

Theme Essays

GCSE English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Turn the topic into a thesis: 'How does Dickens present the theme of family?'

Step 1 · Topic

Family.

Step 2 · Ask what Dickens suggests

Family offers warmth and belonging even in poverty, and Scrooge's isolation is a rejection of it.

Step 3 · Thesis

'Dickens presents family source of warmth and moral strength that Scrooge rejects and must rediscover.'

Answer: A thesis that states what the writer suggests, ready to be proved.

Check: Arguable, specific, whole-text.

2. Now try one with the steps

Find what carries the theme of family in A Christmas Carol.

Step 1 · Characters

Step 2 · Settings

Step 3 · Structure

Answer:

3. Practice

Show your working. The marks tell you how much is expected.

1. What is the difference between a topic and a theme? [2]

2. Name the motif that carries guilt in Macbeth. [1]

3. Name one thing that can carry a theme besides a character. [1]

4. Turn the topic 'conflict' into a thematic statement for Romeo and Juliet. [2]
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5. What should a theme essay's conclusion do? [1]
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6. Why might organising paragraphs 'by aspect' be stronger than going act by act? [2]
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7. Give two themes that link well in Jekyll and Hyde. [1]
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8. How does light imagery carry the theme of love in Romeo and Juliet? [2]
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9. Write a thematic statement about responsibility in A Christmas Carol. [2]
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10. Plan three aspects of 'secrecy' in Jekyll and Hyde. [3]
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11. Explain how linking ambition and guilt strengthens an essay on Macbeth. [2]
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12. How can structure carry a theme? Give an example. [2]
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13. Write a thesis for: 'How does Stevenson present violence?' [2]
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14. Why should you consider whether a theme is resolved at the end? [2]
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4. Before you hand it in

Writing 'The theme is guilt' thesis.

Say what the writer suggests about guilt.

Only writing about characters.

Include at least one paragraph on a motif or structural choice.

Listing every appearance of the theme.

Group evidence into two or three aspects with claims.

Ending without a message.

Finish with the writer's purpose in context.