

Common Themes in Literature

Name: _____ Date: _____

What is **theme**?

The **theme** of a book is the message or main idea relevant to the real world that the author wants the reader to take away from reading a literary text.

A theme has the following characteristics:

- It is a message or lesson about life that is broadly applicable—it can be true for situations beyond the story.
- It is a statement, not just a topic. That is, “friendship” is not a theme. However, “Friendship can bring comfort in times of hardship” could be a theme.
- Different books or movies can have similar themes. For example, the stories “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Hansel and Gretel” both convey the message that you should be careful about whom you trust, because people may not share their true intentions. The plots of these fairy tales are quite different, but their themes are similar.

Directions

Read through the list of some common themes in literature with your partner. Choose three that might be themes in *A Long Walk to Water*. Be prepared to explain why you selected each one.

1. Nature can present many challenges to humans.
2. Family is our most important support.
3. Love is what makes life worth living.
4. Dangerous situations can make people become leaders.
5. To be truly happy, you must do what you know is right, even if it is unpopular.

6. Individuals are able to survive in challenging environments in remarkable ways.



7. People need to depend on one another in order to survive.



8. In challenging situations, it can be helpful to focus only on small steps.

