

Summary Showdown

Theme & Summary: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what it says explicitly and when drawing inferences; determine the theme of a story, play, or poem from details in the text, including how characters respond to challenges; summarize the text.

Learning target: I can determine a theme from how characters respond to challenges and write an objective summary.

Success looks like: Students use the vocabulary correctly, complete the quest, and score 80% or higher on the evidence-based exit ticket.

Materials: Student devices, the printed lesson worksheet (one per student), projector for the mini-lesson presenter.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

60 minutes

Time	Part	Teacher does	Students do
0:00-0:08	Warm-up	Project the warm-up. Circulate, then call on 2-3 students. Save question 3 for the debrief.	Answer Part 2 of the lesson worksheet; share with a partner.
0:08-0:20	Mini-lesson	Teach with the 4-step presenter. Run each quick check with the whole class.	Complete worksheet Parts 4-11 as each slide appears; answer checks with fingers.
0:20-0:48	Quest	Launch Summary Showdown. Assign mission levels; circulate with the answer key.	Play solo or in pairs; record code pieces; complete any written evidence task.
0:48-0:52	Debrief	Ask 2 debrief questions and revisit warm-up question 3.	Finish worksheet Part 13 (prediction check + one thing learned).
0:52-1:00	Exit ticket	Hand out the exit ticket. Collect and sort with the mastery guide.	Answer with evidence independently.

Key vocabulary

Word	Student-friendly definition
Theme	The message or life lesson the author wants readers to understand. It is written as a full sentence.
Topic	What the story is about in one or two words (friendship, courage). A topic is not a theme.
Summary	A short retelling of the most important events in order, without opinions.
Conflict	The problem or challenge the main character faces.

Word	Student-friendly definition
Resolution	How the conflict is solved.

1. WARM-UP

0:00–0:08 · 8 min

Warm-up expectations (post these): Answer in Part 2 of the lesson worksheet (or on this sheet). Number each answer to match the question. Answer in complete sentences. For math, show your work. Work silently for 5 minutes, then share with a partner for 2 minutes. Be ready to share one answer with the class.

#	Question	Look for
1	What is the difference between a topic and a lesson?	A topic is a word or two (friendship). A lesson/theme is a full sentence about life.
2	Think of a story or movie you know. What lesson did the main character learn?	Answers vary; look for a complete sentence that applies to anyone.
3	Retell a story you know in exactly 3 sentences: beginning, middle, end.	Answers vary; look for who, problem, key event, resolution.

2. MINI-LESSON

0:08–0:20 · 12 min

Project the Lesson presenter from the room page. It runs the whole hour: target and agenda, warm-up with timer, hook vote, 4 teaching steps (key idea, interactive tool, turn and talk, check for understanding), I do / we do / you do, a work-time screen with a timer and expectations, debrief, and the exit ticket. Press N for teacher notes, T to pause the timer, and P to pick a student.

Hook (1 min): The tortoise beats the hare. Is "a race" the lesson of the story? Class vote: Yes / No / Not sure

Step 1 (3 min): Topic vs. theme

Teach	A topic is one or two words, like "honesty." A theme is a full sentence about life: "Telling the truth builds trust, even when it is hard."
Interactive tool	Flip cards: Topic: courage, Topic: friendship
Students do	Turn "courage" and "friendship" into full theme sentences.
Turn and talk	Why isn't "friendship" a theme? What would you add to make it one?
Worksheet Part 5A	A TOPIC is one or two words. A THEME is a complete sentence about life.
Check for understanding	Which is a theme, not a topic? Answer: (C) Hard work can overcome difficulties.

Step 2 (3 min): Find the theme

Teach	Ask yourself four questions: What challenge did the character face? How did they respond? What changed? What lesson does that teach anyone?
Interactive tool	Visual: chain
Students do	Answer the four questions (challenge, response, change, lesson) for the tortoise.
Turn and talk	Think of a movie character who changed. What did they learn?
Worksheet Part 6A	To find a theme, track the character's CHALLENGE, RESPONSE, and CHANGE.
Check for understanding	The tortoise keeps moving steadily and wins. The theme is: Answer: (C) Slow and steady effort can beat talent without effort.

Step 3 (3 min): Themes are for everyone

Teach	A theme applies to everyone, so leave character names out. Not "Maria learned to share," but "Sharing can build friendships."
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	Fix this theme by removing the name: "Leo learned to share."
Turn and talk	Why should a theme statement work for anyone, not just the character?
Worksheet Part 7A	A theme statement should not include CHARACTER NAMES.
Check for understanding	Which theme statement is written best? Answer: (B) Kindness can change someone's day.

Step 4 (3 min): Write a summary

Teach	A summary tells who, the problem, the key events in order, and the resolution. Leave out small details and your opinion.
Interactive tool	Board and notes
Students do	Write a 3-sentence summary of "The Tortoise and the Hare."
Turn and talk	What is the difference between a summary and a retelling of every detail?
Worksheet Part 8A	A summary includes who, the PROBLEM, key EVENTS, and the RESOLUTION. It leaves out OPINIONS.
Check for understanding	Which belongs in a summary? Answer: (D) The main problem

I do: worked example (shown one step at a time)

1. Formula: Character + challenge + response + change -> lesson.
2. Character: the tortoise. Challenge: racing a much faster hare.
3. Response: keeps moving steadily. Change: wins while the hare naps.
4. Lesson: "The tortoise learned slow and steady wins."
5. Make it universal (remove the name): "Slow and steady effort can beat talent without effort."

What to say on every slide is in the presenter script PDF.

We do: guided practice

Story: Ben forgets his lines in the play, freezes, then keeps going and finishes. The audience cheers. Write the theme.

1. Challenge: Ben forgets his lines.
2. Response: he freezes, then keeps going.
3. Change: he finishes and gets cheers.
4. Theme: Pushing through a mistake can still lead to success.

Answer: Pushing through mistakes can still lead to success.

You do: independent check (2 min)

Which is the BEST summary sentence for "The Tortoise and the Hare"? (A) I liked the tortoise best. (B) The race was on a sunny day. (C) A slow tortoise beats a fast hare in a race because the hare stops to nap and the tortoise keeps going. (D) The hare is very fast and brags a lot.

Answer: (C) A slow tortoise beats a fast hare in a race because the hare stops to nap and the tortoise keeps going.. Students who miss it: 3-minute reteach at the teacher table, then start the room at the Explorer level.

Misconception: "The theme is one word, like friendship." That is a topic.

Misconception: "A summary includes everything that happened." It includes only the most important events.

Misconception: "There is only one correct theme." Stories can have several themes if the text supports them.

3. QUEST: SUMMARY SHOWDOWN

0:20–0:48 · 28 min

Launch: project the start screen, read the story aloud, and assign mission levels (Explorer = extra support, Agent = on level, Legend = challenge). Students can open Supports any time for read-aloud, bigger text, a word bank, and a scratch pad.

- Levels unlock in order, like a video game. Celebrate "level-ups" out loud to keep energy high.
- Students who finish early can replay and aim for 100% first-try accuracy, which is shown on their certificate.
- If a student is stuck on a level, pair them with someone who has already cleared it to explain without giving the answer.

Students turn in: the completion code plus their copied "turn in your work" block (Canvas Text Entry).

4. DEBRIEF

0:48–0:52 · 4 min

1. What is the difference between a topic and a theme?
2. Which story in the activity had the clearest theme? What details showed it?
3. Name a book or movie you love. What is one theme?

Close the loop: return to warm-up question 3. Answer: Answers vary; look for who, problem, key event, resolution.

5. EXIT TICKET

0:52–1:00 · 8 min

Print the exit ticket PDF (page 2 is the key and mastery guide). Every item requires evidence: Part A asks students to justify each choice, Part B asks for an explanation, and Part C applies the standard to a new situation using RACE. Sort results into Mastered, Approaching, and Beginning to plan tomorrow's groups.

LESSON RESOURCES

Resource	How it fits the lesson
Warm-up worksheet (PDF)	Optional standalone warm-up (also Part 2 of the lesson worksheet), with a key.
Mini-lesson presenter	Projectable, step-by-step interactive lesson with tools and quick checks (room page).
Lesson worksheet (PDF + key)	One printable packet students complete during the whole lesson: short fill-ins and quick checks in 13 small parts that match the presenter slides.
Summary Showdown (.html)	The quest for Canvas, with differentiated levels, supports, and a turn-in.
Exit ticket (PDF + key)	Evidence-based check with a rubric and a mastery sorting guide.
CommonLit (extra)	Free leveled short stories and poems with theme questions. https://www.commonlit.org/
ReadWorks (extra)	Free fiction passages with question sets. https://www.readworks.org/
ReadWriteThink (extra)	Lesson plans and graphic organizers for theme and summary. https://www.readwritethink.org/
Khan Academy: Reading & Vocabulary (extra)	Grade 5 reading practice with theme questions. https://www.khanacademy.org/ela

ANSWER KEY: SUMMARY SHOWDOWN

Level 1: Summary Rules (code piece: S)

1. Which belong in a summary? -> Belongs in a summary: The main character, The main problem, How the problem is solved, Key events in order | Does not belong: "This was the best book ever!", The color of every character's shirt
2. Match each part of the summary frame with its job. -> Somebody = The main character; Wanted = The goal; But = The problem; So = What the character did; Then = How it ended

Level 2: A Story (code piece: T)

1. Which is the BEST summary? -> Tomas wants a bike, but no one buys lemonade on rainy days. After advice from Mrs. Liu, he sells hot cocoa and earns enough for the bike.
2. Which theme fits the story? -> Being flexible and asking for help can lead to success

Level 3: A Poem (code piece: O)

1. What happens in the poem? -> A storm hits, but the oak survives because of its deep roots
2. What is the theme of the poem? -> True strength comes from a strong foundation, not from how you look
3. Tap the TWO lines that state the theme of the poem most directly. -> "It learned that strength is not in height," + "But in the roots that grip down tight."

Level 4: A Drama (code piece: R)

1. How do Maya and Eli respond differently to the problem? -> Maya looks for a solution; Eli wants to quit at first

2. What is the theme of the drama? -> Don't give up; problems can often be solved by trying again
3. Tap ALL of the stage directions in this part of the play. -> "(frustrated)" + "(pausing)" + "(grinning)"

Level 5: Grand Prize Round (code piece: Y)

1. Match each text to its theme. -> The Lemonade Stand = Be flexible and ask for help; The Oak = Strength comes from a strong foundation; The Science Fair = Keep trying when things go wrong
2. What do "The Lemonade Stand" and "The Science Fair" have in common? -> Characters face a problem and succeed by not giving up

Final code: STORY