Teacher Notes

Theme

Activity 2
Collaborating on Theme

Activity Overview

Using one or more short stories of the teacher's choosing, the students will analyze the themes contained in the stories. With the teacher's assistance, the students will then evaluate how the theme is the central meaning of the story and lends to the merit of the work.

Tip

It is important to choose one or more short stories in which the theme is clearly revealed and central to the literary craft exhibited in the story. Be sure to point out to the class that not all the elements of a story listed on the **Theme Analysis Activity** sheet are always relevant or present in every story. However, those elements that are present are essential when analyzing the theme of the story.

Directions

Before the Activity Begins

Review the terms *theme*, *conflict*, *dialogue*, *characterization*, *repetition*, and *symbol* using the **Theme Analysis Activity** sheet from Activity 1. Tell the students that today they will read a short story (or stories) and analyze the theme in them using the same method they practiced in Activity 1. Have the students open the LearningCheck™ file, **THEME.edc**, on their devices and select the Theme2 Section of the file.

During the Activity

Divide the students into small groups of three or four. Direct the students to read the short story in their groups. Remind them to keep a close eye on the details of the story elements that help reveal the theme.

Students will use the TI-83 Plus, keyboard, and the Theme2 section of the LearningCheck™ file to analyze the theme. Each student will be prompted to:

♦ identify the conflict and resolution

♦ analyze what the conflict and resolution reveal about the theme

♦ select important examples of key dialogue

♦ analyze what this dialogue reveals about the theme

♦ identify ways in which a character changed (or refused to change) in the story

♦ analyze what this change reveals about the theme of the story

♦ identify any important repeated words or ideas

♦ analyze what this repetition reveals about the theme

♦ identify any symbols

♦ analyze what these symbols mean in relation to the theme

Each group of students should discuss these points and reach consensus about the answers before recording them in their files. When this is accomplished, the student groups should use their answers to develop a group statement of the theme or themes of the work.

After the Activity

If the entire class read and analyzed the same story, then you should have a representative from each group present their theme statements and if time permits, discuss the rationale behind each statement. If there is wide variation in the statements, you should lead a class discussion to develop a class theme statement. This discussion should be used to also clarify any misconceptions held by the students regarding theme analysis or definition.

If the small groups read and analyzed different stories, then you should have each group briefly retell the story (if it is not already familiar to the class) before reading the group's theme statement. The group members should explain how the statement was developed, citing specific elements in the story to support their decisions. Use the group presentations to help clarify any misconceptions demonstrated in these analyses.

After the group debriefings, have the class critique the author's theme from the standpoint of how it contributes to the literary merit of the story. If the class analyzed more than one story, perform this critique on one story with which the entire class is familiar. Let the class know that in the next activity, they will be designing original themes of their own using these now-familiar criteria. Their themes can be related to the characters, settings, and plots they have already

developed in the lessons about **Character and Characterization, Setting,** and **Conflict and Plot** or they can be completely new and isolated ideas.