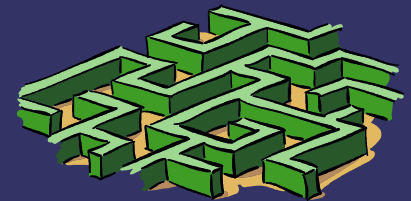


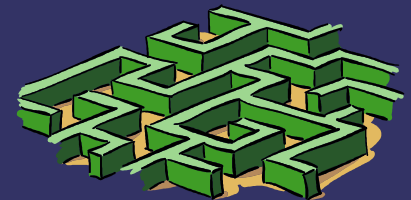
Theme

What Is It and How Do I Identify It?



Theme is...

- ➔ The central, underlying, and controlling idea, or insight, of a work of literature.
- ➔ The idea the writer wishes to convey about the subject - the writer's view of the world or a revelation about human nature.

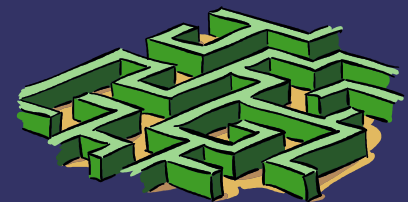


Theme is Not

- ➔ **Expressed in a single word.** People often confuse subject with theme (like topic vs. main idea).

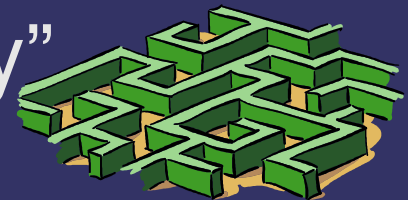
Example: Subjects of “Romeo and Juliet” are any of the following:

1. Love and Hate
2. The Passage of Time
3. Love and Lust
4. The Role of Fate
5. The Consequence of Impulsivity



Theme Is Not...

- ➔ The purpose of a work (example: to educate is the purpose of a textbook, not the theme).
- ➔ Theme can be moral; but the moral is not necessarily the theme.
- ➔ The conflict
- ➔ Let's apply this to “The Dinner Party”

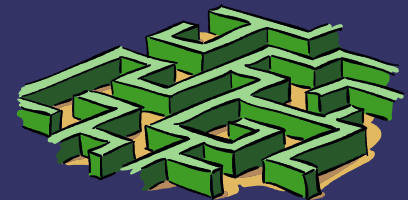


How do I find a theme?

Where do I start?

1. Summarize the plot by writing a one-sentence description.

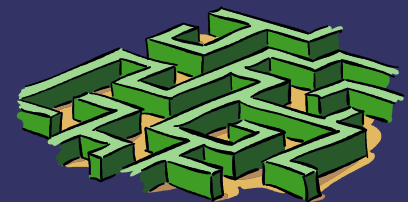
- ➔ “The Dinner Party” is a story about an American uncovering the truth about the emotional stability of women through the hostesses reaction to a cobra at the dinner party of a colonial official.



2. Identify the subject of the work

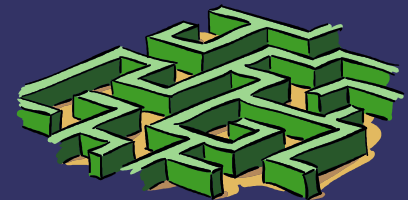
Subject = the central concept or topic

- ➔ The subject of “The Dinner Party” is women being stereotyped by men.



3. Identify the insight or truth that was learned about the subject.

- ➔ ASK YOURSELF: What did I learn about women being stereotyped by men?
- ➔ ANSWER: In “The Dinner Party” the insight or truth is that women should not be negatively stereotyped because they are able to control their emotions as well as men.

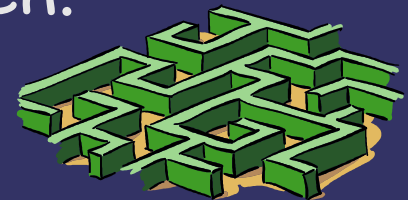


4. Now write the theme:

- How?
- Take the subject and the insight.
- Make a declarative sentence that combines them.

Possible Themes for "The Dinner Party"

1. Women have as much self-control as men.
3. Stereotypes obscure the truth about people
4. Sexism obscures the truth about women.



5. Test your theme out...does it work?

State how the plot supports the insight or truth about the subject?

This theme works because

- ➔ The colonel argues that women have not outgrown the “jumping on a chair at the sight of a mouse” era – he is stereotyping (being sexist)
- ➔ A cobra slithers over the hostess's foot and she doesn't react – her actions prove him wrong
- ➔ The American notices and points out the hostess's calm reaction – he confirms the stereotype is wrong.
- ➔ The reader recognizes the fact that women have outgrown the “jumping on a chair at the sight of a mouse” era – the reader has “heard” the author's message



Now Write A ROPES Answer to Defend Your Theme...

- ➔ R = The theme of “The Dinner Party” is
- ➔ O = women have as much self-control as men.
- ➔ P = The story begins with a colonel arguing that women have not outgrown the “jumping out of their chairs at the sight of a mouse era” (1). The hostess of the party proves that his sexist comment is false by staying calm when a cobra slithers across her foot.
- ➔ E = The American at the party recognizes her calm reaction and confirms for the colonel and the reader that women have just as much control as men in the face of danger.
- ➔ S= This proves that the theme of the story is that women have as much self control as men.



Let's Apply This To "Romeo and Juliet"...

- ➔ 1. Summarize the plot in one sentence.
- ➔ 2. Identify the subject.
- ➔ 3. What did you learn from about this subject?
- ➔ 4. Write a thematic statement (theme).
- ➔ 5. Make sure your choice fits the plot.
- ➔ 6. Write a ROPES answer to defend the theme.

