

Motifs in literature and film (intermediate/advanced)



Name:

Date:

Read the text with the whole class and play Bingo!

A motif is like a recurring theme or idea that pops up throughout a story, like a symbol that keeps showing up in different ways. It can be an object, a character, a phrase, or even a color that has a deeper meaning and helps to tie the whole story together.

One famous literary motif is the fish in "The Old Man and the Sea" by Ernest Hemingway. The fish represents more than just a fish; it symbolizes the old man's struggle and determination to keep fighting, no matter how tough things get.

Another well-known motif is childhood in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain. Huck's adventures and experiences as a kid represent the innocence and freedom of childhood, but also the harsh realities of growing up in a world full of challenges and tough choices.

In "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the green light is a powerful motif. It represents Gatsby's hopes and dreams for the future, especially his desire to be with Daisy. The green light is always just out of reach, symbolizing how some dreams can never be fully realized.

Some other examples of motifs in literature include the mockingbird in "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee, which stands for innocence and the idea that it's wrong to harm something that doesn't do any harm to others. The color red in "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne represents sin and shame, but also passion and strength.

Motifs are important because they help to give a story depth and meaning. They make us think about the bigger picture and the themes that the author is trying to explore. So next time you're reading a book or watching a movie, keep an eye out for those repeating symbols and ideas - they might just be motifs!

Out of reach	Passion	Recurring theme	Sin	"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"
Struggle	Freedom	Phrase	"The Great Gatsby"	Object
Color	"The Scarlet Letter"		"The Old Man and the Sea"	Deeper meaning
Shame	Motif	Fish	Symbol	Mockingbird
Innocence	Childhood	Red	Story	Character

Let's explore a motif in detail

Describe the significance of the recurring motif of surveillance in '1984'.

How does the motif of language manipulation contribute to the theme of power in '1984'?

What role does the motif of memory play in the development of Winston's character in '1984'?



How to go about analyzing motifs

Step 1: Close Reading

Read the Text Carefully: Pay attention to details, imagery, symbols, and recurring elements throughout the text.

Annotate: While reading, underline or highlight words, phrases, or images that appear repeatedly.

Step 2: Identify Repetitions

Look for Recurrence: Identify elements that repeat. This can include objects, phrases, colors, symbols, settings, or actions.

Take Notes: Jot down instances where these elements occur and the context in which they appear.

Step 3: Determine the Significance

Contextual Analysis: Examine the context in which the motif appears. Consider the characters involved, the setting, and the plot events at each occurrence.

Symbolic Meaning: Think about what the repeated element might symbolize. Consider cultural, historical, or thematic connotations.

Step 4: Connect to Themes

Link to Themes: Determine how the motif reinforces or highlights the main themes of the work. Ask yourself how the motif contributes to the overall message or moral of the story.

Character Development: Assess how the motif affects character development or the reader's understanding of the characters.

Step 5: Analyze Patterns

Pattern Recognition: Look for patterns in how the motif develops over the course of the text. Consider any changes or evolutions in the motif's meaning or significance.

Impact on Narrative: Analyze how the motif influences the narrative structure or the reader's perception of the story.

Step 6: Support with Evidence

Collect Evidence: Gather quotes and specific instances from the text where the motif appears.

Provide Analysis: Explain how each piece of evidence supports your interpretation of the motif's significance and its connection to the themes.

Step 7: Synthesize Your Findings

Summarize: Combine your observations and analyses into a coherent understanding of the motif.

Write: Construct an essay or a detailed explanation that outlines the motif, its significance, and its impact on the text as a whole.

Analyze the motif of propaganda in '1984' and its impact on society.
