

Universal Themes

A universal theme is an idea that applies to anyone regardless of cultural differences, or geographic location. Universal themes are ways to connect ideas across all disciplines. It is a central idea about the human condition. It is a generalization about life or human nature; they deal with basic human concerns. A universal theme with generalizations can serve as the organizing element of unit of study.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• abundance/scarcity• abuse of power• action vs. apathy• beating the odds• beauty• coming of age• corruption• courage• effects of the past• faith• fall from grace• family• fate• fear• fear of failure• freedom• friendship• greed• hate• heritage• heroes• honesty• innocence• justice• love• loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• manipulation• mothering• nature• need for change• obligation• parent-child relationships• peace• peer pressure• perseverance• Power of the mind vs authority• prejudice• price of progress• pride• quest for knowledge• religion• revenge• secrecy• security/safety• seizing the moment• survival• the overlooked• the road not taken• war• winners and losers
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Universal Themes imply ideas about the human nature and the relationship of human beings to themselves, each other, and the universe. Themes make revelations and are often stated as generalizations. The following are possible generalizations for the themes, which were developed, by Jim Curry and John Samara in their curriculum document designed for the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented.

CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change generates additional change • change can be either “good” or “bad” • change is inevitable • change is necessary for growth •
COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a community has members • community members share a common environment • communities follow patterns of growth and change • when one community comes in contact with another community, change may occur
CONFLICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conflict is composed of opposing forces • conflict may be natural or man-made • conflict may be intentional or unintentional • conflict may allow for synthesis and change
EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploration requires taking risks • exploration confronts “the unknown” • exploration may result in “new findings” or the confirmation of “old findings” • exploration requires leadership (i.e., explorers)
FORCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • force attracts, holds, or repels • force influences or changes • force and inertia are co-dependent • force may be countered with equal or greater force
ORDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • order may be natural or constructed • order may allow for prediction • order may communicate concepts • order may have repeated patterns • order may have elements of chaos
PATTERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patterns have segments that are repeated • patterns allow for prediction • patterns have an internal order • patterns may have symmetry • patterns are everywhere
POWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • power is the ability to influence • power may be used or abused • power is always present in some form • power may take many forms (chemical, electrical, political, mechanical) • power may be used to facilitate, dominate, or maintain the status quo
RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationships can bring about change • relationships can be simple or complex • relationships may have positive and negative effects • relationships can be natural, forced, or chosen • relationships are connections