Theme Anchor Chart

Topic, theme, evidence

Topic: What idea keeps coming up? Name it in a word or short phrase: *asking for help*.

Theme: What does the story suggest about that topic? Say it in a sentence that could apply beyond the story: *Getting help with one part of a problem can make it possible to do the rest yourself.*

Evidence: Which actions, choices or changes make that reading convincing? Name at least two details, then explain what they show together.

Try it with a short story

The Loose Wheel

Nora wanted to fix the cart wheel before the library opened. She tugged at the wrench until her knuckles hurt. When Eli asked if she needed a hand, she told him she was almost done. The wheel still scraped. Nora set the wrench down. “Can you hold the cart steady? I think I can turn this if it stops shifting.” Eli held the handle, and Nora lined up the wheel and tightened the bolt. She rolled the cart to the far door and back. “I fixed the wheel,” she told the librarian, then added, “Eli kept the cart from tipping while I did it.”

- **Topic:** Asking for help.
- **Too broad:** “This story is about help.” That names a topic but does not say what the story suggests.
- **Too tied to the plot:** “Nora and Eli fixed a cart.” That tells what happened, not what a reader might take away.
- **Theme:** Getting help with one part of a problem can make it possible to do the rest yourself.
- **Evidence and reasoning:** Nora first turned down help and the wheel still scraped. When she asked Eli to hold the cart, she could line up and tighten the wheel herself. Help did not replace her work; it made her work possible.

Check your theme

- Does it say more than the topic?
- Does it fit the ending as well as an earlier moment?
- Could the idea apply to a different story?
- Do the details show why it fits?

Readers can find different themes. Each one needs evidence from the story. You do not need to start with “Always” or “Never.” A theme can show a trade-off or pattern without telling people what to do.