

What is Theme?

Theme is what a text implies about life or human nature.

A text can have more than one theme.

Theme is the “main” idea of a work; in other words, everything in the text should work together to help communicate that idea. Nothing in the work should logically contradict the theme.

How do I write a thematic statement?

Start by listing some of the (thematic) **topics** of the text; for example, *alienation, prejudice, ambition, freedom, love, loyalty, passion, etc.* The topic can also be a longer phrase, however, such as *the relationship between love and hate*. These are still not good enough to explain the theme of a piece of literature.

Combine those topics with comments that reflect the author’s **observations** about human nature. What is the author saying about those topics? What does the author believe to be true about those topics?

How to avoid common mistakes:

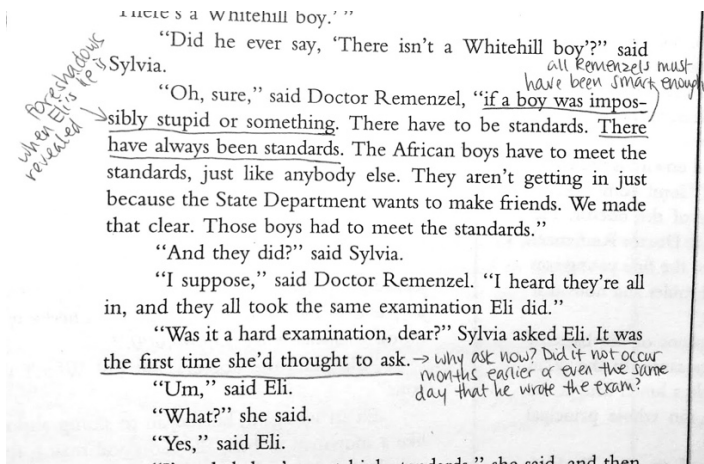
A theme is NOT	Instead, a theme IS
<p>A moral or a command</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It doesn’t tell us how to behave by using words like “should”, or by commanding. 	<p>An observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It makes a comment about the way things appear to be in reality.
<p>A common saying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It isn’t trite, it’s not a cliché, or a maxim, or an aphorism like, “Actions speak louder than words,” or “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” 	<p>Original and thoughtful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It should be something that you find interesting, something a bit philosophical whose wording you have come up with by yourself.
<p>Specific to the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It doesn’t refer to the specific characters and plot in the text. 	<p>General, about reality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It translates the characters and plot into <i>generalizations</i> such as “people” or “parents” or “raising a child,” etc.
<p>Absolute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It doesn’t use words like “all,” “none,” “everything,” or “always,” because that kind of statement is rarely true, and usually impossible to prove. 	<p>Reasonable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It uses terms like “sometimes,” or “often,” or refers to limited circumstances, to suggest a more realistic view of the variety in life.

Dialectical Journal Assignment

After reading Thomas King's "Trap Lines" and discussing the comprehension questions in class, it is clear that some of the major topics that act as the foundation for the story are issues about **communication, inheritance, and parent-child relationships**. In order to think deeper about these topics, you will keep a dialectical journal, one that is an extended version of annotating a text.

Traditional annotating ↴

Dialectical journal ↴



Note Taking (exact sentence/s or phrases from the text + pg#)	Note Making (my original ideas about the significance of the text)
"Oh, sure[,] if a boy was impossibly stupid or something. There have to be standards. There have always been standards." (244)	Foreshadows when Eli's lie is revealed; signifies that all Remenzel's despite their legacy still were smart enough, although Doctor Remenzel does say that admission used to be an interview with the headmaster → maybe the entrance exam also is a recent change to the school since they've been forced to accept non-white boys

For this dialectical journal assignment, you will be asked to find quotes that support the three previously mentioned topics in "Trap Lines": communication, inheritance, and parent-child relationships.

- find *at least three* pieces of evidence for each topic (you should have at least 9 examples in total)
- you do not need to write in full sentences in the right-hand note making column, but do copy word-for-word and include the page number in the left-hand note taking column
- your right-hand column must include your interpretation of the text, and it can also include any observations of previous knowledge of other texts, current events, or forms of media that remind you of the evidence that you have chosen
- you may handwrite or type this dialectical journal → if you type, you need to print out your work
- ** the next time we do this for the second Thomas King story, you will have to do this assignment but will not be given topics ahead of time; instead, you will be doing your own observations **
- due date: **Tuesday, February 27 by the end of the block**. You will have class time to complete this on Monday and Tuesday.

Total: _____/18

Format

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