

# Understanding the Theme of "The Space Rock"

## Section 1: What is Theme?

The theme of a story is its big idea. It's a message, lesson, or universal truth that goes beyond the literal events of the story. In other words, it's an idea that applies to people in general—not just the characters in the story. An author doesn't usually come right out and tell you what the theme is; as a reader, you need to infer it. A story can have more than one theme.

.....

Fables can be useful when you are learning about theme. They have a special kind of theme called a moral, which is a short, clear lesson. Unlike other kinds of themes, morals *are* often directly stated, usually at the end of a story, either by one of the characters or by the narrator.

**Directions:** Read the following fable by Aesop. Its moral, or theme, appears at the end.

### THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE

One day, a hare was bragging about how fast he could run. He bragged and bragged and bragged. While he was bragging, he laughed at the tortoise, who was very slow. In response, the tortoise challenged the hare to a race, which made the hare laugh even harder. But the hare agreed, and the forest animals got together and mapped out a course. The race began and the hare, being a swift runner, soon left the tortoise behind. About halfway through the course, it occurred to the hare that he had plenty of time to beat the slow tortoise. So the hare decided to play in the meadow for a while. When he finished playing, he decided he had time to take a nap. He curled up under a tree and fell asleep. The tortoise, meanwhile, continued to plod on, taking one slow step after another. Finally, the hare woke up from his nap. "Time to get going!" he thought. And off he went, faster than he had ever run before, until he reached the finish line, where he met the tortoise, who was patiently awaiting his arrival.

*Slow and steady wins the race.*

## Section 2: Matching

**Directions:** Read the themes below, and the Aesop's fables below and on the next page. Decide which theme goes with each fable and write the theme in the box provided.

### THEMES

*A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth.*

*There is strength in numbers.*

*Don't let your words be larger than your deeds.*

### THE BOY WHO CRIED WOLF

There was once a boy who tended his sheep near a dark forest. Alone all day, he was rather bored, so he thought up a plan to get a little company and some excitement. He ran toward the village calling out, "Wolf! Wolf!" The villagers rushed out to meet him. This pleased the boy so much that a few days later he tried the same trick—and again the villagers hurried out to help him. A few days after that, a wolf actually did come out from the forest. The boy of course cried, "Wolf! Wolf!" and ran to the village. But the villagers, who had been fooled twice before, thought the boy was again deceiving them, and nobody came to help. So the wolf made a good meal off the boy's flock.

Moral:

### THE BUNDLE OF STICKS

An old man on his deathbed gave his sons some final advice. He presented them with a bundle of sticks, and said to his eldest son, "Break it." The eldest son strained and strained, but with all his strength was unable to break the bundle. The other sons also tried, but none of them was successful. "Now untie the bundle," said the father, "and each of you take a stick." When the sons had done as instructed, the father said, "Now each of you break your stick." Each stick was easily broken.

Moral:

### THE BOASTING TRAVELER

Upon returning home, a man who had traveled in foreign lands boasted of the many wonderful and heroic feats he had performed in the different places he had visited. Among other things, he said that when he was on the island of Rhodes, he had leaped such a distance that no man could leap anywhere near as far. There were, he said, many people in Rhodes who saw him do it and whom he could call as witnesses. One of the bystanders said, "Now, my good man, if this be all true, there is no need of witnesses. Suppose this to be Rhodes, and leap for us."

Moral:

## Section 3: "The Space Rock"

**Directions:** After you read "The Space Rock," answer the questions below. Then write the theme of the story in the box. Below it, explain why you think what you wrote is the theme.

Who is the main character? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the main conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

How is the main conflict resolved? \_\_\_\_\_

What big idea in the story applies to people in general, not just to the characters in the story?

---

---

The theme of "The Space Rock" is:

I think so because \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---