

# Familiar Themes

## Key Stage 3 > Year 8

---

<b>&gt; Framework Objective R2</b> Undertake independent research using a range of reading strategies, applying their knowledge of how texts and ICT databases are organised and acknowledging sources	<b>&gt; Framework Objective R11</b> Investigate the different ways familiar themes are explored and presented by different writers
<b>&gt; Framework Objective R3</b> Make notes in different ways, choosing a form which suits the purpose	<b>&gt; Framework Objective S&amp;L10</b> Use talk to question, hypothesise, speculate, evaluate, solve problems and develop thinking about complex issues and ideas

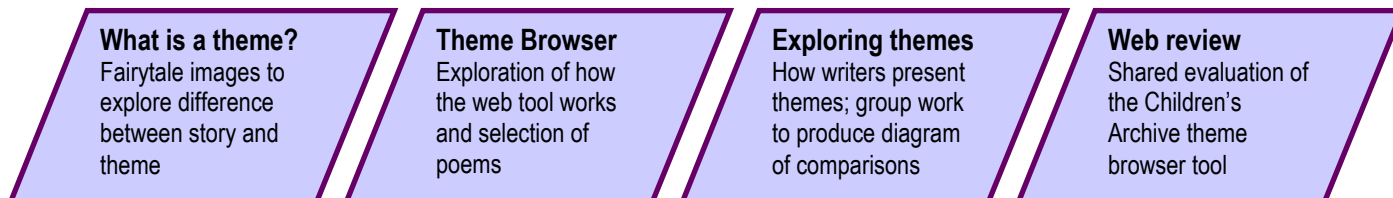
## Icon

---

> Children's Archive > Theme Browser

## Overview

---



## Introduction

---

This sequence of activities is designed to form a self-contained project lasting several lessons. Its primary focus is on understanding how writers explore and present their themes; its pedagogical method is to work in ways that value creativity, independent research, and critical thinking.

It encourages active use of ICT, with multimodal modelling by the teacher and hands-on practical experience by the students. It introduces students to the Poetry Archive website and gives structured activities to develop independent use and evaluation of one of its tools.

Different types of reading are required by the tasks, and different forms of note-making are tried out.

The key outcome is a wallchart for display, produced through group work involving complex discussion to compare ideas and problem-solving to find a suitable form for their presentation.

# Familiar Themes

## Key concepts

---

### Story

The combination of characters, settings and events that we engage with in many literary texts; the obvious answer to the question “what’s it about?”

### Theme

The issues and ideas that a poem raises about the nature of human experience; the more sophisticated answer to the question “what’s it about?”

### Exploring Themes

Poets and other writers *explore* themes by presenting us with opinions, perspectives and questions to make us think about our own ideas, beliefs and assumptions about the issue

### Presenting Themes

Poets and other writers *present* themes through the choices they make about settings and situations; speaker(s) and character(s); words and images; rhyme and rhythm; genre; tone; and structure.

# Familiar Themes

## Activities

---

### 1. What is a theme?

Students need to be clear about the distinction between the story (what happens) and the themes (ideas or issues).

- provide an image on screen or on paper from whatever shared story your students have: fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood* can be particularly productive, and many images can be found by searching for “fairy tales” on the website [www.art.co.uk](http://www.art.co.uk).
- Ask the key question “what is this story about?” and model the idea that there are 2 ways of answering this: one describing the characters and events i.e. story, one describing the underlying issues and ideas i.e. themes
- Practise with another image as a class, groups or individually to make sure the idea is understood. A list of common themes may help here.

### 2. Themes in the Children’s Archive

In an ICT suite, or with a class set of laptops, model how to use the theme search in the Children’s Archive. For a neat link to the starter, model finding Roald Dahl’s *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*.

- How to find the Poetry Archive website
- How to get into the Children’s Archive
- How to get into the Theme Search
- How to find poems by theme (choose family or animals to get to Dahl’s poem)
- How to open an individual poem page
- How to start the audio recording

Then set some practical tasks to help students get used to using this area of the site. Some tasks and questions you might set groups of 3, with students making suitable notes as they go:

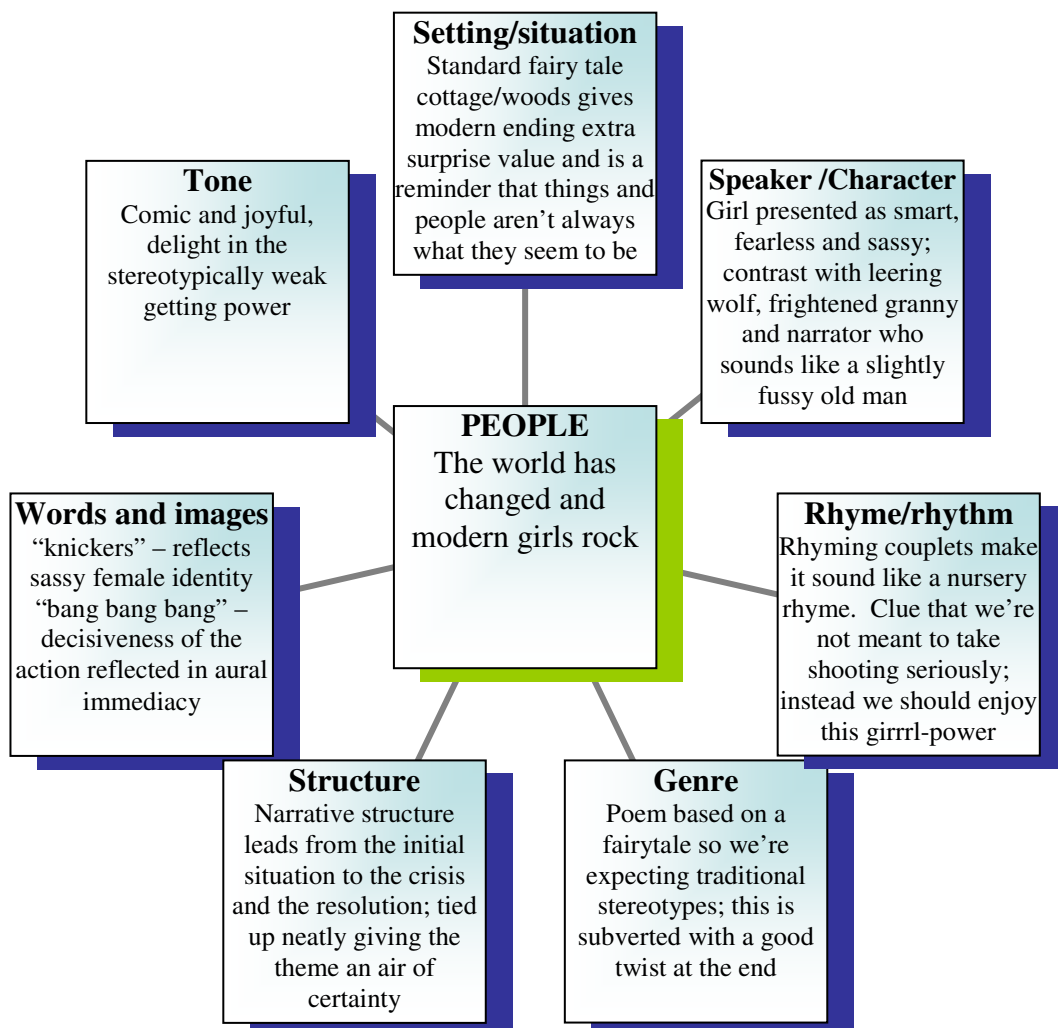
- How many themes are there in the Children’s Archive?
- How are the themes organised on the webpage?
- Why are some themes written in a bigger font than others?
- Can a poem be in more than one theme category? Why might this be the case?
- Pick 3-5 themes of different sizes and read and listen to at least one poem from each theme
- Research and recommend additional poems for the theme categories with only 1 or 2 poems
- Pick a theme you want to explore further which has at least 3 poems in it, and choose 3 of the poems to work on later

### 3. Understanding how writers explore and present themes

- Introduce key concepts about how writers explore and present themes
- Model how this can be analysed using Dahl’s *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf* or whichever other poem in the archive was used earlier. You could do this diagrammatically as shown below. Boxes can be simplified as needed, e.g. just showing speakers/characters, setting/situation, and words and images. This is a radial diagram in Word.
- Get the groups of 3 to decide who is going to work on which of the 3 chosen poems; each person to make notes in an appropriate form (such as under headings, or using a radial diagram) to show how the common theme is explored and presented in one of the poems
- Then set the group the task of producing a poster or wallchart to summarise clearly the similarities and differences between the 3 thematically linked poems. This could be in the form of a chart or lists, with or without illustrations or icons, or a Venn diagram with 3 overlapping circles. Display the ones with the most interesting and creative ideas and/or approach.

## Familiar Themes

Diagram: themes analysis for Roald Dahl's *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*



### 4. Wrapping it up

- In a whole class forum, review the "Poems by Theme" webpage, evaluating its strengths and limitations, and identifying recommendations for improvements to its content, functionality and design

## **Familiar Themes**

### **Variations**

---

- Use fairytale image as stimulus for devising and performing 90 second dramatic adaptations of the traditional story to develop richer ideas before discussion of key question “what’s it about?”
- Production of radio programmes based on the exploration of poems on a selected theme
- Formal letters or reports for the Education Manager of the Poetry Archive evaluating the theme browser tool, making recommendations for its development, and suggesting additional poems

### **Other resources**

---

- Roald Dahl’s *Revolting Rhymes* includes other re-worked fairy tales
- The official Roald Dahl website at [www.roalddahl.com](http://www.roalddahl.com) includes other lesson ideas and materials