

# SMART™ Lesson

## Analyzing Themes in Mystery and Suspense Literature

### Introduction

In mystery and suspense literature, the themes are often hidden or implicit, which means that they are not directly stated. Instead, the reader has to analyze different aspects of the story to uncover the underlying themes. In this lesson, you will learn how to identify themes in mystery and suspense literature and how to analyze them.

### Identifying Themes

A theme is an underlying message or point that a writer is trying to convey through their story. It is not always explicitly stated but can be inferred from the plot, characters, and events that take place in the story. When reading a mystery or suspense story, it is essential to look for patterns, recurring motifs, and symbols that can help you identify the theme.

### Example:

In Arthur Conan Doyle's story "The Speckled Band," the theme of justice is prevalent. The story revolves around the murder of Julia Stoner, and her sister Helen Stoner seeks justice for her death. Although many clues lead to the suspect, Dr. Grimesby Roylott, the motive behind the murder is unclear. The theme of justice is explored in the way that Sherlock Holmes solves the case and brings the killer to justice.

### Analyzing Themes

Once you have identified the themes in a mystery or suspense story, the next step is to analyze them. You should ask yourself questions like:

- What message does the writer want to convey?
- Why is this theme important to the story?
- How does this theme relate to the characters?
- What impact does this theme have on the plot?

### Example:

Using the same example from "The Speckled Band," we can analyze the theme of justice. The writer may want to convey the message that justice will always be served, no matter how long it takes. The theme is essential to the story as it drives the plot

forward, and without it, the story would lose its meaning. The theme of justice is related to the characters in the way that Helen Stoner seeks justice for her sister's murder, and Sherlock Holmes helps her achieve that. Furthermore, justice has an impact on the plot as it affects the outcome of the story.

## Worksheet - Analyzing Themes in Mystery and Suspense Literature

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow:

It was a dark and stormy night, and Lily was alone in the old mansion on the hill. She was housesitting for a wealthy couple who were away on vacation. Lily had heard strange noises throughout the night, and she was getting scared. Suddenly, she heard a loud crash coming from the basement, and she knew she had to investigate.

1. What is the setting of the story?
2. What is the mood of the story?
3. What is the protagonist's problem?
4. What is the theme of the story?
5. Explain why the theme is important to the story?
6. How does the theme impact the plot?