

# How to Write a Theme-Based Literary Essay

- ① Think about the character's motivations, problems, and lessons learned and look for patterns.
- ② What does the character want, and what gets in the way?
- ③ How does the character try to resolve his problems?
- ④ What lessons does the character learn from trying to resolve his problems?
- ⑤ Now what patterns can you see?
- ⑥ Think about the patterns you see in universal terms. Ask yourself, "What big life lessons - what themes - can readers draw from the patterns in the story?"
- ⑦ Then craft a claim based on one of the themes.
- ⑧ Search for the most compelling evidence that can support the claim, then add it to the essay like this:
  - Quote some parts of the text.
  - Story-tell other parts.
  - Summarize yet other parts.
- ⑨ To write an introduction to your essay, start with a universal statement about life and then transition to the text-based claim itself, focusing on the story you are writing about.
- ⑩ To write a conclusion to your essay, show connections in at least one of these ways:
  - Your thesis and emphasize why the claim and evidence matter
  - Yourself and the life lesson you learned or realized
  - The author's message
  - Leave readers with something to think about