

Identifying Theme Practice

Directions: Read and analyze the details in each passage then select the BEST answer choice that describes the overall theme of the story.

1. The Crow and the Pitcher

A CROW perishing with thirst saw a pitcher, and hoping to find water, flew to it with delight. When he reached it, he discovered to his grief that it contained so little water that he could not possibly get at it. He tried everything he could think of to reach the water, but all his efforts were in vain. At last he collected as many stones as he could carry and dropped them one by one with his beak into the pitcher, until he brought the water within his reach and thus saved his life.

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. If at first you don't succeed, try, and try again.
- b. Nobody is perfect.
- c. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.
- d. Physical activity will help you when you least expect it.

2. The Hare With Many Friends

A Hare was very popular with the other beasts who all claimed to be her friends. But one day she heard the hounds approaching and hoped to escape them by the aid of her many Friends. So, she went to the horse, and asked him to carry her away from the hounds on his back. But he declined, stating that he had important work to do for his master. "He felt sure," he said, "that all her other friends would come to her assistance." She then applied to the bull, and hoped that he would repel the hounds with his horns. The bull replied: "I am very sorry, but I have an appointment with a lady; but I feel sure that our friend the goat will do what you want." The goat, however, feared that his back might do her some harm if he took her upon it. The ram, he felt sure, was the proper friend to apply to. So she went to the ram and told him the case. The ram replied: "Another time, my dear friend. I do not like to interfere on the present occasion, as hounds have been known to eat sheep as well as hares." The Hare then applied, as a last hope, to the calf, who regretted that he was unable to help her, as he did not like to take the responsibility upon himself, as so many older persons than himself had declined the task. By this time the hounds had caught the Hare, and tore him to shreds.

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.
- b. Popularity is the key to success.
- c. Friendships are the heart of life.
- d. It is better to have a few good friends than many superficial ones.

3. The Mule in the Lion's Skin

A Mule once found a Lion's skin which the hunters had left out in the sun to dry. He put it on and went towards his native village. All fled at his approach, both men and animals, and he was a proud Mule that day. In his delight he lifted up his voice and brayed, but then every one knew him, and his owner came up and gave him a sound beating for the fright he had caused. Shortly afterwards, a Fox came up to him and said: "Ah, I knew you by your voice."

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. Don't judge a book by its cover.
- b. It is better to be called a fool quietly than to open your mouth and confirm suspicions.
- c. Be careful what you wish for as your wishes might come true.
- d. Don't bite the hand that feeds you.

4. The Fox and the Goat

A FOX one day fell into a deep well and could find no means of escape. A Goat, overcome with thirst, came to the same well, and seeing the Fox, inquired if the water was good. Concealing his sad plight under a merry guise, the Fox indulged in a lavish praise of the water, saying it was excellent beyond measure, and encouraging him to descend. The Goat, mindful only of his thirst, thoughtlessly jumped down, but just as he drank, the Fox informed him of the difficulty they were both in and suggested a scheme for their common escape. "If," said he, "you will place your forefeet upon the wall and bend your head, I will run up your back and escape, and will help you out afterwards." The Goat readily assented and the Fox leaped upon his back. Steadying himself with the Goat's horns, he safely reached the mouth of the well and made off as fast as he could. When the Goat scolded him for breaking his promise, he turned around and cried out, "You foolish old fellow! If you had as many brains in your head as you have hairs in your beard, you would never have gone down before you had inspected the way up, nor have exposed yourself to dangers from which you had no means of escape."

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. Think things through before taking action. Don't be impulsive.
- b. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- c. Be cautious of strangers promising rewards.
- d. It is better to be true to yourself than to be popular.

5. The Oxen and the Axle-Trees

A HEAVY WAGON was being dragged along a country lane by a team of Oxen. The wheels groaned and creaked terribly; whereupon the Oxen, turning round, thus addressed the wheels: "Hello there! Why do you make so much noise? We bear all the labor, and we, not you, ought to cry out."

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. The squeaky wheel gets the oil.
- b. Work now and play later..
- c. Those who do the least work complain the most.
- d. Do not attempt too much at once.

6. The Monkey and the Cookies

A monkey put his hand into a jar of cookies. He grasped as many as he could possibly hold, but when he tried to pull out his hand, he was prevented from doing so by the neck of the cookie jar. Unwilling to lose the cookies, and yet unable to withdraw his hand, he burst into tears and bitterly lamented his disappointment.

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. Choose the lesser of two evils.
- b. There is strength in unity.
- c. If men had all they wished, they would be ruined.
- d. Don't be greedy.

7. The Bundle of Sticks

An old monkey on the point of death summoned his sons around him to give them some parting advice. He ordered them to bring in a bundle of sticks, and said to his eldest son: "Break it." The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts was unable to break the sticks. The other sons also tried, but none of them was successful. "Untie the bundle," said the father, "and each of you take a stick." When they had done so, he called out to them: "Now, break," and each stick was easily broken. "You see my meaning," said their father.

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. Choose the lesser of two evils.
- b. There is strength in unity.
- c. If men had all they wished, they would be ruined.
- d. Every tale is not to be believed.

8. The Dogs and the Hides

Some dogs famished with hunger saw a number of cowhides steeping in a river. Not being able to reach them, they agreed to drink up the river, but it happened that they burst themselves with drinking long before they reached the hides.

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. If at first you don't succeed, try, and try again.
- b. Do not attempt the impossible.
- c. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.
- d. Don't be greedy.

9. The Monkey and the Snake

One winter a Monkey found a Snake stiff and frozen with cold. He had compassion on it, and taking it up, placed it in his bosom. The Snake was quickly revived by the warmth, and resuming its natural instincts, bit the monkey, inflicting on him a mortal wound.

What is the theme in the passage above?

- a. Think things through before taking action. Don't be impulsive.
- b. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- c. You cannot always change someone's nature by helping them.
- d. It is better to be true to yourself than to be popular.