

MOTIF VS. THEME IN LITERATURE

Worksheet

Part I – Understanding Motif and Theme

1. What is a theme in literature?

- A. A repeated word or phrase
- B. The central message or idea about life that a literary work communicates
- C. The setting of a story
- D. The main character's physical appearance

2. What is a motif?

- A. A recurring image, symbol, word, phrase, situation, or idea that supports a larger meaning
- B. The exact location where a story takes place
- C. The climax of a story
- D. A character's main problem

3. Which statement best explains the relationship between a motif and a theme?

- A. A motif and a theme are always exactly the same thing.
- B. Motifs are recurring elements that can help develop or reinforce a theme.
- C. Themes only appear in poems, while motifs appear only in novels.
- D. Motifs are always more important than themes.

4. Which of the following is most likely a theme?

- A. Repeated images of darkness
- B. A recurring clock
- C. The idea that forgiveness can help people heal
- D. A character repeatedly walking through a forest

5. Which of the following is most likely a motif?

- A. Love requires sacrifice.
- B. Repeated references to birds and flight
- C. People should learn from their mistakes.
- D. Courage can overcome fear.

Part II – Motif or Theme?

Directions: Write **M** for Motif or **T** for Theme.

- 6. ____ The idea that true friendship requires loyalty.
 - 7. ____ Repeated images of doors and locked rooms.
 - 8. ____ The belief that people can overcome hardship through perseverance.
 - 9. ____ Repeated references to changing seasons.
 - 10. ____ The idea that greed can lead to destruction.
 - 11. ____ A recurring image of a broken mirror.
 - 12. ____ The message that judging others based on appearances can lead to misunderstanding.
-

Part III – Identifying Motifs

Directions: Read each example and identify the recurring **motif**.

- 13.** Throughout a novel, the author repeatedly describes birds flying over the main character whenever she thinks about freedom.

What is the motif?

What larger idea might this motif help develop?

- 14.** A character repeatedly looks at an old photograph of her family whenever she feels lonely.

What is the motif?

What larger idea might this motif help develop?

- 15.** Throughout a story, the author repeatedly describes storms whenever the main character experiences conflict.

What is the motif?

What larger idea might this motif help develop?

Part IV – Motif and Theme Together

Directions: Read each passage. Then answer the questions.

Passage 1

"Every morning, Marcus stopped beside the old oak tree before walking to school. When his father left for work, Marcus had planted the tree with him. Years later, the tree had grown tall and strong. Even when Marcus faced difficult days, he returned to the tree and remembered his father's advice."

- 16.** What motif appears in this passage?

-
- 17.** What theme could this motif help develop?
-

Passage 2

"Elena kept a small candle on her desk. She lit it whenever she worked on something difficult. During the hardest weeks of the year, the candle burned beside her books every night. Each time she wanted to give up, she looked at its small flame and continued working."

18. What motif appears in this passage?

19. What theme could this motif help develop?

Passage 3

"Throughout the novel, Daniel refuses to throw away his grandfather's watch. He carries it everywhere. When he makes an important decision, he often looks at the watch and remembers the lessons his grandfather taught him."

20. What motif appears in this passage?

21. What theme could this motif help develop?
