Grade 7: Reading Benchmark

Theme

7.R.1.2: Compare two or more themes and their development throughout a literary text.

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Benchmark Introduction



Benchmark:

Compare themes and their development in a piece of literature.

Definition of Theme

The underlying message or big idea of a talk, book, film, or other work.

When looking for theme(s)

1. There can be more than one **theme** in a text.
2. A **theme** applies to the piece of literature as a whole—not just one part or chapter.
3. A **theme** is not a one- or two-word topic, but a complete thought that communicates the author's message.
4. A **theme** is communicated throughout the text, with repeated images, ideas, or symbols.

Examples of comparative themes

In *Beauty and the Beast,* the prince is cursed to become a beast when he shows no mercy to those who are not beautiful. The Beast is kind, though, and Belle falls in love with him despite his appearance.

The tale compares two ideas about beauty:

- Humans are drawn to beauty.
- True beauty is more than skin deep.

Definition of Universal Theme

A universal theme is an idea that applies to anyone, anywhere, regardless of cultural differences.

Examples of universal themes

- The struggle to gain understanding, awareness, and/or spiritual enlightenment
- The tension between ideals and reality
- The inevitability of fate

A universal theme in “Cinderella” and many other fairy tales is: Good wins over evil.

Benchmark Skill Routine



How to analyze and compare themes

Read closely and highlight examples of figurative language and imagery.

Annotate to make observations about the details you selected.

How to analyze and compare themes

Ask yourself:

What larger messages or ideas (themes) about life, humans, or nature do these specific observations suggest?

How to analyze and compare themes

Think about how the themes compare or contrast.

Consider the similarities and differences.

How to analyze and compare themes

The end matters:

Pay attention to how the text ends.

- How are the themes developed?
- Which theme is most supported by the end of the text?

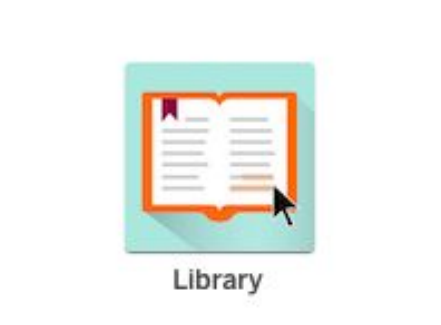
Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and make observations about the figurative language and imagery.
2. Ask yourself what universal messages or ideas these observations suggest.
3. Compare and contrast the themes.
4. Pay attention to the ending and how the themes are developed.

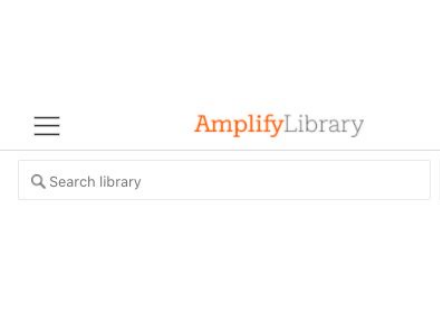
Benchmark in Action: Example of how to analyze and compare themes



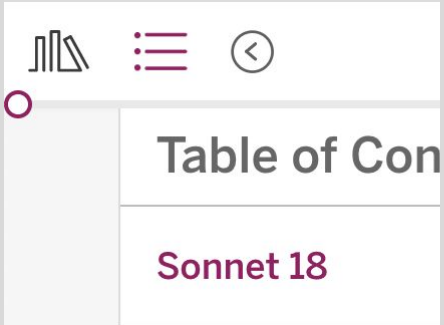
Get ready to read “Sonnet 18” by William Shakespeare.



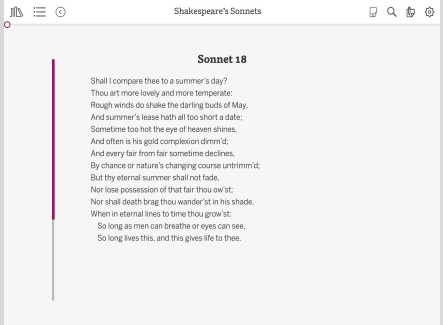
1. Open the Library app.



2. Type “Shakespeare’s Sonnets” into the search bar. Click on the title of the book to open it.



3. Click on the Table of Contents. Find and click on “Sonnet 18.”



4. Read “Sonnet 18.”

“Sonnet 18”

Context

In this sonnet, Shakespeare uses metaphor and imagery from nature to compare the subject to a summer’s day.

Read “Sonnet 18.”

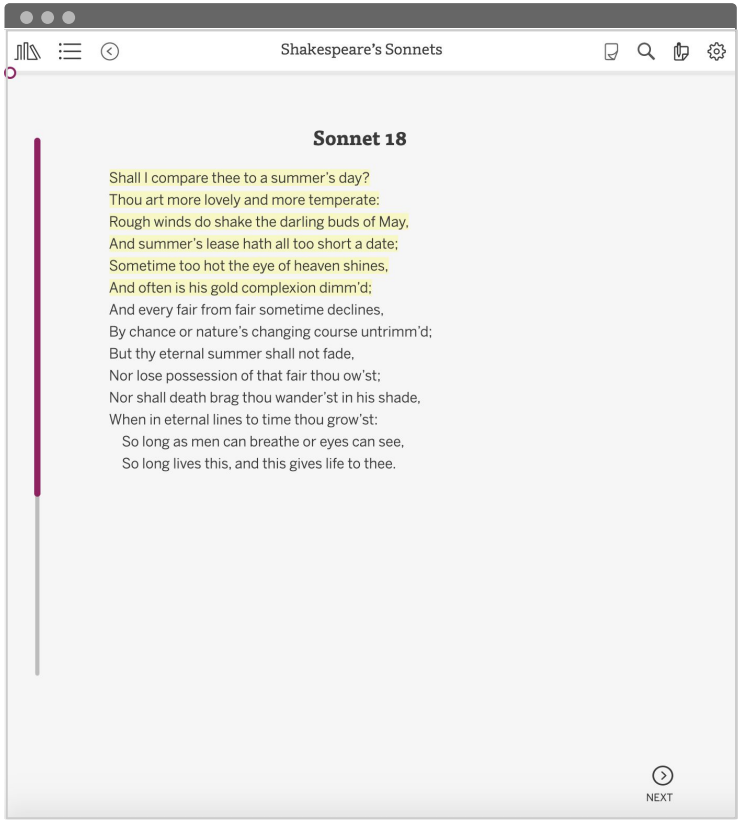
As you read...

- highlight details and make observations.
- think about what universal messages or ideas your observations suggest.
- compare and contrast the themes.
- pay attention to the ending.

Practice Step 1

Highlight details in the text and make observations about figurative language and imagery.

Practice Step 1



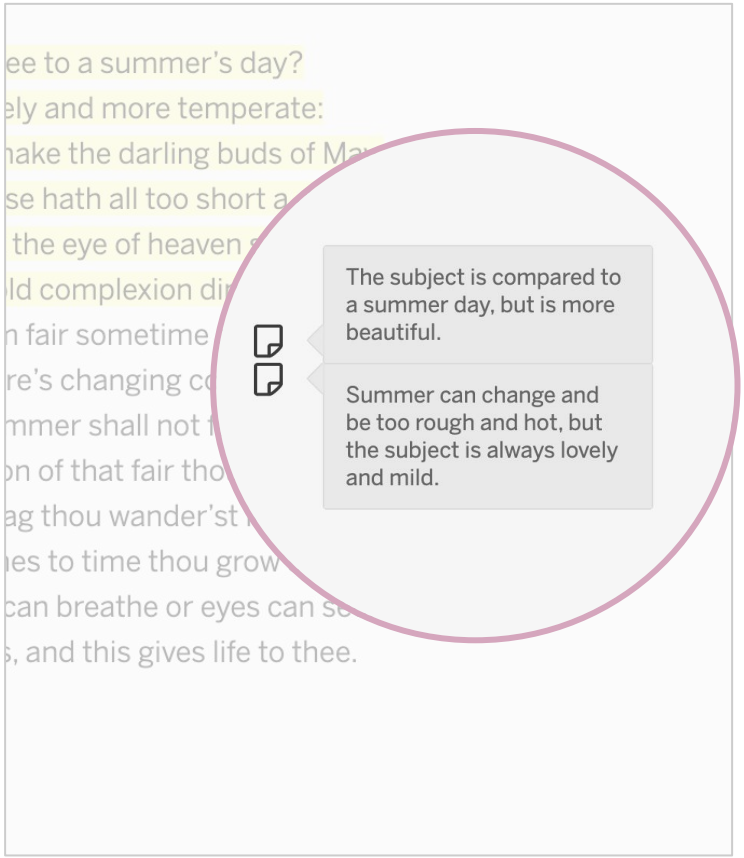
Highlight figurative language in the text:

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:" (lines 1 and 2)

"Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;"
(lines 3–6)

Practice Step 1



Annotate your highlights about figurative language:

- The subject is compared to a summer day, but is more beautiful.
- Summer can change and be too rough and hot, but the subject is always lovely and mild.

Practice Step 2

What messages or ideas do your observations suggest?

Which of these ideas, or themes, are universal (apply to anyone, anywhere, regardless of cultural differences)?

Practice Step 2 Examples:

- Nature is full of beauty, but also change.
- Love is more beautiful than nature.

Practice Step 3

Think about how the themes compare or contrast.

Consider the similarities and differences.

Practice Step 3 Example:

The speaker argues that their beloved's beauty is even greater than the beauty of summer, because the beloved is *always* beautiful and mild, while nature's beauty changes.

Practice Step 4

Pay attention to the ending and how the themes are developed. Is one theme more supported by the end of the text?

Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and make observations about the figurative language and imagery.
2. Ask yourself what universal messages or ideas these observations suggest.
3. Compare and contrast the themes.
4. Pay attention to the ending and how the themes are developed.

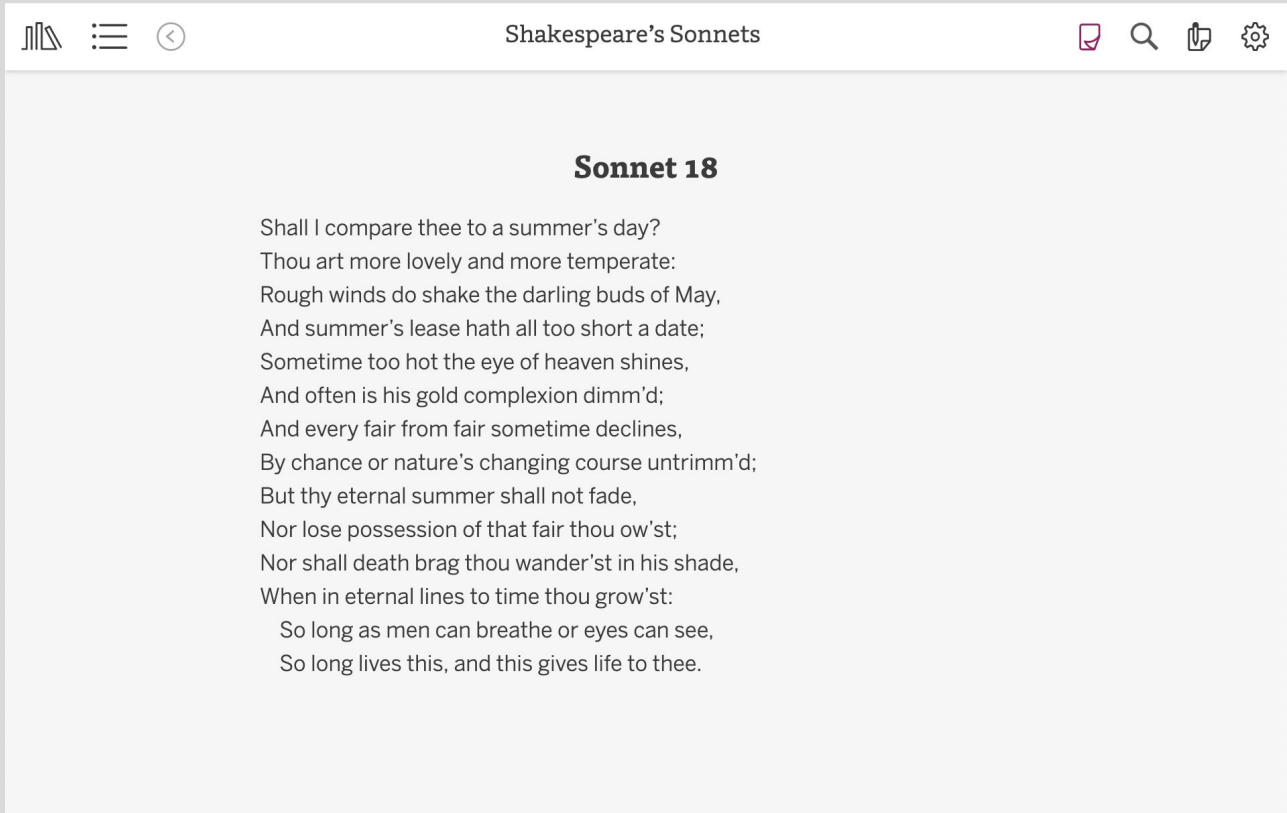
Independent Practice



Benchmark:

Compare themes and their development in a piece of literature.

Reread “Sonnet 18.”



“Sonnet 18”

Context

In this sonnet, Shakespeare uses metaphor and imagery to compare the subject to a summer’s day. The speaker suggests that their love for the subject is so powerful that it is eternal.

Practice analyzing and comparing themes

Step 1
Continue to select text details and make observations about the figurative language in the poem.

Step 2
Identify larger messages or ideas about life, humans, or nature that are suggested by your latest observations. Have you discovered any other universal themes?

Step 3
How do the messages we discussed earlier develop and compare to or contrast with one another?

Step 4
Trace these themes to the end of the poem. How are they developed?

Check for Understanding



Share and Discuss

1. What are three or four key observations you made about figurative language in the poem?

Share and Discuss

2. What universal messages or ideas do these observations suggest?

Share and Discuss

3. Compare themes in “Sonnet 18.”
    - How do the themes develop?
    - How are the themes similar or different?
    - Are the themes universal?