



# Strategic Instruction in Grade 9-10 Literature: Analyzing Theme / Central Message Module

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Specifically designed to target the following Common Core English Language Arts Standards for Reading Literature:

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.**

Can also be used when teaching...

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1 (Argumentative writing)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2 (Expository writing)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 (Listening & Speaking: working collaboratively)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2 (Listening & Speaking: integrating multiple sources of information)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3 (Evaluating speaker's point of view)

This module features one **Tier 1 Stratagem** (designed for grade level instruction) and two **Tier 2 Stratagems** (designed for building fundamental analysis skills), each focusing on a critical dimension of the authors' development of themes. Each Stratagem includes ready-to-use DVT Power Point slides, DVT fillable PDF forms, DVT rubrics, and lesson plans, as well as samples of how teachers have used them.

## Tier 1 Stratagem

### Theme Analysis



Features effective identification, analysis, and explanation of the theme or central message of a literary work, including how the theme is manifested by the plot, characters, and scenes in conjunction with identification of text evidence to support suppositions.

## Tier 2 Stratagems

### Team Dialog



Used to develop effective listening and communication skills within the context of identifying and explaining the theme of a literary work.

### Theme Connections



Used to develop effective listening and communication skills within the context of identifying and explaining the theme of a literary work and forming and explaining real-life connections between the theme and personal experiences.

See sample DVTs from this module on the following pages

# THEME Analysis

Analyze in detail the development and refinement of a theme or central idea in a text, including how it emerges and how it is shaped and refined by specific details.



Sample DVT from  
Strategic Instruction in Literature, Grades 9-10  
**Analyzing Themes Module**  
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**T**opic **H**idden message, opinion, or question about topic **E**xpose appearance of theme in plot, characters, & scenes **M**ake connections to text evidence **E**xplain real-life connections

LITERARY  
WORK

## The Scarlet Ibis

TOPIC of literary work:

**The evil that lurks within**

THEME (authors hidden message, opinion, or question about the topic):

**The struggle for power with a loved one can lead to cruelty.**

### INITIAL Theme connection to PLOT, CHARACTER or SCENE

How the theme *begins* to be evident in the story

When Doodle was born, all the attention switched to him. Brother felt unnoticed and powerless, so he sought to regain his power by dominating Doodle. He even wanted to get rid of him by killing him.

### Details / Text evidence / Citation(s)

Page 1: He might, for as long as he lived, lie...in the center of the bed in the front bedroom. It was bad enough having an invalid brother, but having one who was possibly not "all there" was unbearable, so I began to make plans to kill him by smothering him.

### Significance

The narrator (Brother) was already thinking about how it would look to others if he had a physically and mentally disabled sibling. His image and personal power might be diminished, and he could not stand the thought of that.

### UNFOLDING Theme connection(s) to PLOT, CHARACTER or SCENE

How the theme is *shaped & refined* by additional aspects in the story

Brother was not maintaining his reputation as a cool, normal boy because he had to pull Doodle around in a cart. He was told everyday that he had to follow the doctor's orders and take Doodle with him wherever he went. Brother resented this so much that he treated Doodle abusively.

### Details/Text evidence/Citation(s)

Page 3: He was a burden in many ways. To discourage his coming with me, I'd run with him across the ends of the cotton rows and careen him around corners on two wheels. Sometimes, I accidentally turned him over, but Doodle never told.

### Significance

Brother resented Doodle because the family seemed to only care about Doodle having his needs met. They didn't seem to care about Brother's feelings. Brother felt powerful when he was able to scare or hurt Doodle because Doodle never did anything about it.

### Overall Conclusions that can be Drawn about the Theme

As soon as Doodle is born, Brother feels threatened. All the attention from the family is centered on Doodle, and Brother resents him. Then, because Doodle can't walk, Brother has to pull him around in a cart. Brother is humiliated, and he loses the freedom to do the things he wants to do. His resentment of Doodle grows. His resentment and loss of power cause him to try to regain his power in cruel ways. He terrifies Doodle and even harms him. Because Doodle never tells on him, he continues to exert his power never thinking of the consequences.

# THEME CONNECTIONS: My life as a teenager

Analyze in detail the development and refinement of a theme or central idea in a text, including how it emerges and how it is shaped and refined by specific details.



Sample DVT from Strategic Instruction in Literature, Grades 9-10

Analyzing Themes Module

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LITERARY  
WORK

## The Most Dangerous Game

The theme of a story is the author's unstated message or opinion about life. The theme can be expressed by the reader as a statement or a question that the author seems to be raising. Different readers may have different points-of-view on what a story's theme is, so there is no correct or incorrect answer to the question, "What is the theme of the story?" An important thinking skill, however, is stating what you think the theme is and why. Another important thinking skill is relating the story theme to real life.

INSTRUCTIONS: In *The Most Dangerous Game*, some readers think that the author's unstated message about life is, "What a person values determines the way he or she lives."

STEP 1: Brainstorm with your teacher ideas about how the theme, "What a person values determines the way he or she lives" relates to a real-life experience you have had or observed.

STEP 2: Using the ideas you noted on the organizer below as your guide, write a short essay explaining the theme and the real-life connections you made.

Theme

What a person values determines the way he or she lives

Theme's meaning

I think this means that all the ideas we have about ourselves, people and life make up our personalities and cause us to act the way we do. This also means our set of beliefs about what is right and wrong motivates our behavior as well.

Real-life situation #1 to which the theme relates

History teacher giving credit for effort

Reason, supporting details and/or examples of WHY the theme relates to this situation

Yesterday, the teacher told the class that we all needed to try harder on the tests, but to not be too discouraged because there were other ways to pull our grades up. She said that she gives a lot of credit for effort on our research projects. The crazy thing is, after she said that, everybody started studying for those test a lot harder. The history teacher seems to really value effort, and she gives credit for effort accordingly. This shows that she's putting her beliefs into actions.

Real-life situation #2 to which the theme relates

Billy not being part of the "Biology cheating crowd"

Reason, supporting details and/or examples of WHY the theme relates to this situation

I know for a fact that some students cheat on tests in Biology class and some do not. The cheaters seem to value the benefits of getting good grades over everything else, so the way they are living their life in that class shows their values. My friend Billy knows about the cheaters, but he won't do it. That's because he values honesty and integrity over getting good grades, and believe me, he's not getting great grades in Biology.

Conclusion: So what? What is important to understand about this?

When you analyze how people act, you can work backward to figure what their beliefs and values are. Likewise, if you know what they value, you can predict what they might do in certain situations. I definitely believe that what a person values determines the way he or she lives.

## TEAM DIALOG (small group)

1. Discuss with your team the following statement:  
***“The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the hunted.”***
2. Note a your team’s reaction and then provide reasons and details that explain it on the organizer below.
3. Review the Team Dialog Rubric. Be prepared to score 30 points as you dialog with other teams about the statement!
4. After the dialogue, use the rubric to rate your team’s participation; identify areas your team did best, and areas to improve.

Our team’s reaction to the statement, ***“The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the hunted.”***

**We think that hunters become leaders and the hunted are followers**

Reason #1

Reason #2

In practically all societies, there are leaders in government. The rest of the people may have rights, but they are still followers.

In practically all job/career situations, there are employers (leaders) and employees (followers).

Supporting Details / Real-life Examples

Supporting Details / Real-life Examples

**1** Monarchy– King or Queen is considered the leader and the people the are followers.  
Democracy- The President and the Branches of government = leaders; People= followers

**1** In large businesses, CEOs are in charge of workers & production. In school districts, the superintendent is the main leader; principals = school leaders; the rest of the employees are the followers.

**2** Oligarchy– A small group of people are the leaders; the people= followers  
Dictatorship– one person has total power as the leader; the rest of the people= followers

**2** In construction, there are General Contractors over subcontractors & workers: leaders and followers, and so it goes with jobs.

CONCLUSION

Our team believes that the world is made up of “The Hunters and the Hunted” because we interpret this statement as meaning the world is made up of leaders and followers.