

## Common Themes in Literature

This list only gives you thematic topics, but if you can identify what topics a work seems to be addressing, you can then build a thematic statement and/or thesis statement for a paper.

Alienation  
Ambition  
Appearance vs. reality  
Custom/tradition  
Betrayal  
Bureaucracy  
Courage/cowardice  
Women/feminism  
Cruelty/violence  
Defeat/failure  
Despair/discontent/disillusionment  
Chance/fate/luck  
Domination/suppression  
Dreams/fantasy/imagination  
Duty  
Escape  
Exile  
Faith/loss of faith  
Falsity/pretence  
Authenticity or lack of  
Family/parenthood  
Free will/will power  
Games/contests/sports  
Tricks  
Greed  
Guilt  
Home  
Heart vs. reason  
Initiation  
Illusion/innocence  
Instinct  
Journey/psychological journey  
Law/justice  
Education/school  
Loneliness/aloneness  
Loyalty  
Materialism  
Memory/the past  
Mob psychology  
Music/dance/art/aesthetics

Mysterious stranger  
Persistence/perseverance  
Patriotism  
Poverty  
Prejudice  
Prophecy  
Repentance  
Redemption  
Resistance/rebellion  
Revenge  
Retribution  
Adventure  
Adversity  
Aging and the aged  
Alcoholism  
Ambiguity/ambivalence  
Class structure  
Aristocracy  
Art and artists  
Beauty  
Beliefs and customs  
Birth, fertility, and rebirth  
Boredom and malaise  
Corruption  
Capital punishment  
Change and progress  
Chaos  
Charity  
Childlikeness, childishness, and immaturity  
Choice and decision  
Christ, Christ complex, Christianity, and martyr complex  
Civilization  
Clergy  
Manifest Destiny  
Communication (or lack of)  
Complacency  
Confession  
Conflict  
Conscience  
Conservative  
Consolation  
Convention  
Conversion  
Country vs. city  
Courage and cowardice  
Cruelty and violence

Dance  
Danger  
Death  
Defeat and failure  
Demons and devils  
Dependence  
Depression, despair, discontent, and disillusionment  
Destruction and destructiveness  
Determinism, chance, fortune, fate, and indifferent universe  
Devotion  
Discovery, including self-discovery  
Divorce  
Domination, enslavement, and suppression  
Addiction  
Envy  
Epiphany  
Escape  
Exile  
Expediency  
Exploitation  
Faith and loss of faith  
Falsity, pretence, and artificiality  
Fame  
Family, fatherhood, and motherhood  
Fanaticism  
Farming  
Faust (ianism)  
Fear and terror  
Folly  
Freedom  
Fulfillment  
Games, contests, sports, competition, and trickery  
God and creation  
God and humanity  
Godliness  
Greed  
Grief and remorse  
Fuilt  
Happiness  
Heaven, including paradise on earth  
Hell  
Helplessness  
Heroes, heroines, and leaders  
Holiday  
Home  
Hospitatliy and offense to community

Human and animal  
Humanity and human understanding  
Hunting  
Hypocrisy and duplicity  
Perfection  
Identity  
Illusion and innocence  
Imprisonment  
Independence  
Initiation, experience, manhood, womanhood  
Instinct vs. reason and heart vs. reason  
Jealousy  
Journey, travel, voyage, both literal and psychological  
Killing and murder  
Law  
Learning, schooling, and knowledge  
Life, joie de vivre, and life spirit  
Love and affection  
Marriage  
Master/servant and employer/employee  
Materialism  
Memory  
Militarism and military life  
Mind and matter  
Miracle  
Mischief  
Mob psychology  
Morality  
Music and song  
The mysterious stranger  
Mystery  
Natural force and natural disaster  
Nature and humanity  
Obsession, compulsion, and habit  
Optimism  
Pacifism  
Parent and child relationship; adult and child relationship  
Past-present-future  
Patriotism  
Persistence and perseverance  
Politics  
Poverty  
Prejudice  
Pride  
Primitivism  
Profession

Promise  
Prophecy  
Prostitution  
Race and racial attitude  
Reality and realness  
Reincarnation  
Immortality  
Religion  
Repentance  
Rescue  
Resistance, rebellion, and revolution  
Respectability  
Responsibility  
Return  
Revenge and retribution  
Ritual  
Rivalry  
Sacrifice  
Sadism/masochism  
Sanity, insanity, and senility  
Scapegoat and victim  
Seafaring  
Search  
Secrecy and secret world  
Sexuality and sexual conquest  
Sickness and the invalid  
Social status  
Societal or cultural differences  
Societal pressures  
Sophistication  
Soul and soul mates  
Spiritual crisis  
Stoicism  
Suicide  
Supernatural, magic, fairies, and ghosts  
Survival  
Suspicion  
Theft and ransom  
Time and circumstances, timelessness, eternity, time and space  
Tolerance  
Tradition and insularity  
Unity and human solidarity  
Universality and microcosm  
Value/value system  
War  
The wasted life, the empty life

Wealth and the wealthy  
Womanhood, feminism, and the rights of women  
youth