

Themes – Revision

When you ask yourself **why** a specific text has been written, it is often very easy to identify the **broad themes** that an author is discussing, but this is often insufficient to really explain what the author is trying to say. It becomes necessary to first identify the broad themes being dealt with in a text and then trying to identify what the **author is specifically trying to say about these themes**. The best way of illustrating what I'm talking about is through an example:

You are analysing three different texts:

The first text is a story about a girl who meets a boy in high school and falls in love, just before moving away. Later in the text, the girl, now a grown woman, meets the boy, now a man in a troubled marriage, again. They fail to recognise each other, but fall in love anyway and only realise that they first met in high school after the man is divorced and they are living together.

The second text is about a man who met his wife in high school. They got married shortly after matriculating and went on to have two children, while struggling to make ends meet. The man then started working with a new woman that he was very attracted to and they started having an affair. Eventually, the man's wife discovered his infidelity and divorced him, leaving him free to marry the woman he met at work, that he subsequently fell in love with.

The third text concerns a woman who had a very serious relationship during high school, but broke up with her boyfriend in matric, so that she could go to university, study medicine and pursue a career as a surgeon. Now she is in her thirties and is very successful, but still single, engaging in casual relationships that do not interfere with her pursuit of her career goals.

All three of these texts share common themes. Just reading through my short summaries, it becomes easy to identify that all of these texts deal with themes of love, marriage and growing older. That being said, however, it is also easy to see that all of these texts are not the same and that they are not saying the same things about love, marriage and growing older. Now, if you consider an analysis of these text, do you think it is sufficient to identify the three broad themes I have already mentioned and leave it at that? Of course not! You need to dig deeper and discuss what these authors are specifically saying about these themes.

The first passage deals with themes of love, marriage and growing older. In this passage, the author seems to be promoting the concept of "romantic destiny", as the high-school lovers are reunited in later life and are able to resume their high-school romance, despite the obstacles that stood in their way.

The second passage also deals with themes of love, marriage and growing older. In contrast to the first passage, however, the author seems to have a much more cynical view of young love and the enduring nature of relationships, as the protagonist's early marriage sours and he meets another woman to whom he is much more attracted later in life.

The third passage deals with the same themes of love, marriage and growing older, but in a very different way to the first two passages, as the author seems to be promoting the idea that it is acceptable, or perhaps even desirable, for an individual to eschew relationships in pursuit of success and fulfillment in other areas of life.

In this way, I hope that I have ably illustrated why you need to do more than simply relating the broad themes of a passage you are analysing. Always remember that you need to provide a detailed analysis, including justifications, of the author's message when you comment on a text.