

# THEME

## Reading Puzzles

Natalie and Cecilia preferred to work by themselves, so when their math teacher paired them together for a group project, they were a little hesitant. To get an A on the project, one student had to solve the problem, and the other student had to explain the steps to the class. Natalie was not a mathematician. She loved math, but it was not her strength. What she really loved was public speaking. Cecilia was shy when it came to talking in front of the class, but she was great with numbers. They put their strengths together, accomplished the task, and scored the highest grade they had ever scored on a project.

13

**THEME:**  
Working together  
better than working  
alone.

Finally, the state fair was here. We sprinted toward the entrance, but the length of the line stopped us in our tracks.  
"This is ridiculous!" one lady yelled to the ticket attendant.  
"Where's your supervisor?" another man asked loudly.  
I could see the tears as they gathered in the attendant's eyes. I stepped to the side and addressed the crowd.  
"I'm sure it won't take long to get in. Let's be a good example for the children and be patient," I said.  
I could feel the ticket attendant's sense of relief.

3

**THEME:**  
Don't do what  
others are doing if it  
is wrong or rude.

J

Julia overheard her classmates when they made plans to copy each other's classwork. They asked her to help, but she respectfully refused. Now, she had to make a tough decision to tell the teacher. When the other students found out that she had told the teacher, they were not happy with Julia. However, Julia didn't mind. She knew that she had done the right thing even though it had been difficult.

15

**THEME:**  
It is not  
easy to do  
this.

Annie couldn't believe that she had broken her arm. Yesterday at soccer practice, she had tripped up and fell on her arm. She had never thought that something as simple as a fall could seem to ruin her life. The soccer coach told her that she would probably have to take a break from soccer. When they took her to the hospital and told her she'd need a cast, she cried. Her mom told her that it would be fine and would heal in no time. However, four weeks was a long time to Annie. Annie didn't want to go to school the next day. She dreaded what would happen when her friends saw her arm in the huge cast, but her mom made her. When she walked into her classroom, she was surrounded by people asking if she was okay and wanting to sign her cast. It made Annie feel important, and she decided that maybe a cast wasn't so bad.

18

**THEME:**  
Sometimes situations  
we dread turn out to  
not be that bad.

N

# 18 PUZZLES

# ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This reading center resource includes 18 theme puzzles to practice identifying the themes of fiction stories.

The themes in this center are not one-word themes. Instead, they are themes written as complete sentences.

Three different direction versions are included to help you best use this resource for your students.

**Version 1:** The students will read each text, determine the theme, and then find the puzzle piece that matches.

**Version 2:** The students will read each text, determine the theme, write that theme in their words on their recording sheets, and then find the puzzle piece that best matches.

**Version 3:** This version is identical to Version 2, except optional distractor theme puzzle pieces are included.

Directions and specific recording sheets for the different versions can be found following the puzzle pieces.

Answer keys are also included.

Mary knew better. She was prepared to give a long story about how she had lost the money. She had also invented a story about a big dog chasing her, causing her to lose it. Her mind was racing as she opened the door to her house.

"Please put the change on the table," her mom requested.

"Mom," Mary stated, "I...I..."

She could not bring herself to lie.

"I spent it on candy," Mary admitted.

Mary's mom looked at her in disbelief.

Then she smiled slightly.

"Thank you for being honest," she stated.

"Honesty is evidence of good character."

1

**THEME:**  
**Have the  
courage to be  
honest.**

K

Tina's trainer was in awe of her dedication. She was now 10 hours into her training, and she was still going strong. She wasn't there yet, but her tumbling routine was getting better and better. After the last rotation, she turned and looked at her trainer.

"Ready to call it quits?" her trainer asked.

"Not until I flawlessly complete this routine," Tina replied.

Her trainer nodded in agreement, and before she could reply, Tina was already tumbling across the mat.

2

**THEME:**  
**Never give up on  
something that is  
important to you.**

O

Finally, the state fair was here. We sprinted toward the entrance, but the length of the line stopped us in our tracks.

"This is ridiculous," one lady said to the ticket attendant.

"Where's your supervisor?" another man asked.

I could see the attendant getting flustered. I stepped to the side and addressed the crowd.

"I'm sure it won't take long to get in. Let's be a good example for the children and be patient," I said.

I could feel the ticket attendant's sense of relief.

3

**THEME:**  
**Don't do what others are doing if it is wrong or rude.**

J

My legs felt like spaghetti, and my eyes had dumbbells on them. The 12-hour shift had drained my energy. I stumbled into my apartment, took a shower, and collapsed onto the bed.

"I don't think I can keep doing this," I whispered. "Is this really worth it?"

I looked toward my mirror, and there it was. The shiny black car seemed to be glaring at me. I sighed. Only 54 more hours at the restaurant, and it would be mine. This work would definitely be worth it!

4

**THEME:**  
**Work hard for what you want.**

S

I thought I was invincible. Who else could run 100 yards in 20 seconds? The track meet was next weekend, and feeling confident in my ability, I didn't practice at all. I spent the week enjoying fast food. Then the morning of the meet arrived.

"Let's go, guys," the coach yelled. "Get out there on the track and get set."

I ran to take my position. We all crouched down and waited for the bell.

As soon as it sounded, I took off! Guys were passing me on the left and right.

My confidence faded into last place.

5

# THEME:

**If you don't practice, you may hurt your skills.**

R

Maddie was upset when the other birds left her behind, but Jessica pledged to stay by her side. Maddie needed more time to develop her wings. She practiced her flying skills daily, and Jessica was right there beside her.

"Keep going, Maddie," Jessica said. "You can do it."

Maddie could fly farther and farther every day, and they celebrated each milestone.

Before long, she was ready to leave. As Jessica and Maddie flew north, their smiles illuminated the sky.

6

# THEME:

**Practice makes perfect.**

D

Mia was excited to have dinner with her friends. She hadn't seen them in months! As she drove to the restaurant, she noticed a long line outside of the local soup kitchen. It was cold, and the people were shivering. Mia couldn't overlook the distress on their faces. She stopped and went inside the building. To her amazement, there were only two people serving food.

"Looks like you all could use a hand," she stated.

"Yes, ma'am," one of the gentlemen replied. "Four of our volunteers didn't show up today."

"What a shame!" Mia exclaimed. "Where can I find some gloves?"

7

**THEME:**  
**Put others before yourself.**

L

Theodore and his family could hear the chainsaws getting closer and closer. The forest was disappearing, and they knew why. Many of the bees had lost their homes, and Theodore's family was next. The bees pondered over what could be done. They met with all of the bees in the forest and decided to band together to send a message to the lumberjacks. When the lumberjacks arrived the next morning, they couldn't believe their eyes. There were hundreds of bees gathered together against the blue sky. Their message read, "STOP STEALING OUR HOMES!" Horrified of this display, the lumberjacks retreated.

8

**THEME:**  
**You're never too small to make a difference.**

E

Mrs. Thomas and her students were upset about their test scores. She thought that it had been a good lesson, and the students had passed the other assignments. The students had studied feverishly for the assessment, and their study guides had been flawless. The teacher fretted over the test. She didn't understand what had gone wrong. Then she examined the answer key. The sight of the key gave her instant relief. She had used the wrong key to grade the test! She immediately regraded the tests. The next day, she apologized to the entire class and explained her mistake.

9

**THEME:**  
**When you make a mistake, apologize and try to correct it.**

T

Zekera woke up with butterflies in her stomach. Today was the big day, the day that would determine her future. Today was the day that she would perform for the school's talent show. However, this was not just any talent show. Talent scouts from the local college were coming. Zekera wanted to make a great impression so that she could win a musical arts scholarship.

She was so nervous that she wanted to spend all day practicing, but her mother recommended that she not. Her mother wanted her to save her voice for the show. She explained to Zekera that she had all of the talent she needed already. Zekera smiled and knew that her mother was right. She had this!

10

**THEME:**  
**Have faith in yourself.**

U

Now that Jorge was a teenager, he thought about his childhood often. He had often fought with his little brother over silly things, and he felt very guilty about it. Once, he even started a fight over a toy on his little brother's birthday for no reason. To this day, Jorge still felt bad about it.

When he told his friend about this, she explained that that was all in the past. She reminded him that they have a great relationship now.

Jorge listened carefully as she continued. "Sometimes we make mistakes, but the mistakes are not what is important" she said. "It is when you realize your mistakes, learn from them, and move on. Just like you did with your brother."

11

**THEME:**  
**Accept your mistakes and learn from them.**

W

"I'll give you my food for a week if you will be my friend," the snake told the rabbit one day while they were both searching for food.

"I'm sorry," the rabbit said, "but I don't eat the same foods as you and have no need for your food."

"What about my home? You can sleep in my home if you will be my friend," the snake suggested.

Again, the rabbit declined. He had a comfortable home already. He couldn't understand why the snake kept trying to buy his friendship with food or a place to live. Finally, he realized the snake was just lonely.

"You don't need to get me anything to be my friend. If you want to be friends, let's start by getting to know each other."

12

**THEME:**  
**Friendship cannot be bought.**

A



Natalie and Cecilia preferred to work by themselves, so when their math teacher paired them together for a group project, they were a little hesitant. To get an A on the project, one student had to solve the problem, and the other student had to explain the steps to the class. Natalie was not a mathematician. She loved math, but it was not her strength. What she really loved was public speaking. Cecilia was shy when it came to talking in front of the class, but she was great with numbers. They put their strengths together, accomplished the task, and scored the highest grade they had ever scored on a project.

13

# THEME:

**Working together is better than working alone.**

C

My relationship with my sister would be so much better if she would appreciate me and not tease me so much. I've tried to explain this to her numerous times, but it has never helped. She would just tease me more or ignore me. However, just this morning something changed. When I gave her a hand-written card for her birthday, she just absentmindedly tossed it on her bed as I expected. But, later that night she came into my room and sat on my bed. She told me that she really appreciated the card and my kind words. She said she was sorry that she had been treating me so terribly this past year. She went on to explain how she was taking difficult classes this school year and it was stressing her out. After we talked, we hugged and made plans to watch a movie together the next day. I have a feeling this is just the beginning of our new relationship. I am thankful that I was nice and patient even she was not. It paid off!

14

# THEME:

**Be kind even when others are not.**

Y

Julia overheard her classmates when they made plans to copy each other's classwork. They asked her to help, but she respectfully refused. Now, she had a tough decision to make. Should she keep quiet or alert the teacher? Julia made the tough decision to tell the teacher. When the other students found out that she had told the teacher, they were not happy with Julia at first. However, Julia didn't mind and she knew they would come around. She knew that she had done the right thing even though it had been difficult. Sure enough, her classmates approached her at recess the next day. They told her that they were sorry for getting upset at her. They had talked about the situation and realized she was right all along.

15

# THEME:

**It is not always easy to do the right thing.**

K

Everyone wanted to know about Carmen's bag of candy. There was a rumor that Katie had stolen it, but Katie denied it.

Katie approached Carmen during recess. She looked her straight in the eyes and said, "I did not take your candy, Carmen. Here, you can search my book bag."

"No need," Carmen said. "I believe you."

Some of the other students still thought Katie had taken it. Because of the rumor, other students thought that Katie was a thief. Together with Carmen, Katie worked hard to set everyone straight and let them know the truth.

16

# THEME:

**Rumors are harmful and can spread quickly.**

B

In his mind, Paul the Peacock was the most attractive creature in the rainforest. He strutted around all day, showing off his bright and vivid feathers. He knew that he was very attractive and couldn't understand why he didn't have any friends.

While sitting alone one day, Paul the Peacock was approached by Randy the Raccoon. Randy the Raccoon was extremely popular and had many friends. Paul decided to ask for his help. Randy told Paul that he made friends by offering to help, being nice, and listening to their troubles.

It finally clicked, and Paul realized he was only showing his outside and not the peacock he was on the inside.

17

# THEME:

**What is on the inside is more important than what is seen on the outside.**

F

Annie couldn't believe that she had broken her arm. Yesterday at soccer practice, she had tripped up and fell on her arm. She had never thought that something as simple as a fall could seem to ruin her life. The soccer coach told her that she would probably have to take a break from soccer. When they took her to the hospital and told her she'd need a cast, she cried. Her mom told her that it would be fine and would heal in no time. However, four weeks was a long time to Annie. Annie didn't want to go to school the next day. She dreaded what would happen when her friends saw her arm in the huge cast, but her mom made her. When she walked into her classroom, she was surrounded by people asking if she was okay and wanting to sign her cast. It made Annie feel important, and she decided that maybe a cast wasn't so bad.

18

# THEME:

**Sometimes situations we dread turn out to not be that bad.**

N

OPTIONAL  
DISTRACTOR  
PUZZLE PIECES

**THEME**

**Don't judge a book  
by its cover.**

G

**THEME**

**It is better to work  
alone than with a  
team.**

M

OPTIONAL  
DISTRACTOR  
PUZZLE PIECES

**THEME**

**Friends can easily  
be bought with  
material objects.**

P

**THEME**

**Going along with the  
crowd is necessary  
sometimes.**

V

# VERSION 1

The students will read each text, determine the theme, and then find the puzzle piece that matches.

# THEME PUZZLES

## DIRECTIONS:

Read the texts. Determine the theme of each text. Find the puzzle piece that matches the theme. Write the letter of the puzzle piece that matches the theme on your recording sheet.

# THEME PUZZLES RECORDING SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Text #	Letter of Matching Theme	Text #	Letter of Matching Theme
1		10	
2		11	
3		12	
4		13	
5		14	
6		15	
7		16	
8		17	
9		18	



# VERSION 2

The students will read each text, determine the theme, write that theme in their words on their recording sheets, and then find the puzzle piece that best matches each theme.

# THEME PUZZLES

## DIRECTIONS:

Read the texts. Determine the theme of each text. Write the theme in your words on your recording sheet. Find the puzzle piece that matches the theme. Write the letter of the puzzle piece that matches the theme on your recording sheet.

# THEME PUZZLES RECORDING SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Text #	Theme in Your Words	Letter of Matching Theme
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		

# THEME PUZZLES RECORDING SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Text #	Theme in Your Words	Letter of Matching Theme
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		

# VERSION 3

The students will read each text, determine the theme, write that theme in their words on their recording sheets, and then find the puzzle piece that best matches each theme.

**The students will also have optional distractor puzzle pieces included in the center.**

# THEME PUZZLES

## DIRECTIONS:

Read the texts. Determine the theme of each text. Write the theme in your words on your recording sheet. Find the puzzle piece that matches the theme. Write the letter of the puzzle piece that matches the theme on your recording sheet.

**Note: Some theme puzzle pieces will not be used.**

# THEME PUZZLES RECORDING SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Text #	Theme in Your Words	Letter of Matching Theme
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		

# THEME PUZZLES RECORDING SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Text #	Theme in Your Words	Letter of Matching Theme
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		

Theme Puzzle Pieces Not Used: \_\_\_\_\_



# THEME PUZZLES ANSWER KEY

Text #	Letter of Matching Theme	Text #	Letter of Matching Theme
1	K	10	U
2	O	11	W
3	J	12	A
4	S	13	C
5	R	14	Y
6	D	15	K
7	L	16	B
8	E	17	F
9	T	18	N

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Thanks!  
Jennifer Findley

