

## English III

### Theme Messages

#### **Overview:**

A theme is an intended message of a literary work. A piece of literature has both a subject and a theme message. Often a work can have multiple subjects and multiple theme messages.

#### **Subject + Attitude = Theme Message:**

A subject is the specific topic of a literary work (i.e. friendship).

The attitude the author communicates toward the subject (e.g. "Friendship requires trust") is the theme message. Thus, two authors may write about the same subject, but have different theme messages (e.g. "Friendship takes years to develop" or "Without trust a friendship will die").

A theme message considers all aspects of the story and is definitely more complex than either the subject or the attitude alone.

#### **Recording the Theme Message of a Literary Work:**

Determining the theme message of a literary work provides a good basis for examination of that work and what you might learn from it. The following guidelines will help you create strong theme message statements about the books you read:

1. While a theme message expresses a central idea of a specific literary work, it should be stated in general terms; it should **not** include names of characters or mention specific events from the story.

*Competition that arises from insecurity undermines personal relationships.* Correct example.

*Gene's insecurity causes him to believe a competition exists between himself and Finny, which destroys their friendship.* Incorrect example.

2. Theme messages should be expressed clearly in one sentence.
3. Theme messages should provoke thought; they should not be obvious or cliché.