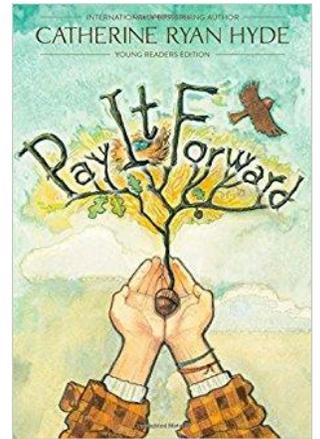


Theme in Literature

Learning Target:

I can use textual evidence to scaffold information to determine themes in the novel *Pay It Forward*.

I can find and cite relevant textual evidence to demonstrate theme in the novel *Pay It Forward*.



Materials:

- Anchor Text
- Theme Worksheet
- Pen/Pencil
- Possible:
 - Chart Paper
 - Colored Markers

Time Frame:

This lesson can be adapted for 1 – 2 days

Procedure:

- Distribute Theme Worksheet
- This activity can be modified and differentiated to respond to students' levels and abilities and to teacher preference.
- Some possible protocols include:
 - Carousel
 - Brainstorming
 - Fishbowl
 - Graffiti
 - Gallery Walk
 - Jigsaw
 - Think, Pair, Share
 - Independent Work

Theme: Themes are central ideas in a work of literature. The themes must often be inferred by looking at characters' words and actions as well as the plot, setting, and mood of the novel.

Directions: Read and answer the questions about the following excerpts of the novel. After examining each pair of quotes, use them to figure out a theme of the novel.

Pair One:

Arlene says, "Now you listen here. Trevor is twelve years old. And you want him to change the word. I never heard such bull" (37).

Mr. St. Claire answers, "First of all, it's a voluntary assignment...Second of all, what I want is for the students to reexamine their role in the world and think of ways one person can make a difference. It's a very healthy exercise" (37).

1. What does Arlene assume about her son's ability to handle the assignment?

2. What is Mr. St. Claire's motivation for giving the assignment?

Chris visits Mr. St. Claire's classroom to ask Trevor about his project.

Chris says, "Your teacher told me you had an interesting idea for that assignment..."

Trevor replies, "Yeah, I invented this thing called 'paying it forward.' ...It was a total bust" (209).

Chris reacts, "Maybe it didn't work out as bad as you thought" (209).

3. What does Chris understand about the movement that Trevor doesn't?

Theme: What theme does this first pair of quotes reveal?

Pair Two:

Trevor puts an ad in the paper and shows up on a bike to a crowd.

Jerry asked, "So, is it a joke?"(24).

Trevor replied, "No, it's for real. I got a paper route, and I make thirty-five dollars a week, and I want to give it to somebody. Who'll, like, get a job and not need it after a while. Just to get'em started, you know?"(24).

4. Why would Jerry think that Trevor's proposal might not be real?

5. Why would Trevor be willing to give up his pay to a stranger?

At the vigil, Reuben addresses the crowd.

“And then a little boy came along, and he decided maybe he could change the whole thing. Make it [the world] a decent place to live for everybody...And now Trevor is fighting for his life after a senseless, purposeless act of violence...If Trevor touched your life that much, then maybe you need to pay that forward”(257-8).

6. How would Reuben make a positive outcome for the sacrifice that Trevor made by helping a stranger?

Theme: What theme does this second pair of quotes reveal?

Theme: You can't judge a book by its cover, or there is often a contrast between external image or appearance and internal character and motivation.

Directions: Find two quotes or text details from the novel to support this theme. (Be sure to cite page number of text.)

1.

2.
