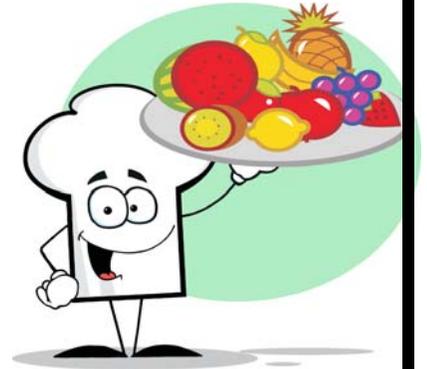


# FROM KEY WORD TO THEME

A good first step towards understanding **theme** is to identify a key word or concept that a story deals with. For example, a story might be about courage, friendship, or bravery. But a **theme** cannot be expressed in a single word. The subject or key word of a story might be friendship, but the **theme** is something particular about friendship that can be expressed in a complete sentence.



Read the passages below. For each one, circle the key word that best describes what the passage is about. Then, think about the passage and write a sentence that includes that key word, and which expresses its **theme**. Remember, **theme** is bigger than just the story itself; it is a lesson or a message that is applicable in the real world.

1. Kim's diet was terrible. All she ate was chips and sweets and jelly sandwiches on white bread. She was overweight and she was always tired. When her doctor told her that she felt bad because of what she was eating, Kim was amazed. She didn't realize that she had so much power to make herself feel better. Kim stopped eating junk food and started eating fruits and vegetables. In a few weeks she felt like a new person.

- a) courage                      b) responsibility                      c) health

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2. Dan was really looking forward to eating some cake. But when his mother sliced the cake, she made the pieces very small. "Why is my piece so small?" Dan asked, dismayed. "Because there are a lot of people here," his mother told him. "We have to make sure that we have enough cake for everybody. His mother continued to cut and serve the cake and soon there was no more cake left. Disappointed that he would not be able to have seconds, Dan went off to sit and eat his tiny piece of cake. There was a small girl sitting at his table. She looked longingly at Dan's cake. "I did not get any cake," she said. "By the time I got up there, all of the cake was gone." "Here," Dan said, handing the girl a fork. "I will share my cake with you." The little girl's face lit up, and suddenly Dan felt better.

- a) hunger                      b) generosity                      c) disappointment

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Theme**

3. It was Rebecca's turn to cook dinner. Rebecca did not like to cook. So on her night, she usually heated up a few cans of chili, or cooked a frozen pizza. "This pizza is no good," her brother Frank said. "It tastes like cardboard. The cheese tastes like rubber." Rebecca thought that Frank's complaint was petty, especially since he ate everything on his plate. "I am going to make a pizza every time it is my turn to cook," Rebecca said. "Since I know that you will eat it."



- a) duplicity                      b) fairness                      c) effort
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4. Wendy enjoyed spending time with her grandmother. Her grandmother told her stories about what the world was like when she was a little girl, a very long time ago. Wendy also liked her grandmother's caramel cake and blackberry cobbler. There was only one problem. Wendy's grandmother always made casseroles for dinner. Wendy didn't want to hurt her grandmother's feelings. But she hated casseroles, and she couldn't help hesitating before taking a bite. But she did take a bite, because she loved the way that her grandmother's eyes lit up when she saw Wendy eating her home-cooked food. When Wendy's grandmother smiled, suddenly the casserole didn't taste so bad.

- a) loyalty                      b) love                      c) duplicity
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5. Ryan's mother was trying to learn to cook. She was not very good at it, though. One night she burned the casserole. Another night she scalded the soup. Ryan and his father did their best to eat what she put in front of them, though. "She will get better," Ryan's father told Ryan. "We have to encourage her so that she will not give up." One afternoon Ryan's mother put too much baking soda in the cookies and they were so bitter that Ryan had to spit a bite of cookie out into his napkin when his mother wasn't looking. "I am sorry that I am not a good cook," his mother told him. "That is okay," Ryan said. "The important thing is that you keep working on it, and then you will get better."

- a) perseverance                      b) honesty                      c) cooking
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