

Common Literary Themes

1. **Man Struggles Against Nature:** Man is always at battle with human nature, whether the drives are sexual, material or against the aging process itself.
2. **Man Struggles Against Societal Pressure:** Man is always struggling to determine if societal pressure is best for living. Novels like *Revolutionary Road* or *Mrs. Dalloway* give examples of characters who know how society says they should live, but feel society's dictation is contrary to what makes them happy
3. **Man Struggles to Understand Divinity:** Man tries to understand and make peace with God, but satisfaction is elusive and difficult.
4. **Crime Does Not Pay:** A popular theme played out in books throughout time is the concept that honesty is honored and criminals will eventually be caught. *Crime and Punishment* and *The Telltale Heart* are two stories written on this theme.
5. **Overcoming Adversity:** Many books laud characters who accept a tough situation and turn it into triumph. Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* exemplifies a shrewd person who finds a way to come out on top despite failed relationships and an economic depression after the Civil War.
6. **Friendship is Dependent on Sacrifice:** This is the idea that you can't have friends if you don't act like a friend.
7. **The Importance of Family:** Sacrifices for family are honored and explored, as are the family bonds that survive adversity.
8. **Yin and Yang:** Just when you think life is finally going to be easy, something bad happens to balance it all out.
9. **Love is the Worthiest of Pursuits:** Many writers assert the idea that love conquers all, appealing to the romantic side of us.
10. **Death is Part of the Life Cycle:** Literary works with this theme show how death and life are intricately connected.
11. **Sacrifices Bring Reward:** Sacrifices and hard work pay off in the end, despite the challenges along the way.
12. **Human Beings All Have the Same Needs:** From the Montagues to the Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet* or the characters in S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, book after book asserts that rich or poor, educated or uneducated, all human beings need love and other basic needs met.

