

# THEMES *in Literature*

FIFTH EDITION

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TRUTH & WISDOM

TIME & ETERNITY

PERSEVERANCE

COURAGE

HUMILITY

JUSTICE

JUSTICE

TEMPERANCE

POWER OF WORDS



JOY & PEACE

BEAUTY

FAITH & HOPE

LOVE

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LANGUAGE ARTS SERIES

## ***Themes in Literature***

Fifth Edition

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Each anthology in the Abeka literature series is a valuable tool to the Christian young person seeking to increase his knowledge of good literature. The student will be exposed to a wide variety of short stories, poems, essays, and plays and to a good balance of serious and humorous selections from some of the finest writers of world literature.


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## The Difference between Knowledge and Wisdom

from *THE WINTER WALK AT NOON*

WILLIAM COWPER<sup>1</sup>

*William Cowper describes characteristics of knowledge and wisdom. Based on his description, which is better?*

- Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,  
 Have ofttimes no connexion.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge dwells  
 In heads replete<sup>3</sup> with thoughts of other men;  
 Wisdom in minds attentive<sup>4</sup> to their own.
- 5 Knowledge, a rude<sup>5</sup> unprofitable mass,  
 The mere materials with which Wisdom builds,  
 Till smooth'd and squared and fitted to its place,  
 Does but encumber<sup>6</sup> whom it seems to enrich.  
 Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
- 10 Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.

<sup>1</sup> **Cowper** (Cooper)

<sup>2</sup> **connexion**—former spelling of *connection*

<sup>3</sup> **replete** (rĭ·plet')—abundantly full

<sup>4</sup> **attentive**—carefully watchful

<sup>5</sup> **rude**—rough; unfinished; undeveloped

<sup>6</sup> **encumber** (ĕn·kūm'bar)—to burden or weigh down



**William Cowper** (1731–1800), the son of a clergyman, became one of the most widely read English poets of his day. He liked to write about the joys and sorrows of everyday life, describing ordinary things such as hedges, rivers, haystacks, and ditches in his poetry. Cowper also wrote many hymns and religious poems, collaborating with John Newton on a book of religious verse entitled *The Olney Hymns*. Some of his hymns include “Oh! For a Closer Walk with God” and “There Is a Fountain.”



### Theme

the central idea which gives a work meaning

### Blank verse

an unrhymed verse

### Think IT THROUGH

1. According to the poet, what is the difference between knowledge and wisdom, and which is more desirable?
2. The book of Proverbs has much to say about knowledge and wisdom. Explain the truth concerning the foundation of wisdom found in Proverbs 9:10.





## EXPLORER OF THE STARS

adapted from *FIVE SONS OF ITALY* \*\*\* HELEN ACKER

*Hundreds of years ago, people believed that the earth, not the sun, was the center of the universe. So when Galileo's telescope revealed otherwise, man's understanding of the universe was overthrown. Unfortunately for the truth and for Galileo, there were powerful forces at work with an intent to suppress the truth.*

At the ancient University of Padua near Venice, nearly seventeen years after the experiment of the falling balls,<sup>1</sup> a mysterious rumor was going around. Like most rumors, it was not clear. It came from Holland and concerned a glass which was said to have magic properties. Some said that in this glass men were like giants, and fleas like monsters. Even ghosts became visible. One could look down a road and see nothing at all. Yet with the magic glass, houses and carts and men appeared, all clear and real.

Most of the black-robed professors of the university did not take the rumor seriously. "More hocus-pocus," they said laughing. Then they went their way, putting the foolish story out of their minds.

Nevertheless the rumor persisted. One night, in one of the beautiful palaces of Venice, at a gathering of distinguished men, it came up again. Among

the learned men present was Domine<sup>2</sup> Galileo Galilei,<sup>3</sup> now of the University of Padua. He heard the rumor for the first time. He had come into the city earlier in the day to go to the famous Venetian libraries in order to examine some new and precious manuscripts that had recently been acquired. After the day spent in study, he was enjoying an evening of sociability. The lofty rooms filled with pictures and carefully chosen sculptures, the fine talk of his friends, the good food...and the soft illumination of many lighted candles—all created in him a relaxed and receptive mood.

<sup>2</sup> Domine (dōm'ə-nē')—Italian title of respect meaning "master" or "lord"

<sup>3</sup> Galileo Galilei (gā'l ə-lā'ō gā'l ə-lā')

### Plot

the arrangement of events in a story or play;  
the sequence of related actions

<sup>1</sup> This refers to Galileo's experiment in which he proved, by dropping objects of different weights from the top of Pisa's Leaning Tower, that the speed of fall of an object is not proportional to its weight.

His host, Count Morosini, had been talking for some time. As always, he talked well, of music, art, and the recent additions to his extensive collections. He now turned to Galileo. “Have you heard the rumor from Holland? It is said that an optician<sup>4</sup> has made a glass that brings distant objects near and magnifies them. Do you think such a report could be true? Or is it fantasy?”

Galileo was startled. He felt as though a flash of light went into his mind and lighted it, as lightning in a cloud. Of course it could be true. He sat up. “I think it is possible,” he said at once. “I don’t know what it is. Perhaps layers of glass can be so arranged.”

There was some further talk about the magic glass, but as no one had definite information, the topic was dropped. Galileo, however, could not give it up. He excused himself, and, leaving the party, hurried out of the palace of his friend. He walked rapidly down the moonlit street. At length, he took a gondola,<sup>5</sup> but for once found its slow movement through the canals tedious.<sup>6</sup> As his mind continued to be stirred up and excited, he decided not to stay in the city for the night, but to take a carriage and return to his study at Padua. During the drive, his thoughts raced.

“The instrument must be more than one glass,” he reasoned. “A concave<sup>7</sup> glass diminishes. A convex<sup>8</sup> one magnifies, yet blurs and confuses an object. Perhaps there can be a combination of the two.”

The road ahead of Galileo’s carriage lay smooth and lighted by the moon. Pine trees made masses of dark, and from time to time the leaves of an olive tree gleamed silver. Galileo was always aware of nature’s beauty. It now seemed to him that the magnificence of the night and the sky were sympathetic to his thoughts, and that nature herself was pushing him on to some marvelous discovery.

Back in his study, he sat down at his table and began to work with mathematical formulae. He saw what must be done. He had only to get the precise curve of each lens and the exact space between them that would give maximum magnification. He worked steadily through the day, and by night had finished

his calculations. He had worked out the theory or principle of the mysterious instrument. It was found later that the Dutch optician by chance had put two lenses together which magnified. He, however, had no knowledge of the principles involved.

For the next weeks, Galileo gave all his time to the instrument. He worked over the glass, grinding it with the greatest care so that it would be mathematically true and precise. Finally, after two months’ work, he was able to produce what he wanted. He set the two lenses, one convex, the other concave, in an iron tube.

And now at last the moment had come to try out the double glass, to put figures and formulae and paper diagrams to the test. With beating heart, Galileo climbed to the roof of his house. He lifted the mysterious instrument to his eyes, then slowly turned it up to the heavens.

There was no way he could have been prepared for what he saw. He was the first man in all the world to have a good telescope, the first to swing it round the sky! Suddenly, dazzlingly, stars leaped toward him.

In one moment, he saw that the sky was vaster than any man had dared to imagine, that there were myriads of stars never before seen. He saw that the Milky Way was not a veil of mist, but a mighty river of stars, an infinite unimaginable number poured out by the Creator of a tremendous universe. He saw that the moon, which men had thought was smooth and shining, was covered with mountains and valleys. He saw fixed<sup>9</sup> stars where there had been none before, ten times the number recorded by man.

The longer he looked, the more amazed he became. He grew tired with looking and holding the instrument, yet could not put it down. He was alternately elated<sup>10</sup> and humble, then elated again. Once he laughed in delighted wonder. “If one of our celebrated architects had to distribute this multitude of stars... he would have disposed them in beautiful arrangements of squares, hexagons, and octagons. God, on the contrary, has shaken them from His hand as if by chance in wealth and profusion<sup>11</sup> incredible.”

Later, in different mood, he exclaimed, “O presumptuous!<sup>12</sup> O rash ignorance and littleness of man!”

<sup>4</sup> **optician** (op·(t)shən)—one who makes and sells glasses

<sup>5</sup> **gondola** (gŏn·(d)ə)—lightweight boat propelled by a single oar; often used on Venice’s canals

<sup>6</sup> **tedious** (tē·dē·əs)—tiresome by reason of slowness or dullness

<sup>7</sup> **concave** (kŏn·kāv)—curving inward

<sup>8</sup> **convex** (kŏn·vēks)—curving outward

<sup>9</sup> **fixed**—immovable; stationary

<sup>10</sup> **elated** (i·lā·təd)—delighted, exhilarated; overjoyed

<sup>11</sup> **profusion** (prŏ·fyŏŏ·zhən)—abundance

<sup>12</sup> **presumptuous** (prĭ·zŭmp·shŏŏ·əs)—excessively bold and self-confident