme.docx](#)
- [The Outsiders Passages—A Visual Exploration of Theme.pdf](#)
- [Theme Flower—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Theme Flower—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Theme Flower—A Visual Exploration of Theme.docx](#)
- [Theme Flower—A Visual Exploration of Theme.pdf](#)
- [Theme Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Theme Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Theme Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme.docx](#)
- [Theme Graphic Organizer—A Visual Exploration of Theme.pdf](#)
- [Theme Room Labels—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Theme Room Labels—A Visual Exploration of Theme - Spanish.pdf](#)
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Materials

- Theme Flower handout (attached)
- Theme Room Labels (attached)
- *The Outsiders* Passages (attached)
- Theme Graphic Organizer (attached)
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer (attached)
- Highlighters: pink, yellow, blue, green
- Writing utensils
- Art materials including but not limited to plain copy paper in various sizes, magazines, newspapers, markers, colored pencils, scissors, and glue.

Engage

1. Open or download the ["Theme Pictures" Google Slideshow](#) and the "Theme Flower" document from the attachments. Each student needs a copy of the "Theme Flower."
2. Explain to students that they will be shown six individual pictures and that they will be identifying a universal theme set for each one of the pictures. The center of the "Theme Flower" has four universal theme sets to choose from: courage/fear, acceptance/isolation, love/hate, and loyalty/betrayal.
3. Show the first picture. Give students 15-30 seconds to formulate an opinion as to which universal theme set is depicted and to write that universal theme set on the petal labeled "Picture 1."
4. Repeat this process for the other five pictures, making sure that students write the universal themes in the corresponding petals.

Teacher Note

Emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Some students might need a physical copy of the pictures.

Adaptations And Modifications

Students who have difficultly writing quickly or in small spaces might need the "Theme Flower - Modified" document so that they can circle rather than write the universal theme set for each picture. For an extra challenge, have students identify one universal theme depicted by each picture rather than a universal theme set (i.e., love rather than love/hate).

Explore

Students will compare their universal theme set identifications with their classmates' using the [Four Corners](#) strategy.

1. Print the "Theme Room Labels" from the attachments.
2. Affix one theme set to each side of the room.
3. Explain to students that you will be showing each of the pictures from the previous activity again. When each picture is shown, they will move to the side of the room labeled with the same theme set as the one they have written on their "Theme Flower" paper.
4. Show the first picture and have students move to the correct location in the room.
5. Once students have moved, they should discuss within their group which details in the picture helped them decide on the theme set.
6. Finally, each group should share these details with the class.
7. Repeat this process for the other five pictures.

Teacher Note

Reiterate that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers and that because they only saw the pictures briefly, some students might have focused on details that others did not.

(Possible) Discussion Points

Picture 1: Students could identify courage as a possible theme because the men serving in the military are brave, or fear because the children staying behind are fearful of the war and their fathers' absences. Additionally, students could identify love as a possible theme, as the boy loves his father and wants to be with him. **Picture 2:** Students could identify hate as a possible theme as Jack Ruby displayed hate when shooting Lee Harvey Oswald. Or, perhaps, they could identify loyalty as a possible theme because Ruby displayed loyalty to Kennedy by shooting his assassin. **Picture 3:** Students could identify courage because Dr. King displayed courage during the Civil Rights Movement. Additionally, students could identify acceptance or isolation as possible themes, as the Civil Rights Movement pushed for less isolation and more acceptance. **Picture 4:** Students could identify courage because Armstrong and other astronauts must have had courage to be the first to go to and land on the moon. Students might also say that fear is a possible theme because fear that the Russians would beat the United States to the moon resulted in Armstrong walking on the moon. **Picture 5:** Students could identify loyalty as a possible theme because the characters display loyalty to each other and their mutual cause. They could also say that courage is a possible theme because the characters must be brave to fight against the enemies. **Picture 6:** Students could identify love as a possible theme because of the relationships between the three characters. They could choose courage as a possible theme because the Jedi fight against the dark side.

Explain

Provide each student with a copy of the "Theme Graphic Organizer" from the attachments and a copy of a passage from a familiar text. Passages from *The Outsiders* have been provided in the attachments and the full text is available here, but passages from other texts can be used instead if desired.

> **Teacher Note**
>
> Passages from familiar and/or recently read short stories or novels could be used in place of the provided passages from The Outsiders. Passages should be limited to 1-2 pages and have ample explicit or inferential examples of setting, imagery, diction, and characterization.

Explain to students that they will be looking for examples of setting, imagery, diction, and characterization within the passage, which help establish a theme of the text.

> **Teacher Note**
>
> Reviewing each of the literary elements prior to completing the activity is helpful. Students should be able to define setting, imagery, diction, and (indirect) characterization, and they should be able to provide examples of each. For additional instruction or review of these literary elements, you can complete the Growing Theme lesson prior to this lesson or use one of the following lessons available on the K20 Learn website: Literary Elements/Narrative Writing; I Theme, You Theme, We All Theme for Ice Cream; Making Meaning through Figurative Language and Poetic Devices; Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge; OPTIC: A Reading Strategy Recipe; and To Inferencing and Beyond. Allowing and encouraging students to consult an anchor chart, entries in an interactive or writer's notebook, or other reference items with the literary terms, their definitions, and examples can be helpful as well.

Using the Why-Lighting strategy, have students annotate the text for the four literary elements.

Students read through the text and highlight descriptive examples of each of the literary elements.

- Pink: Setting
- Yellow: Imagery
- Blue: Diction
- Green: Characterization

> **Teacher Note**
>
> It is helpful to model the activity before students begin working independently so that they understand expectations and so that they choose descriptive rather than generic examples. For example, "I was sweating something fierce, although I was cold" (Hinton, 1967, p. 5) is clearly more descriptive than "I got pretty scared..." (Hinton, 1967, p. 5), although both demonstrate the universal theme of fear. The first sentence would be highlighted yellow because it is an example of imagery.

After students have finished annotating the passage, they should review each of their highlighted elements, identify which theme is demonstrated, and write each example within the appropriate theme set compartment on the "Theme Graphic Organizer."

Teacher Note

Using the example from above, students would write, "I was sweating something fierce, although I was cold" in the "Courage/Fear" compartment.

Finally, have students identify the theme set compartment with the most entries and examine the entries to determine the overall theme. For example, if the "Courage/Fear" compartment had the most entries, students would read the entries to determine if they were more reflective of a theme of "Courage" or a theme of "Fear."

Teacher Note

If students have two theme sets with a comparable amount of examples, they could choose which theme set they would like to focus on.

Extend

Provide students with access to various art materials, including but not limited to plain copy paper in various sizes, magazines, newspapers, markers, colored pencils, scissors, and glue.

Explain to students that they will be constructing a multi-genre visual project that illustrates the theme of their passage and incorporates the literary examples from their graphic organizer. The visuals can be literal depictions or symbols of the literary elements. Students should focus on incorporating a variety of pictures and visual elements rather than written text.

> **Teacher Note**
>
> Give students ample time to complete this project and encourage artistic freedom and interpretation. Students may visualize and interpret the information in vastly different ways. As long as they have met any parameters you might have set, there are no "wrong" visual representations.

> **Teacher Note**
>
> It might be helpful to many students to define parameters for this project. For example, you might indicate that you want students to have at least six pictures or symbols and incorporate at least one example of each literary element. Defining parameters such as these also allows you to easily grade the projects if you choose to do so.

A sample rubric can be found [here](https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/338?rev=25057).

Evaluate

Display students' multi-genre visual projects around the room prior to the beginning of the class.

Provide each student with a copy of the "Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer" from the attachments.

Explain to students that they will be looking at other students' projects and providing feedback on each.

Using the Gallery Walk/Carousel and 2 Stars & a Swish strategies, students will complete their "Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer."

1. Have students move to their starting point by selecting another student's work.
2. Allow students to review the work for 2-3 minutes.
3. On their graphic organizer, students should identify two literary elements (setting, imagery, diction, and characterization) that they find in the visual and make one connection to the visual.

> **Teacher Note**
>
> If time is a concern, you can assign either a specific number or a minimum number of projects for each student to complete. Connections should be positive and meaningful rather than generic. For example, "I like how you arranged your pictures in the shape of a heart to symbolize love" would be more meaningful than "Your picture is pretty."

Resources

- Hinton, S. E. (1967). The Outsiders. New York: Viking Press. http://nisbah.com/summer_reading/the-outsiders_se_hinton.pdf
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Four Corners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/138
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery Walk/Carousel. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118
- K20 center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- https://i.pinimg.com/736x/6e/b3/7c/6eb37c637df4b87b91b083611e24690e--iconic-photos-photo-s.jpg
- https://cbschicago.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/lee-harvey-oswald-colorized.jpg
- http://media.npr.org/assets/music/lists/takefive/2010/01/mlkjr_wide-3392e29850b9316426c0e457d9874673a2dfba28-s900-c85.jpg
- https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/images/589552main_as11-40-5875_full.jpg
- https://metrouk2.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/theavengers-marvel.jpg?w=748&h=420&crop=1
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