



Theme Detective: The Lighthouse

Mission: A theme is hidden in this story, and your job is to track it down. Follow how Nora responds to her biggest challenge, mark the clues, and write a theme statement that could teach anyone a lesson.

Big question: What is the theme of "The Lighthouse Steps," and how do Nora's choices reveal it?

★ Warm-up: Topic or theme?

Label each T (topic) or Th (theme). Fix the topics into themes.

Friendship ✓ **Topic** → "True friends help each other in hard times."

Hard work pays off. ✓ **Theme.**

Key vocabulary

Theme	The lesson or message about life a story teaches.
Topic	A one- or two-word subject, like "courage."
Challenge	A problem a character must face.
Evidence	Words from the text that support your idea.

1 Box 1

Mark Nora's fear

In the simulator: Use ■ **Nora is afraid** to highlight TWO sentences that show Nora's fear.

What did you notice?

Mark Nora's brave actions

In the simulator: Use ■ **Nora acts bravely** to highlight TWO sentences where Nora acts in spite of her fear.

How does Nora RESPOND to her challenge?

- ☐ She is still afraid, but she climbs anyway
 ☐ She stops being afraid, then climbs
☐ She waits for someone else to light the lamp
 ☐ She refuses to climb

✓ **She is still afraid, but she climbs anyway**

2 Box 2

Topic or theme?

Sort each idea.

Sort: Courage · Fear · Being brave means acting even when you are afraid. · Family · Helping others can give us strength to face our fears.

Topic (a word or two)	Theme (a lesson in a sentence)
Courage Fear Family	Being brave means acting even when you are afraid. Helping others can give us strength to face our fears.

3 Box 3

Find the lesson

In the simulator: Use  **Lesson clue** to highlight the sentence where Nora says what she learned.

Which theme statement fits the story BEST?

- ☐ Being brave doesn't mean you aren't scared; it means you act anyway. ☐ Lighthouses are dangerous.
☐ Never go out in a storm. ☐ Grandparents are wise.

✓ **Being brave doesn't mean you aren't scared; it means you act anyway.**

4 Box 4

Write a theme statement

Write the theme as a sentence that could teach ANYONE (not just Nora). Do not use character names.

Look for: Is about courage or fear; Shows the lesson (acting even when afraid); at least 8 words

Model: This story teaches that being brave means doing what is right even when you are afraid.

5 Box 5

Legend: another theme Legend only

Stories can have more than one theme. Write a SECOND theme about helping others, and name one detail that supports it.

Look for: Is about helping others; Uses a story detail; at least 14 words

6 Box 6

Prove it (CER)

What is the theme of "The Lighthouse Steps"? Prove it with a quote.

Claim

Look for: States a theme about courage; at least 8 words

Evidence

Look for: an exact quote from the text; at least 8 words

Reasoning

Look for: Explains the evidence; Connects to the theme; at least 12 words

Exit ticket: answer the big question in your own words

What is the theme of "The Lighthouse Steps," and how do Nora's choices reveal it?

Look for: A theme is a lesson about life that the story teaches, written as a complete sentence that could apply to anyone. You find it by tracking how the main character responds to a

challenge and what they learn. "Courage" is a topic; "Being brave means acting even when you are afraid" is a theme.

Completion codes

Students see a code like **ABC-I3** when they finish. The first part must match below. The letter is the level (E = Explorer, I = Investigator, L = Legend), and the number at the end is how many stars they earned.

Level	Code starts with
 Explorer	VKD-E
 Investigator	TUS-I
 Legend	X87-L

! Watch for these misconceptions

- "The theme is one word, like friendship." That is a topic.
- "A summary includes everything that happened." It includes only the most important events.
- "There is only one correct theme." Stories can have several themes if the text supports them.