

## Teaching Theme with Stone Soup

Grade Level: Middle-High School

Access [Stone Soup in ASL](#) or [read it here online](#).

Allow time for students to read the book or watch the video and then separate students into groups.

Ask the students:

*What is the writer of the book trying to teach us?*

The students will probably come up with the familiar: be generous, be friendly, trust one another, share with those who have less, work together, help each other, etc.

Encourage them to dig deep and use their imaginations. (Note: you will want a list that is at least one item longer than the number of student groups.)

Write all their answers on the board.

### Turning Topics into Themes

Now, at this point, students have really just listed topics. So choose one from the list to model how to correctly write the theme.

Write on the board:

*"The author is trying to teach the reader \_\_\_\_\_."*

Then choose one of the topics, for instance, "to be generous."

Fill in the blank with "to be responsible":

*"The author is trying to teach the reader to be generous."*

Explain that the theme should not just tell the reader "what," it should also tell the reader "why."

Ask the students

*What did you learn from the book about why people should be generous?*

You might get an answer like: If you're not generous, you will be unhappy.

So you can write:

*"The author is trying to teach the reader to be generous so you will be happy."*

You can continue to tweak this until you have something like:

“The author is trying to teach the reader that happiness can be found through generosity.”

Next, cross out the words “The author is trying to teach the reader that” and capitalize the H in Happiness:

“Happiness can be found in generosity.”

Now you have the theme. Have students give you examples from the text that support this theme and write those under the theme.

#### More Themes

Explain to students that stories can have more than one theme. Assign groups of students one of the topics they came up with to write a theme statement. Give them several minutes to perfect their statements. Remind students to explain the “why” and encourage them to write the theme in different ways and then choose the best one.

Once their statements are complete, have them pass their statements to another group. That group reads the statement, then finds textual evidence to support the statement.

Post the statements in the classroom and have students do a gallery walk to read everyone’s theme statements.

This is a good group activity, and it also gives students examples of how other students have written the theme statement.

Digital Alternative: Have students copy their theme statements and supporting text to a [Padlet board](#).