

Subject vs. Theme

Subject vs. Central Idea

Big Idea: By identifying the most important details, I can determine the author's message.

4	3	2	1.5
I can identify an appropriate theme/central idea, choose the most important events/details, explain how they develop the theme/central idea, and connect the theme/central idea to another text.	I can identify an appropriate theme/central idea, choose the most important details/events and explain how they develop the theme/central idea	I can choose the most important details/events. I am not yet able to identify an appropriate theme/central idea and explain how it is developed.	I can choose some of the most important details.

Note:

3.5 - I can identify an appropriate theme/central idea, choose the most important details/events, explain how they develop the theme/central idea, and partially connect the theme/central idea to another text.

2.5 - I can identify the theme/central idea and choose important details/events that develop the theme, but my explanation of how they develop the theme/central idea is inadequate.

0.5 and 1.0 require teacher's help. 0 = no important details or evidence of an appropriate response.

Subject/Topic

I. Let's read "A New Pitcher" to start today's lesson. First, *approach* the text.

II. *Subject* and *topic* mean the same thing, therefore *subject* = *topic*.

A) A subject is *what* a text is about. You can **usually** state the subject in **one** word.

B) It is a person, place, thing, or idea.

Examples:

1) *Baseball* is the subject of "A New Pitcher".

2) *Fear* could also be the subject of "A New Pitcher".

Theme and Central Idea

II. *Theme* and *central idea* mean the same thing, therefore *theme* = *central idea*. *Theme* exists in fiction; *central idea* exists in nonfiction.

Note: Another term that means the same as central idea is *main idea*.

- A) Theme/central idea is the author's message to the reader.
- B) Theme is usually a generalization about life or about human beings; the central idea is what you're supposed to learn about the topic.
- C) They are what you're supposed to learn from the author, so they must be more than a one- word answer.
- D) Theme is NOT about a story's characters, but a main idea CAN be about a specific person since it is nonfiction.

Let's read the short story again to find examples.

Examples:

- 1) *People can overcome their fear with practice* is a possible theme for "A New Pitcher".
- 2) *It's hard to be successful if you're not prepared for it* is another possible theme for "A New Pitcher".

Non-examples:

- 1) Matthew is nervous to pitch.
- 2) Matthew can be successful if he keeps practicing.

What's wrong with the Non-examples?

Subject vs. Theme/Central Idea

Is it a subject or a theme/central idea?

- 1) A subject is one word; a theme/central idea is a statement
- 2) A subject is *who* or *what*; a theme/central idea is *why*

How do you match a subject with its theme?

- 1) Look for the subject's word in the theme

Example: subject = love; theme = love can conquer anything.

Example: subject = Frederick Douglass; central idea = Douglass's *Narrative* shows how white slaveholders perpetuate slavery by keeping their slaves ignorant.

- 2) Look for the **description** of the subject inside the theme

Example: subject = respect; theme = treat others how you would like to be treated.

Subject vs. Theme

Match the subjects and themes that **best** go together.

Subject	Theme
Danger	“There are many victories worse than a defeat.” – George Eliot
Kindness	“As soon as there is life there is danger.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson
Laughter	The world is a better place when we can act for more than ourselves.
Success and Failure	“A day without laughter is a day wasted.” – Charlie Chaplin

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My Turn

Which is the **best** central idea for “My Mother, the Scientist”?

Which is the **best** subject for “My Mother, the Scientist”?

- a) Science
- b) Inequality
- c) Due to inequality, it was odd for a woman to be a mother and a scientist in the 1960's.
- d) The narrator was afraid of Mrs. Weddle, his first grade teacher.

Help Me

Which is the **best** theme for “Rikki-tikki-tavi”?

Which is the **best** subject for “Rikki-tikki-tavi”?

a) Bravery

b) Bungalow

c) Rikki-tikki-tavi showed that he was brave enough to kill the snakes and save the family.

d) Putting yourself in danger to protect the ones you love requires bravery.

Your Turn

Which is the **best** theme for “The Smallest Dragonboy”?

Which is the **best** subject for “The Smallest Dragonboy”?

- a) Keevan was chosen by the bronze dragon even though he was small.
- b) The underdog
- c) Victory is not always achieved by those who expect it, but sometimes it is awarded to those who deserve it.
- d) Keevan doesn't like being teased by others.