**UNDERSTANDING & FINDING THEMES**

As we have learned: ***A THEME in literature is a general insight that the story reveals. Themes are messages from the writer, as interpreted by readers.***

**Remember that themes:**

* Are the central or key ideas at the core of a story – they help us understand truths not only within the text, but humans, relationships, and our world
* Are discovered through close reading and shown through various literary elements, such as: characters, plot, setting, conflict, style, narration, point of view, symbolism…
* Are stated as generalizations about life (but not as clichés)
* Can be interpreted differently by various readers depending on perspectives and contexts

**Finding Themes:**

* Check out the title – it can be helpful to helping you understand key themes and issues
* Notice repeating patterns and symbols and what they might mean
* What is the plot? What bigger (more universal) ideas might it stand for?
* Consider characters and conflicts in which they are involved
* Look for a truth or insight that you gain from reading the text – this is likely related to theme!
* Make sure you have a rationalization and evidence for your theme!

**Rationalizations**

In order for an assertion to be a theme, it must be rationalized. This means finding evidence in the text that your assertion is present and crucial to understanding the work.

Rationalizations can be made using these techniques:

* Analyze how the idea applies to character(s) & characterization
* Show how actions/plot events bring out the idea
* Show how the setting(s) highlight the idea
* Show how the point of view or narrative voice brings out the idea
* Show how symbols/motifs highlight the idea
* Show how style and language support the idea

**STEPS to Stating and proving a theme:**

1. Think of an idea or insight in the story
2. Turn the idea into an assertion (statement)
3. Find rationalization of the assertion in the story (evidence/proof)
4. Decide: Can you prove it? Is it an insight about life and/or humanity?

**FIGURING OUT THEME - WORKSHEET**

1. Write an IDEA (a one-word term, concept, or issue) that comes to mind when you think of this text:

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1. Turn this word into an ASSERTION (statement; *from the text, readers see/learn (that):*

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1. Find rationalizations (evidence from the text to support your assertion):

**TYPE of EVIDENCE TEXTUAL EXAMPLE EXPLANATION**

(Character, symbol, setting, (paraphrase or give quotation; (How does this link to your

POV, language, conflict…) PAGE # needed!) assertion of THEME?)