A Visual Exploration of Theme
Picture the Theme

K20 Center, Jane Baber, Melissa Rule Wicker
Published by *K20 Center*

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 the 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 one-pager visual project.

Evaluate

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

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards (6-12)

IDT502: Identify a clear central idea or theme in more challenging passages or their paragraphs

IDT503: Summarize key supporting ideas and details in more challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.3.R.5: Identify literary elements and devices that impact a text's theme, mood, and tone.

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
- Lesson Slides—A Visual Exploration of Theme.pptx
- Picture the Theme Rubric—A Visual Exploration of Theme.docx
- Picture the Theme Rubric—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
- Theme Room Labels—A Visual Exploration of Theme.docx
- Theme Room Labels—A Visual Exploration of Theme.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Theme Flower handout (one per student; attached)
- Theme Room Labels (one set; print one-sided; attached)
- *The Outsiders* Passages (one per student; attached)
- Theme Graphic Organizer (one per student; print two-sided; attached)
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer (one per student; print two-sided; stapled; attached)
- Picture the Theme Rubric (optional; attached)
- Highlighters: pink, yellow, blue, green (one of each color per student)
- Writing utensils
- Art materials including but not limited to plain copy paper in various sizes, magazines, newspapers, markers, colored pencils, scissors, and glue.

https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/338?rev=37457

Engage

Teacher's Note: Preparing for Activity

Print one set of the **Theme Room Labels**. Hang one theme on each wall of the room.

Teacher's Note: Content Warning

The first passage from *The Outsiders* contains a scene of a character being pursued and shot by police that may be distressing or triggering for some students.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Display **slide 3** and **4** and go over the essential question and learning objectives.

Display **slide 5** and 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. Pass a copy of the **Theme Flower** handout to each student. Explain that the center of the "Theme Flower" has four universal theme sets to choose from: courage/fear, acceptance/isolation, love/hate, and loyalty/betrayal.

Display **slide 6** and 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."

Repeat this process for the other five pictures on **slides 7-11**, making sure that students write the universal themes in the corresponding petals.

Teacher Note: Right or Wrong Answers

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

Teacher's Note: Adaptations And Modifications

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

Display **slide 12** and introduce the students to the [Four Corners](#) instructional strategy. 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. Once students have moved, they should discuss within their group which details in the picture helped them decide on the theme set. Once each group has had time to discuss, have a spokesperson from each group share with the class.

Display **slide 13** and show the first picture and have students move to the correct location in the room. Allow time for students to discuss and share out with the group.

Repeat with **slides 14 - 18**.

Teacher Note: Right or Wrong Answers

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 Student Responses

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

> **Teacher's Note: Adapting the Activity**
>
> 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.
>
> The Spanish version of The Outsiders Passage has only passage #1 translated for students.

> **Teacher Note: Reviewing Literary Elements**
>
> 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: I Need A (Super) Hero, and OPTIC: A Reading Strategy Recipe 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.

Display **slide 19** and pass out a copy of the **The Outsiders Passage** and four of each color highlighter to each student. 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. Introduce the Why-Lighting instructional strategy. Inform students they will highlight the following literary elements in the corresponding colors:

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

Provide students time to read through the text and highlight descriptive examples of each of the literary elements.

> **Teacher's Note: Model Activity**
>
> 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, display **slide 20** and pass out **Theme Graphic Organizer** to each student. Inform students they should review each of their highlighted elements, identify which theme is demonstrated, and write each example within the appropriate theme set compartment on their handout.

Possible Student Repsonse

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

Display **slide 21**, and 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's Note: Activity Modification

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

Teacher's Note: Preparing for Activity

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.

Teacher's Note: Rubric

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. You can also share the attached **Picture the Theme Rubric** to help guide students in the activity. Adjust slide 22 to display your requirements for the project.

Display **slide 22** and introduce the [One-Pager](#) instructional strategy. 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. Provide students time to work on their projects.

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.

Evaluate

Teacher's Note: Preparing for Activity

When printing the Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer consider how many one-pagers you would like the students to view. The attached handout has space for 6 one-pager's feedback to be recorded.

Once students have completed their one-pagers, display them around the room.

Display **slide 23**, pass out a copy of the **Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer** to each student and introduce the Gallery Walk instructional strategy. Explain to the students that they will be looking at other students' projects and providing feedback on each. Using their graphic organizer they will identify two literary elements (setting, imagery, diction, or characterization) that they find in the one-pager and make a connection to the theme. Have students move to their starting point by selecting another student's work. Provide time for students to view all or most of their peers' work.

Teacher Note: Adjusting for Time

If time is a concern, you can assign either a specific number or a minimum number of projects for each student to complete. Consider adjusting slide 23 to show your specific requirements for this activity. 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. Strategies.https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118
- K20 Center. (n.d.). One-Pager. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/72
- K20 center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- K20 learn | Growing themes. (n.d.-a). https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/337
- K20 learn | I need a (super) hero. (n.d.-a). https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/510
- K20 learn | OPTIC: A reading strategy recipe. (n.d.-a). https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/240