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theme

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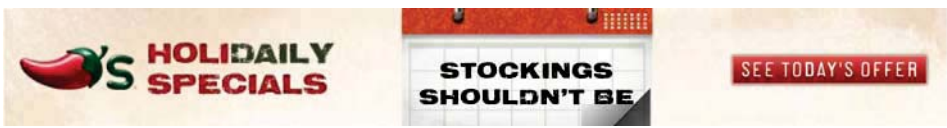
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theme

[theem] Show IPA  
**noun, adjective, verb**, themed, them ing.

**noun**

- a subject of discourse, discussion, meditation, or composition; topic: *The need for world peace was the theme of the meeting.*
- a unifying or dominant idea, motif, etc., as in a work of art.
- a short, informal essay, esp. a school composition.
- Music** .  
  - a principal melodic subject in a musical composition.
  - a short melodic subject from which variations are developed.
- Grammar** . the element common to all or most of the forms of an inflectional paradigm, often consisting of a root with certain formative elements or modifications. Compare **stem**<sup>1</sup> ( def. 16 ) .
- Linguistics** . topic ( def. 4 ) .
- Also, **thema**, an administrative division of the Byzantine Empire.

**adjective**

- having a unifying theme: *a theme restaurant decorated like a spaceship.*

**verb (used with object)**

- to provide with a theme.

Search **theme** on the Web

**Origin:**  
1250 1300; ME *teme*, *theme* (< OF *teme*) < ML *thema*, L < Gk *thēma* proposition, deposit, akin to *tithēnai* to put, set down

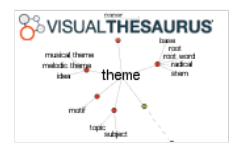
**Related forms**

themeless, *adjective*  
subtheme, *noun*

**Synonyms**

- thesis, text. See [subject](#). 3. paper.

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subject, topic, motif, idea, melodic theme  
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**top·ic** 

[**top** ik]  [Show IPA](#)

**noun**

1. a subject of conversation or discussion: *to provide a topic for discussion.*
2. the subject or theme of a discourse or of one of its parts.
3. *Rhetoric, Logic* . a general field of considerations from which arguments can be drawn.
4. Also called **theme**. *Linguistics* . the part of a sentence that announces the item about which the rest of the sentence communicates information, often signaled by initial position in the sentence or by a grammatical marker. Compare [comment](#) ( def. 6 ) .

**Origin:**

1560-70; < L *topica* (pl.) < Gk ( *tà* ) *topiká* name of work by Aristotle (lit., (things) pertaining to commonplaces), equiv. to *tóp* ( *os* ) commonplace + *ika*, neut. pl. of *ikos* [\\_ic](#); see [topo](#)

**Synonyms**


2. thesis, subject matter. See [subject](#).

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**World English Dictionary**

**theme** (θi:m) 

**n**

1. an idea or topic expanded in a discourse, discussion, etc
2. (in literature, music, art, etc) a unifying idea, image, or motif, repeated or developed throughout a work
3. *music* a group of notes forming a recognizable melodic unit, often used as the basis of the musical material in a composition
4. a short essay, esp one set as an exercise for a student
5. *linguistics* the first major constituent of a sentence, usually but not necessarily the subject. In the sentence *history I do like*, "history" is the theme of the sentence, even though it is the object of the verb
6. *grammar* [root](#) another word for [stem](#)
7. (in the Byzantine Empire) a territorial unit consisting of several provinces under a military commander
8. ( *modifier* ) planned or designed round one unifying subject, image, etc: *a theme holiday*

**vb**

9. ( *tr* ) to design, decorate, arrange, etc, in accordance with a theme

[C13: from Latin *thema*, from Greek: deposit, from *tithenai* to lay down.]

**'themeless****adj**

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 Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009  
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## Word Origin & History

### theme

c.1300, from O.Fr. *tesme* (13c., with silent *s*), from L. *thema* "a subject, thesis," from Gk. *thema* "a proposition, subject, deposit," lit. "something set down," from root of *tithenai* "put down, place," from PIE base *\*dhe-* "to put, to do" (see *factitious*). Extension to music first recorded 1674; theme song first attested 1929. Theme park is from 1960.

### topic

1634, "argument suitable for debate," singular form of "Topics" (1568), the name of a work by Aristotle on logical and rhetorical generalities, from L. *Topica*, from Gk. *Ta Topika*, lit. "matters concerning *topoi*," from *topoi* "commonplaces," neut. pl. of *topikos* "commonplace, of a place," from *topos* "place." The meaning "matter treated in speech or writing, subject, theme" is first recorded 1720. *Topical* "of or pertaining to topics of the day" is recorded from 1873.

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## Cultural Dictionary

### theme definition

A central idea in a piece of writing or other work of art: "The theme of desperation is found throughout his novels." Also a short composition assigned to a student as a writing exercise.

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## Famous Quotations

### theme

"While enclosed shopping malls suspended space, time, an..."

"Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,  
 F..."

"Fools are my theme, let satire be my song."

"A central theme in the speculative writing on technolog..."

"If a theme or idea is too near the surface, the novel b..."

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