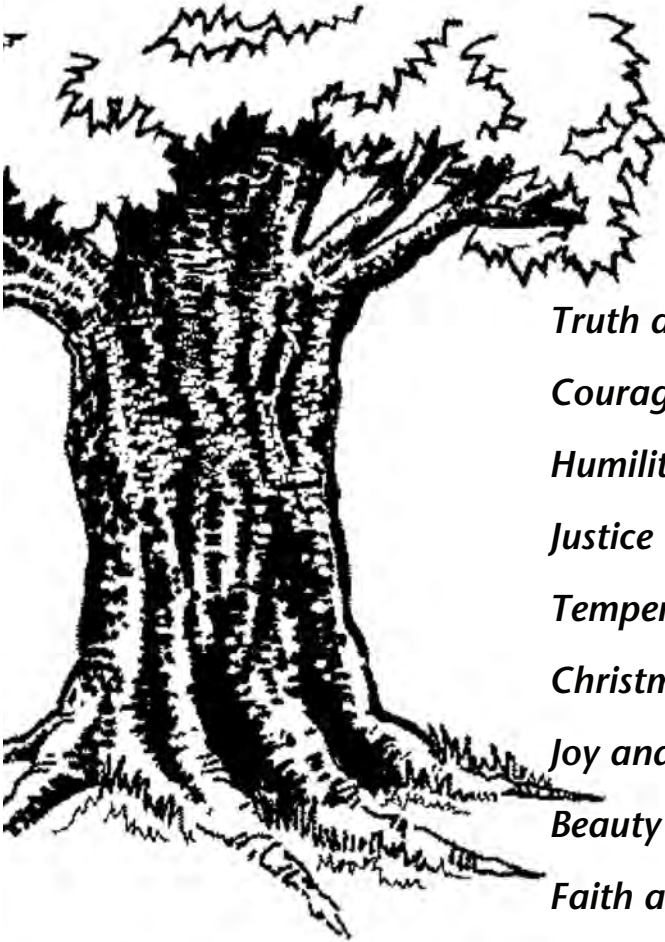

Themes in Literature

SUPPLEMENTAL LESSONS

Fourth Edition



Truth and Wisdom

Courage

Humility

Justice

Temperance

Christmas

Joy and Peace

Beauty

Faith and Hope

Love

Time and Eternity

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Introduction

The *Themes in Literature Supplemental Lessons* booklet is for use with the literature textbook *Themes in Literature* Fourth Edition (copyright © 2010 A Beka Book). The lessons provide more detailed information on certain literary concepts and devices than can be found in the *Themes in Literature* textbook. The student should study each supplemental lesson at the conclusion of each corresponding unit. Also note that the answers to the Comprehension Questions at the conclusion of each lesson can be found in the *Themes in Literature* teacher's manual, published separately by Christian Liberty Press.

These supplemental lessons are an important part of the *Themes in Literature* course because the tests for the course include questions derived from these lessons. It is also hoped that these supplemental lessons will help to provide a foundation for future literature studies and for future enjoyment and discernment in reading.

Diane C. Olson

Themes in Literature

Supplemental Lessons

Unit 1

Lesson 1: *Speaker and Point of View*

The speaker of a story or poem is *the one that is telling the story*—the one that is speaking. The speaker can also be called the *narrator*. The speaker can be the author, but does not have to be. The speaker can be a character that was involved in the story or that observed the events of the story. The speaker can be a major character or a minor character. The speaker can even be an inanimate object. For instance, a rock or a tree can be a speaker and be telling what is happening around it. An animal can also be a speaker.

In any story or poem, understanding who the speaker is, is essential to understanding the piece. The reader should be aware, if possible, of approximately how old the speaker is, how much the speaker knows about the situation and other characters, how much the speaker knows about life in general, etc.

In any story or poem, the point of view is *the perspective from which the story is written*. When the story or poem is written from the perspective of a character or the author telling his own story, you see statements such as “I saw this” or “I did this.” A story or poem written from this point of view is said to be written in **first-person point of view**. In poems especially, the piece can be written in the first-person point of view, but the speaker not be the author. Sometimes it can be difficult or impossible to know if the author is the speaker without additional context. The author may be simply assuming a character that is not his own.

A story written without these types of “I” statements—in other words, not written from the perspective of a particular character, but simply telling the story—is written from the **third-person point of view**. The speaker in a story written in third-person is

usually the author. In a third-person story, the author might relate only events and dialogue, leaving the reader to discern feelings and motives of the characters. However, the author might also relate what the characters are thinking and feeling. This is the **omniscient third-person point of view**, in which the speaker “knows all.”

Examples from Unit 1:

“A Harder Task Than Making Bricks without Straw” is written in the first-person point of view. This story is autobiographical. In other words, the author, Booker T. Washington, who is also the speaker, is telling what actually happened to him during the time of the establishing of Tuskegee Institute.

The story “Explorer of the Stars” is written in third-person point of view. The speaker was not involved in the story, so the speaker is the author. Also note that the speaker often tells the reader what Galileo was thinking, so the story is in the omniscient third-person point of view.

The poem titled by the textbook “A Good Name” is written in first-person point of view. In this case the words are from a play by William Shakespeare. The speaker is the character, named Iago, who says the lines during the play.

Comprehension Questions:

Identify the speaker and the point of view for each of the following:

1. “Success”
2. “You’ve Got to Learn”

Lesson 2: Plot

The **plot** of a story is *the sequence of events in that story*. A plot can be described in detail, or a plot can be described very briefly. The basic plot of any love story has famously been described as, “Boy meets girl, boys loses girl, boy gets girl.” (Usually a literature book question or a book report requires more detail than that, however.)

Any story will have an introduction (or beginning part), a body (or middle part), and a conclusion (or end part). The introduction and conclusion are usually very short. The **introduction** will start off the story with something to gain the reader's attention and will introduce the *main character*, or *speaker* (who is not always the main character), the *conflict*, and the *setting*. The setting simply refers to where and when the story takes place. The middle part, or **body**, contains most or all of *the action of the story*. This includes all the events leading up to the climax, the climax, and sometimes some action after the climax. The **conclusion**, or ending, should be short and can contain some *clarifying or additional information*, *the moral of the story*, or *a surprising twist*.

In any good short story or novel, there will be at least one main conflict. The **conflict** can be described as *the problem that the main character needs to solve*. A story's conflict will fall within one of three categories. Man against man conflict occurs when the main character has a problem with another person or with a group of people. Man against environment conflict occurs when the character has a problem stemming from forces of nature, pressures of society, or forces of "fate." Man against himself conflict refers to an inner struggle that the character has, fighting against something in his own nature. Usually a longer story, and sometimes a shorter story, will have multiple conflicts.

The **climax**, also sometimes called the **crisis**, is often described as *the most exciting part of the story*. It is the point to which most of the events of the story are leading. The climax is a turning point that occurs right before the resolution of the main character's problem and can be a fight or an exciting event. However, it can also be a major decision or realization on the part of the main character.

Example from Unit 1:

In "You've Got to Learn," the basic plot can be described in a few sentences. An otter that was protecting its family killed Andy's dog. Andy is distraught and starts hunting the otter with the intent to kill it. As he spends time observing nature, however, he gains an understanding and admiration for animals in general and the otter in particular. He saves the otter from two attacking lynxes.

The climax occurs during the fight between the otter and the lynxes. Andy “was so filled with a sudden overwhelming admiration for [the otter’s] courage that he nearly shouted encouragement” (p. 42). Andy comes to the realization that the otter was only protecting its pup when it killed the dog. It is this realization that resolves the two main conflicts in the story. Andy has a man against nature (the otter) conflict that is resolved by his change of heart towards the otter. He also had a man against himself conflict as he was dealing with his conflicting feelings over the dog, the otter, his father, and his brother. This conflict within himself was also resolved with his change of heart toward the otter.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Give the plot for “God Sees the Truth, but Waits” in 3–5 sentences. Then identify the climax of the story.
2. Identify the climax for a book, movie, or television show of your choice.

Lesson 3: Theme

The **theme** of a work is *the main idea that the author is trying to convey*. It is the main point of the story and can also be called *the moral of the story*. For an article or a research paper, the theme is called the thesis. The theme can be expressed as a complete thought, using a sentence, or possibly two, but no more. The author will sometimes state his theme directly. More often, though, in a story or poem, the reader must discern the theme for himself.

The theme is more than just the general topic. For example, the theme of the poem “Truth” (p. 43) is not “Truth and Wisdom” (the textbook unit name). The theme is that truth will always prevail because God sees to it.

The theme is also not necessarily a succinct statement of the events in the story. **The theme is the lesson behind the events.** For example, the theme of “Every Dog Should Own a Man” is not that a dog should own and train a man. It is that humans cater to their dogs to such an extent that a role reversal seems to take place, making it appear that the dog is training the man.

Comprehension Questions:

State the theme for each of the following:

1. “A Harder Task Than Making Bricks without Straw”
 2. “The Difference Between Knowledge and Wisdom”
-

Lesson 4: Personification

Personification is a literary device in which something that is not human is given human characteristics. Anything can be personified.

Any **object** that is said to speak, know, smile, etc., is being personified. For example, in “The Snow-Storm” on pages 198–199, the north wind is personified as a wild builder making art work out of the snow. Another example can be seen in “In the Garden of the Lord,” where the lilies “pray” (line 16).

Animals can also be personified by giving them attributes or abilities that are normally considered human. In “Every Dog Should Own a Man,” the dog could be considered personified because it is consciously training the man.

Qualities or **attributes** such as beauty, reason, or wisdom can be personified. For example, in “The Difference between Knowledge and Wisdom,” knowledge “dwells” in heads, as one would dwell in a house, and is said to be “proud.” Wisdom “builds” and is “humble.”

Often **heavenly bodies** are personified. For example, in “The Spacious Firmament on High” on pages 246–247, the sun, moon, and stars are personified as being able to tell the story of creation and to sing, “The Hand that made us is Divine” (line 24).

Comprehension Questions:

Find an example of personification in each of the following:

1. “Truth” (p. 43)
2. “True Heroism” (p. 164)