

Name: _____

Identifying Theme

Directions: Determine what the theme is for each story and explain your answer. Remember, a theme is a lesson or message in the story. **Write in complete sentences.**

1. Katie Clean invited Messy Missy to her house to work on their biology project, but Katie Clean had no idea what a visit from Messy Missy entailed. First of all, it was raining and Messy Missy neither bothered to take her boots off nor thoroughly wiped them on the doormat. Then Messy Missy ate a bag of hot chips on Katie Clean's white bedspread without asking, and Messy Missy is a sloppy eater, so hot chip powder got all over the bedspread. Katie Clean tried to be polite and ignore Messy Missy's sloppy behavior, but then Messy Missy threw her chip wrapper on the floor. Offended, Katie Clean pretended that she was sick and asked Messy Missy to leave. The next day Katie Clean asked the teacher if she could work by herself. After explaining her situation, the teacher allowed Katie to work alone. Messy Missy would have finished the assignment by herself, but she spilled grape soda all over her assignment.

What is the theme of the story? _____

What happens in the story that leads you to believe this? _____

2. Money Mark was born rich. He never had to work a day in his life and he got everything handed to him on a silver platter. When he was six, Money Mark wanted to go to a basketball game. His father paid the starting five of the Bulls and Celtics to play a private game of Nerf-ball in Money Mark's bedroom. When Money Mark turned thirteen, he wanted to start a band. His father hired the Rolling Stones to play with him every Saturday at the family's private concert hall, though his family was never there. By the time he was twenty-one, Money Mark was bored with life. He was surrounded by a bunch of possessions that he didn't appreciate and Money Mark could find nothing new or exciting in his life. Despite his vast wealth, Money Mark never found happiness. Penny Petal was born poor. Her family hardly had anything to eat, but they loved each other. Penny Petal appreciated every thing she got. When she was six, her father walked her around the United Center before the Bulls played the Celtics. She was excited by the crazy fans and feeling in the air. She looked forward to the day that she could see a real game. When she was thirteen, she learned to play the buckets. She was an extremely talented musician, a natural percussionist, and everyone on the block loved the rhythms that poured from her palms. By the time she was twenty-one, Penny was a successful businesswoman. Now she had everything that she had ever dreamed of and she truly loved to share her wealth and happiness with her family who supported her through all of the hard times.

What is the theme of the story? _____

What happens in the story that leads you to believe this? _____

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Lesson 7

Part 1: Introduction



Determining Theme

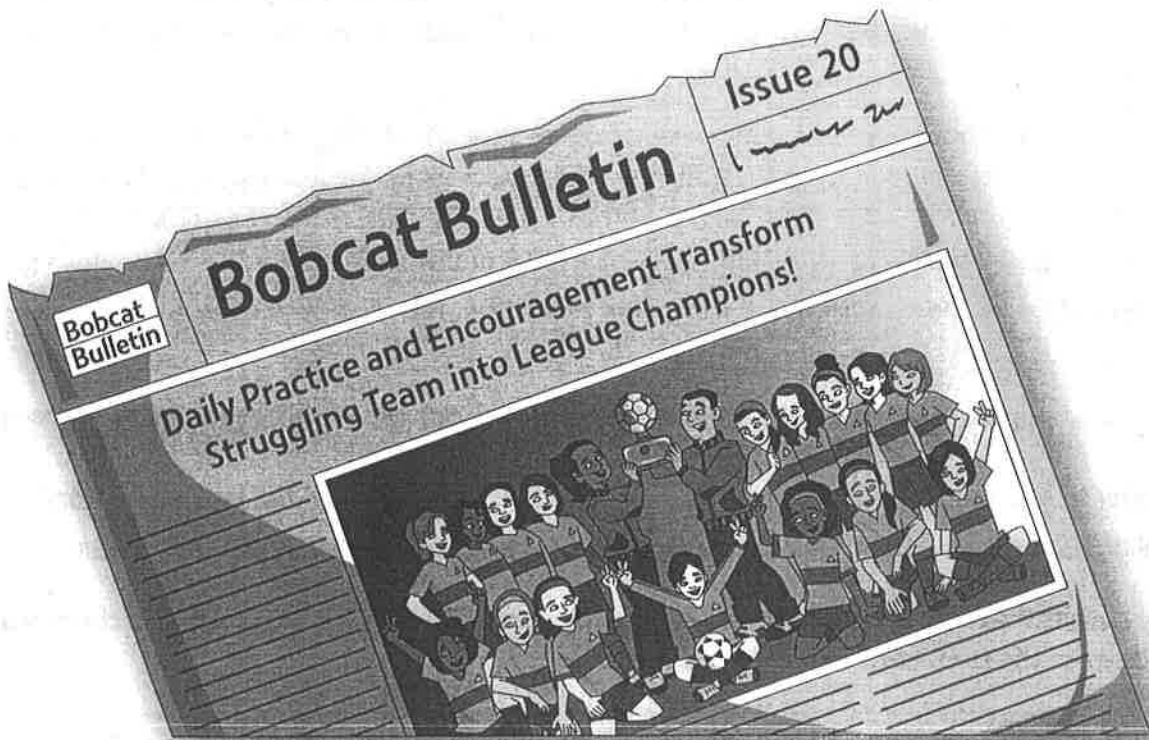
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RL.7.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text. . . .

Theme: *Setting a New Course*

Think back to your childhood. What life lesson did you learn from stories such as “Little Red Riding Hood” or “Snow White”? Here’s a hint: They both have the same **theme**, or main message, which is “Good wins out over evil.”

Study the image and headline below. Think about the theme they suggest.



Circle the most important words in the headline. Then read the chart below to see how organizing details can help you figure out the message of the illustration.

	Events	Theme
Beginning of Season	The team struggles.	Hard work and the support of others leads to success.
End of Season	The team succeeds.	
Reason for Change from Beginning to End of Season	The coaches encouraged the team to practice more and work hard.	

Just as a winning team develops over time, an author develops a theme over the course of the story. As you read, note clues such as how characters change or how story events develop to help you identify the theme, or lesson about life, that the author is trying to share.



Read the first two paragraphs of a story about how a boy named Mick deals with a difficult situation.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

A Different Day by Rachel O'Meara

"Hand over your lunch money, kid!"

Mick stopped daydreaming and looked in the direction of the voice. In front of him was an all-too-familiar scene. Aaron was picking on Jake, just as he did every day at recess. But that was okay with Mick, because at least Aaron was not picking on him. It was also fine because everyone picked on Jake—that was just how things were around here, the accepted norm. In fact, every school Mick had ever attended had had a kid like Jake—someone who was an obvious target, easy to tease and bully.

Today was different, though, because Jake was standing tall, acting brave, and trying to stick up for himself. Aaron responded by getting nastier and louder as he hurled insults at Jake. He pushed forward, forcing Jake backwards and jabbing him in the chest. Jake looked terrified, and Mick could see that Jake's lips were stretched thin as he tried not to let anyone see he was close to yelling for help—or worse, sobbing. But to Mick's surprise, Jake still wasn't backing down.

(continued)

Explore how to answer this question: "What theme is being developed in this part of the story?"

Mick's feelings and observations about the other boys' actions offer clues about the theme.

Find story details that tell how Mick thinks and feels, some of which are shown in the chart below. Add details from the text, and complete the chart.

Point in Story	Important Events	Character's Words, Actions, and Feelings	Theme
Beginning	Aaron demands Jake's lunch money.	Mick watches Aaron pick on Jake. Mick feels that the situation is okay because everyone picks on Jake.	
Middle	Jake is standing up to Aaron.		

Video	Theme	Story Elements That Helped You Determine Theme
<i>For the Birds</i>		
<i>Knick Knack</i>		
<i>Geri's Game</i>		
<i>Ellie and Carl's Relationship</i>		



Close Reading

In the first part of the story, Mick only watches Aaron's interactions with Jake. In the second part of the story, Mick's feelings change.

Underline the sentence that describes when Mick takes action.

Hint

Think about how Mick changes over the course of the story. Which choice best sums up the lesson you learn about life?

Continue reading the story. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

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As he watched from a few feet away, Mick slowly began to fill with anger toward Aaron and compassion for Jake. What was happening wasn't right, and somebody ought to do something. But, on the other hand, Aaron was a nasty character. And when dealing with someone like that, it might be best to lie low and not interfere.

"Hand it over! Now!" insisted Aaron impatiently.

Aaron faked a swipe at Jake, and then laughed loudly when Jake jumped back and cringed. The laughter was even crueler and more hurtful than the words. Today is different, thought Mick, and he forced his feet toward the conflict.

"Not today, Aaron," shouted Mick. "Leave Jake alone!"

Circle the correct answer.

Which statement best states a theme of the story?

- A** Only someone who has been bullied can understand bullying.
- B** It's best to stay out of trouble and never get involved.
- C** It's important to take a stand against bullies.
- D** Bullying will always be a problem that affects many teenagers.



Show Your Thinking

Look at the answer you chose above. Tell which details in the story led you to choose that sentence as the theme.



With a partner, take turns summarizing the story. Then discuss which story events have the strongest impact on the story's theme.