**How to Generate a Thesis Statement**

Even if your assignment doesn’t ask a specific question, your thesis statement still needs to answer a question about the issue you’d like to explore. In this situation, your job is to figure out what question you’d like to write about.

A good thesis statement will usually include the following four attributes:

* take on a subject upon which reasonable people could disagree
* deal with a subject that can be adequately treated given the nature of the assignment
* express one main idea
* assert your conclusions about a subject

For a Literary essay you need to make sure that you have enough proof from your novel to effectively argue the topic.

**General Strategies:**

* Start by brainstorming possible social issues that exist in your novel. Then consider what the message is about that social issue from what the characters experience.
* Consider common themes in literature and see if your novel connects to any of them. What is the message about this?
* Do any of the characters experience change or growth that could be connected to a “coming of age” topic? What is the message about growing up?
* Does your novel mock or critique a commonly held belief or genre? For example, does your novel follow the conventions of a romance novel, except for one major change? If so, what’s the message then?
* Try to consider what message or lesson the author is trying to convey through the characters
* Is there a symbol or a pattern of imagery that exists? What is the message behind that?

**10 of the Most Common Book Themes**

While there are countless themes found in books, there are a few that we can see in many books. These universal themes are popular among authors and readers alike because they are experiences we can relate to.

To give you some ideas on finding a book's theme, let's explore some of the most popular and discover examples of those themes in well-known books. Remember, however, that the messages in any piece of literature can go much deeper than this, but it will at least give you a good starting point.

1. **Judgment** - Possibly one of the most common themes is judgment. In these books, a character is judged for being different or doing wrong, whether that be real or just perceived as a wrongdoing by others. Among classic novels, we can see this in "[The Scarlet Letter](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-scarlet-letter-questions-for-study-741327)," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," and "[To Kill a Mockingbird](https://www.thoughtco.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird-review-741686)." As these tales prove, the judgment does not always equal justice, either.
2. **Survival** - There is something captivating about a good survival story, one in which the main characters must overcome countless odds just to live another day. Almost any book by Jack London falls into this category because his characters often battle nature. "[Lord of the Flies](https://www.thoughtco.com/lord-of-the-flies-profile-1856853)" is another in which life and death are important parts of the story. Michael Crichton's "Congo" and "Jurassic Park" certainly follow this theme.
3. **Peace and War** - The contradiction between peace and war is a popular topic for authors. Quite often, the characters are gripped in the turmoil of conflict while hoping for days of peace to come or reminiscing about the good life before the war. Books such as "Gone With the Wind" show the before, during, and after of war, while others focus on the time of war itself. Just a few examples include "[All Quiet on the Western Front](https://www.thoughtco.com/quotes-all-quiet-on-western-front-738509)," "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," and "For Whom the Bell Tolls."
4. **Love** - The universal truth of love is a very common theme in literature and you will find countless examples of it. They go beyond those sultry romance novels, too. Sometimes, it is even intertwined with other themes. Think of books like Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" or Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights." For a modern example, just look at Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" series.
5. **Heroism** - Whether it is false heroism or true heroic acts, you will often find conflicting values in books with this theme. We see it quite often in classical literature from the Greeks, with Homer's "The Odyssey" serving as a perfect example. You can also find it in more recent stories such as "The Three Musketeers" and "The Hobbit."
6. **Good and Evil** - The coexistence of good and evil is another popular theme. It is often found alongside many of these other themes such as war, judgment, and even love. Books such as the "Harry Potter" and "Lord of the Rings" series use this as the central theme. Another classic example is "The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe."
7. **Circle of Life** - The notion that life begins with birth and ends with death is nothing new to authors and many incorporate this into the themes of their books. Some may explore immortality such as in "[The Picture of Dorian Gray.](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-picture-of-dorian-gray-review-741056)" Others, like Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych," shock a character into realizing that death inevitable. In a story like F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," the circle of life theme is turned completely upside down.
8. **Suffering** - There is physical suffering and internal suffering and both are popular themes, often intertwined with others. A book such as Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" is filled with suffering as well as guilt. One like Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" looks more at the physical suffering of impoverished children, though there is plenty of both.
9. **Deception** - This theme can also take on many faces as well. Deception can be physical or social and it's all about keeping secrets from others. For instance, we see many lies in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and many of Shakespeare's plays are centered on deception at some level. Any mystery novel has some sort of deception as well.
10. **Coming of Age** - Growing up is not easy, which is why so many books rely on a "coming of age" theme. This is one in which children or young adults mature through various events and learn valuable life lessons in the process. Books such as "The Outsiders" and "[The Catcher in the Rye](https://www.thoughtco.com/catcher-in-the-rye-study-discussion-739159)" use this theme very well.

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