

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Week of February 16 – February 19

Lesson 1: Quatrains

Before we begin this lesson, I would really like to tell you about breakfast today.

*French toast, smothered with honey,
Delicious to taste and munch,
Taste of cinnamon, light and sunny,
Dances in my mouth with each crunch.*

(Source: <https://ericarosenblum.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/quatrain-poem2.pdf>)

Can't you just picture the delicious breakfast? The imagery (sight of the toast smothered with honey, sound of the munch and crunch, taste of cinnamon dancing in the mouth) creates a tantalizing quatrain poetry dish!



A quatrain is a stanza (also know as verse) with four lines and a rhyme scheme. Although a quatrain is only one stanza, a quatrain poem can have any number of stanzas (including one). As a bonus, the rhyme schemes can be extremely varied.

But what is a rhyme scheme? A rhyme scheme is the rhyming pattern in a poem.

A poem might rhyme every line.

My family has a crazy **cat**
That's really very very **fat**.
One day he sat on papa's **hat**,
Now papa's hat is very **flat!**

[\(http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-funny-poetry-chapter-2/\)](http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-funny-poetry-chapter-2/)

A poem might rhyme every second line.

Hercules avoided
baths and showers all week **long**.
Though it left him awfully dirty,
no one ever smelled so **strong!**

[\(http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-funny-poetry-chapter-2/\)](http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-funny-poetry-chapter-2/)

A poem might rhyme the first and third line one way, and the second and fourth line another way. In this

A hummingbird necklace of gold and **blue**,
Sparkled beautifully in the **sun**.

poem, blue rhymes with new (lines one and three) and sun rhymes with outdone. (lines two and four)

No matter if it were old or **new**,
Its beauty could not be **outdone**!



The **theme** in a story, movie, or poem is its **underlying message**, or **big idea**. It is the **critical belief about life** that the author is trying to convey. Through themes, a writer tries to give his readers an **insight into how the world works or how he or she views human life**. Here is an example of theme (from <http://literaryterms.net/theme/>):

A man, fueled by an urge for power and control due to his own pride, builds a supercomputer. That supercomputer then takes over the world, causing chaos and struggle galore.

This sci-fi style story contains many common themes. A few of its themes include:

- *Danger of excessive pride*
- *The risky relationship between humankind and developing technology*

To find a theme, you, the reader, need to think! You need to draw conclusions and infer what the author is trying to express about the topic.

How is the theme different from the topic?

A poem's subject is the topic of the poem - what the poem is about. **Themes** are usually **about big ideas or topics** - love, war, freedom, friendship, good vs. evil. The theme is an idea or belief that the poem expresses about the subject or uses the subject to explore, its message about life and how people behave. It is the statement about society, the world, or human nature. Theme is the POINT being made about the topic. Theme is a STATEMENT or LESSON about life.



Examples of Topics Vs. Themes:

Read the chart to see some examples of theme statements ABOUT topics.

<p>Topic: Revenge</p> <p>Theme: Be careful how you treat others. They may treat you the same.</p>	<p>Topic: Courage</p> <p>Theme: Face your fears and you can defeat them.</p>
<p>Topic: Dreams</p> <p>Theme: Hard work can help you get what you want in life.</p>	<p>Topic: Jealousy</p> <p>Theme: Don't wish for what others have. Be happy with what you have.</p>

To find the theme, think:

- What is the topic?
 - The topic is....
- What does the poem say about the topic?
 - The poem says...
- What do these things tell us that are important to learn about life?
 - The poem tells me it is important to

Read through the following poem to get the gist of the poem. What is it about? What important message does the author have for the reader? What is the theme?

Before you read, here are a few words to know:

- scorn - belief that someone is worthless or despicable
- avarice - extreme greed for riches
- blights - something that frustrates plans or hopes
- wretchedness - extreme misery



I Dream A World

By Langston Hughes

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn

I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.

A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,

Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind-
Of such I dream, my world!

(Source: <http://www.learningfromlyrics.org/Langstons.html>)

Now complete the **First Read** response to this poem.

First Read

Write in complete sentences.

What is the gist of the poem?

What is it about?

What message does the author have for the reader?