

Act Five

Standards Focus: Theme

Theme is the central idea or message in a work of literature. Shakespeare is known for telling stories with universal themes, or ideas to which people across time and cultures can relate. The plot, characters, setting, mood, and even the title, are important in determining the message or lesson the author would like the reader to grasp. We must look at all of these elements as a creative whole to understand why Shakespeare continues to be one of the greatest storytellers of all time.

Directions: For questions 1-4, state the theme for each of the examples. Then, for questions 5-9, use the themes given to find a quote or particular event from the play that illustrates each theme. For 10-12, answer the questions about theme using complete sentences.

1. **Example:** Prince: (to the families) “If ever you disturb our streets again, / Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.”

Theme: _____

2. **Example:** Friar Lawrence: (to Romeo) “Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast.”

Theme: _____

3. **Example:** Romeo: (to Tybalt) “Either thou or I, or both, must go with him.”

Theme: _____

4. **Example:** Prince: (to the families) “See what scourge is laid upon your hate, / That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love!”

Theme: _____

5. **Theme:** Love is the most powerful force of all.

Example: _____

6. **Theme:** It is important to communicate your true feelings.

Example: _____

7. **Theme:** Love at first sight truly exists.

Example: _____

8. **Theme:** There are some forces in life, such as fate, over which humans have no control.

Example: _____

9. **Theme:** Dreams can reveal our subconscious thought.

Example: _____

10. One of the themes of *Romeo and Juliet* is: *Passion can cause someone to ignore common sense.* Outside of the story of Romeo and Juliet, what circumstances might cause someone to ignore common sense while caught up in their passion for something? Has this ever happened to you? Explain.

11. Another theme that permeates the play is: *Family can define, support, and sometimes smother us.* Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Give an example from your own life in which this statement is true. Explain.

12. Why is it important for an author to present theme(s) in a work of literature?
