

What is Theme?

It is the central message or insight into life.
More than “What is the story about.” It is what the work MEANS.

Not every story has a theme.
Sometimes a good mystery is just for entertainment.

Themes are either:

1. Stated directly – the “meaning” of the story is said in the story
2. Implied – a reader must decide what the message of the story is by looking at other elements such as plot outcomes. To understand implied themes sometimes you must think about it a lot or read it several times.

Example Theme Poem:

Morning uptown, quiet on the street,
no matter the distinctions that can be
made, quiet, very quiet, on the street.
Sun’s not even up, just some kid and me,
Skating, both of us, at the early sun, and
amazed there is grace for us, without our
having to smile too tough, or be very pleasant
even to each other. Merely to be merely to be
by LeRoi Jones

What is the poem about?

- The speaker and “some kid” find themselves skating on a quiet street at sunrise. The two are surprised because at this quiet hour they can go about their ways peacefully, just being themselves.

What is the theme of this poem?

- The quiet of the early morning is magical
- Tensions between people let up when they can just be themselves.