**Heads Up!**

**Step 1: Identify Big Ideas and Themes**

This beginning stage trains students to explore themes in literature. Students develop theme statements based on one or more short stories and record their personal connections. Students are introduced to the elements of a written response to literature before writing a literary essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Prep and Tech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the step</td>
<td>- Review Teacher Resources for Step 1, Set up Teacher’s Checklist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1.1 | - Distribute and collect Student Permission Forms  
- Prepare Conferring Log for each student  
- Enroll students in Online Classroom  
- Plan a system for rapid distribution of technology  
- Review read aloud text (see chart below for levels)  
- Write big ideas and theme statement  
- Student copies of teacher model text  
- Speakers  
- Chart paper |
| 1.2 B | - Write personal reflection based on theme statement  
- Assign reading of independent short stories  
- Designate partners and plan seating according to story  
- Independent short stories  
1.2a: Make Connections: DI |
| 1.3 B | - Big Ideas/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1  
1.3a: Find Themes: DI, 1.3b: Write Theme Statements: DI  
- Speakers |
| 1.4 I/E | - Assign reading of independent short stories  
- Designate partners and plan seating according to story  
- Big Ideas/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1  
- Independent Short stories  
1.2a: Make Connections: DI  
1.3a: Find Themes: DI  
1.3b: Write Theme Statements: DI  
- Speakers |
| 1.5 I/E | - 1.3b: Write Theme Statements: DI  
- Student computers and Internet access |
Note:

The following short stories will be used throughout the *Response to Literature* writing lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher model text(s)</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Growing Up” by (Soto) U - 860L</td>
<td>“Thank You, M’am” (Hughes) 800L</td>
<td>“Inside Out” (Jiménez) V - 920L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Growing Up” (Soto) U - 860L</td>
<td>“All-American Slurp” (Namioka) Y - 900L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent short stories</td>
<td>Thank You, Mr. Falker (Polacco) O - 680L</td>
<td>“Mother and Daughter” (Soto) U - 820L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Raymond’s Run” (Bambara) Q - 1310L</td>
<td>“Six Rows of Pom-Poms” (Mori) V - 700L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Stray” (Rylant) R - 770L</td>
<td>“Abuela Invents the Zero” (Cofer) Z - 1000L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Party” (Ryan) S - 790L</td>
<td>“Mother to Son” (Hughes) - 780L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Inside Out” (Jiménez) V - 920L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The Babysitter” (Soto) U - 670L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“You Decide” (Soto) U - 950L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Fortune Cookie” (Avi) W - 670L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Food from the Outside” (Williams-Garcia) W - 970L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Reading Companion**

**Step 1: Identify Big Ideas and Themes**

Since this is a unit in which the students write about what they have read, in Step 1, the reading and writing lessons make use of the same texts. Select three stories for your class and assign at least four students to each story so as to create communities for sharing ideas. Be sure to consider students’ reading levels and interests in making selections. Reading workshop should have a predictable structured format that includes a short read aloud accompanied by class discussion, ample time for independent reading and sharing of effective reading strategies before concluding.

Step 1 emphasizes finding big ideas and themes in literature. Begin the reading workshop by ensuring that students have a good understanding of their stories. Have them first consider the fundamentals - character, setting and plot - and then analyze big ideas and themes.

**Recommended Read Aloud:**
- **Beginner:** “Raymond’s Run” by Toni Cade Bambara Q - 1310L
- **Intermediate:** “Growing Up” by Gary Soto - 860L
- **Experienced:** “You Decide” by Gary Soto U - 950L

**Recommended Small Group Reading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Thank You, Mr. Falker</em> by Patricia Polacco O - 680L</td>
<td>“Mother and Daughter” by Gary Soto U - 820L</td>
<td>“The Babysitter” by Gary Soto U - 670L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Luckiest of All Time” by Lucille Clifton - 960L</td>
<td>“Six Rows of Pom-Poms” by Toshio Mori V - 700L</td>
<td>“Inside Out” by Francisco Jiménez - 920L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stray” by Cynthia Rylant R - 770L</td>
<td>“Abuela Invents the Zero” by Judith Ortiz Cofer Z - 1000L</td>
<td>“Fortune Cookie” by Avi W - 450L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Party” by Pam Munoz Ryan S</td>
<td>“Inside Out” by Francisco Jiménez Z - 920L</td>
<td>“Food from the Outside” by Rita Williams-Garcia W - 970L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes (poem) - 780L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Texts can be found in the Text Binder and in Prof. P’s Office in the Online Classroom.

**Strategy/Skill:** To analyze big ideas and themes by looking at changes in character throughout the story.

**Character.** Students should be able to:
- describe a character’s appearance, actions, personality, motivations
- infer what is implied by character’s words and actions
- anticipate what might happen next in a story by predicting a character’s actions
- explain his/her relationship to other characters in the story
- make a connection between themselves and the character.

**Big Idea and Theme.** Students should be able to:
- identify the big ideas in the story
- state a connection between author’s messages and their own lives.
Lesson 1.1: Explore Big Ideas and Themes

Lesson at a Glance
Students learn that big ideas and themes can be found in literature. They look beneath the surface of the short story “Growing Up” by Gary Soto to find the author’s messages.

Objective
Students will identify big ideas and themes in a piece of literature.

Focusing Questions
What is a big idea? What is a theme?

Prep & Tech

- Set up Teacher’s Checklist
- Adapt, copy, distribute and collect Student Permission Form
- Copy and prepare Conferring Log: one per student “Growing Up” by Gary Soto
- Speakers
  - Enroll students in Online Classroom
  - Plan a system for rapid distribution of technology
- Chart paper

Limited Tech Options
If there is no access to the technology needed for this lesson, try the following options:

- Mini Lesson: Instead of using a computer/LCD projector to model big ideas and themes, use chart paper.

Notes:
(1) In this lesson, it is important to generate a chart of big ideas and themes that can continue to be used in Lesson 1.2. Be sure to create a reusable Big Idea/Theme Chart.

(2) Students will need to have read the independent short stories they will write about by Lesson 1.2. This reading can be assigned for homework or completed at another class time. The recommended short stories are located in the Text Binder. Select three stories for your class and try to assign at least four students to each story so as to create communities for sharing ideas. Be sure to consider your students’ reading levels and interests in making your selections.

(3) You will need to set up your class in the Online Classroom before beginning Lesson 1.2. Students will need usernames and passwords to enroll in your “classroom” before they can enter the Online Classroom. See the unit overview and contact your educational consultant for assistance.
**Mini Lesson (20 min)**
Show the lesson visuals, *Explore Big Ideas and Themes*.

Today’s Strategy: To create a thesis or theme statement about a story by analyzing the author’s message, big ideas and themes.

**Introduce the unit by showing the introductory animated program for Step 1.** Tell students that good stories/literature allow us to think about more than just the plot and the characters. Good stories, whether they are in books or magazines, often inspire readers to connect to some aspect of their lives. In addition, stories can make readers think about big issues and ideas in the world beyond their own lives. By being thoughtful and careful readers, we can make these types of connections and develop new understandings.

**Explain that the purpose of today’s lesson is to read a short story together and discuss its big ideas and themes.** Explain that “Big Ideas” are general concepts that are important in a story and beyond. Often a story will have many big ideas in it. Distribute copies of “Growing Up” by Gary Soto so that students can follow along. Read aloud or reread the story in a fluent and engaging way. If this is the first reading of this story, review the characters and plot. Clarify any questions students may have.

It is okay if students have used this text during other writing units. Being familiar with the story will make it easier to get to the analysis and writing assignment quickly.

**Modify Instructional Strategy:** Have students create a 3-columned chart to compare big ideas and themes in two stories.

See the Intermediate Narrative and chart in the body of the lesson for examples of big ideas and themes for “Thank You, M’am.”

**Intermediate**

**Modify Mentor Text:**
Use “Thank You, M’am” by Langston Hughes instead of “Growing Up.” This will be the teacher model text throughout the unit. The text is located in the Text Binder and online in Prof. P’s Office.

**Modify Instructional Strategy:**
Have students create a 3-columned chart to compare big ideas and themes in two stories.

**Experienced**

**Modify Mentor Text:**
Use Francisco Jiménez’s “Inside Out” instead of “Growing Up.” This will be the teacher model text throughout the unit. The text is located in the Text Binder and online in Prof. P’s Office.

It is okay if students have used this text during other writing units. Being familiar with the story will make it easier to get to the analysis and writing assignment quickly.

**Modify Instructional Strategy:**
Have students create a 3-columned chart since they will ultimately be comparing the big ideas and themes in two stories.

Use the Intermediate Narrative and chart in the body of the lesson for guidance in completing this step.

**Example of Big Ideas for “Inside Out” include FITTING IN, RELATIONSHIPS, CHANGE, INDIVIDUALITY, FORGIVENESS.**

**Sample theme statement:**
Everybody has special qualities.

**Show students how to turn a big idea into a thesis or theme statement.** Ask students what message the author wanted readers to take away or learn about this big idea. Explain that this underlying message is called a thesis/theme statement.
Teacher Model

- Think aloud about one or two big ideas that are present in “Growing Up.”
- Write these ideas on a chart and guide students in brainstorming others. (Keep the chart posted for reference in future lessons.)
- Add ideas generated by students to the list.
  
  Some examples of big ideas from “Growing Up.” are:
  
  INDEPENDENCE
  FAMILY
  EXPECTATIONS
  RESPECT
  RESPONSIBILITY
  FORGIVENESS

- Think aloud about how to transform one of your big ideas into a thesis or theme statement by writing a complete sentence that contains the author’s message. For example, for the big idea FAMILY – “People can love and hate their family at the same time.”
- Inform students that there can be more than one possible thesis or theme statement associated with each big idea. For example, another possibility for FAMILY is “What parents expect from children can be different than what children expect from parents.”
- Demonstrate that thesis or theme statements are written as complete sentences and in general, not personal, terms. Record your theme statement next to its big idea. Make sure it is about life in general and not just about you or this one story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Idea</th>
<th>Thesis/Theme Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td>People can love and hate their family at the same time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrative — Beginner

Authors often communicate messages about life through their stories. I am going to think about what Gary Soto wanted me to learn from his story, “Growing Up.” It’s more than just about a girl staying home from a family vacation. One of the big ideas in the story is: FAMILY. I can take that idea and use it to look for the thesis or theme statement, the author’s message, by thinking about the story. Remember that Maria went against her father’s wishes by staying with her godmother while everyone else went on a trip. She feels annoyed by her father and the rest of her family, but then she misses them and worries about them when they’re away. What was Gary Soto trying to say about FAMILY? The answer to this question will be my theme statement: People can love and hate their family at the same time. Notice that I wrote it as a full sentence, and I did not include the names of any of the characters from the story. The statement, Maria loved and hated her family at the same time,” is NOT a theme statement. It is too specific because it uses a character’s name. Theme statements should communicate the author’s message by being about life in general, not just this story.

Sample big idea and theme chart — Beginner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Idea</th>
<th>Thesis/Theme Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENCE</td>
<td>Being independent can also be lonely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td>People sometimes love and hate their family at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPECTATIONS</td>
<td>What adults expect from children can be different than what children expect from adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>Sometimes it is difficult for children to respect adults when they are trying to assert their independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>Responsibility comes with worries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORGIVENESS</td>
<td>Sometimes it is difficult to apologize to someone you love.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Narrative — Intermediate
Authors often want to communicate life truths. I am going to think about what Langston Hughes wanted me to learn from his story. It’s more than just about a boy who tries to steal a woman’s pocketbook. One of the big ideas in the story is: GROWING UP. I can take that idea and use it to look for the thesis or theme statement—the author’s message—by thinking about the story. Remember that at first Roger tried to steal the money because he felt he had to have the blue suede shoes. Later Mrs. Jones takes care of him and gives him the money. What was Langston Hughes trying to say about GROWING UP? I can answer that by writing this theme statement: Young people can learn important lessons from adults. Notice that I wrote it as a full sentence, and I did not include the names of any of the characters from the story. The statement, “Roger learned a lesson from Mrs. Jones,” is NOT a theme statement. It is too specific because it uses a character’s name. Theme statements should communicate the author’s message by being about life in general, not just the story.

Sample big idea and theme chart — Intermediate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROWING UP</td>
<td>Young people can learn important lessons from adults.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANTING</td>
<td>People sometimes do the wrong thing when they want what they do not have.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST</td>
<td>We build or earn trust by how we act toward others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSEQUENCES</td>
<td>People’s actions have consequences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORGIVENESS</td>
<td>Life is better when there is forgiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preparing for Writer’s Work Time
Give the following directions:
• Work in pairs or small groups to:
  o Choose three or four big ideas from the class’ brainstormed list. Refer to the print copy of the story as a guide.
  o Write the big ideas you select in your writers’ notebooks.
  o Turn your big ideas into thesis/theme statements, full sentences that are about life and communicate the author’s message.
  o Check to make sure your thesis/theme statements reflect the author’s messages.
Response to Literature - Lesson 1.1

Writer’s Work Time (20 min)
Students decide on three or four big ideas to develop into theme statements, working in pairs or groups. They refer to the story in order to determine whether their theme statements are good examples of the author’s messages.

Conferring and Differentiation
During Writer’s Work Time, determine if student work has:
- thesis/theme statements that reflect the author’s message
- thesis/theme statements that are written in a general statements rather than using names and details from the touchstone text.

Using the chart below as a guide, conduct individual conferences and/or guided group sessions. On the Conferring Log, record what you find, what you teach and next steps for the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you might find:</th>
<th>Suggested Approaches:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big ideas not turned into theme statements</td>
<td><strong>Prompt with questions</strong>: Prompt student by placing the big idea in a sentence starter. For example, “TRUST is important because…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for more</td>
<td><strong>Provide extension</strong>: Ask students to make comparisons between the themes in “Growing Up” and another story they have read independently. Or, have them identify other big ideas and themes in a different story. Students may also visit the Study Center for more activities such as <em>What’s the Big Idea?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sharing and Lesson Summary (5 min)
Reconvene the class. Share at least two theme statements that you observed during Writer’s Work Time. Add these student examples and others to the class chart. (Keep the chart posted for reference in future lessons.)

Explain to students that they are going to have more opportunities to look for big ideas and turn them into theme statements. In addition, they will write longer pieces based on their theme statements.
Lesson 1.2: Connect Themes to Your Life — Beginner

Lesson at a Glance
Students discuss themes from “Growing Up” and make connections to their own lives. Based on the discussion, students prepare a one-page written reflection. This activity promotes a way of thinking about literature that will be critical as students analyze other stories and write about them throughout the remainder of the Response to Literature unit.

Objective
Students will make connections between themes in literature and their own lives.

Focusing Question
How does this story relate to your own life?

Prep & Tech

Big Idea/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1
Sample detailed personal reflection

Copies of independent short stories:
- Thank You, Mr. Falker by Patricia Polacco (Level O)
- “Raymond’s Run” by Toni Cade Bambara (Level Q)
- “Stray” by Cynthia Rylant (Level R)
- “The Party” by Pam Munoz Ryan (Level S)

1.2a: Make Connections: DI

Chart paper

Limited Tech Options
If there is no access to the technology needed for this lesson, try the following option:
- Mini Lesson: Instead of using a computer/LCD projector to model written reflections, use chart paper or an overhead projector.

Notes:
(1) Students will need to have read the independent short stories they will write about by Lesson 1.3. This reading can be assigned for homework or done at another class time. The recommended short stories are located in the Text Binder. Select three stories for your class and try to assign at least four students to each story so as to create communities for sharing ideas. Be sure to consider your students’ reading levels and interests in making your selections.

(2) You will need to set up your class in the Online Classroom before beginning Lesson 1.3. Students will need usernames and passwords to enroll in your “classroom” before they can enter the Online Classroom. See the unit overview and contact your educational consultant for assistance.
This lesson and the next are for Beginner classes. If your students are at the Intermediate or Experienced level, skip Lessons 1.2 and 1.3 and proceed to Lesson 1.4.

**Mini Lesson (10 min)**
Show lesson visuals, *Connect Themes to Your Life*.

Today’s Strategy: To make the connection between a story and your life by thinking about the story’s theme and corresponding personal experiences you have had.

Explain to students that the purpose of today’s lesson is to find out how themes from literature connect to their lives. Discuss briefly how this kind of thinking and writing about texts will not only help them to better understand the stories and books they are reading, but more importantly, life in general.

Review the definition of big ideas and themes, referring to the Big Idea/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1. Divide students into “theme” groups, each focusing on one of these themes, in preparation for writing. There are several ways to group students. They might sign up on the chart, write their choices on a post-it note, or move to a section of the room designated for discussion of a particular theme. Encourage students to pick a theme they can relate to, as they will be writing more about it later.

**Teacher Model**
- Introduce the idea that themes from stories relate to people’s lives.
- Remind students of one of the theme statements you selected in Lesson 1.1.
- Think aloud about a brief story from your life that clearly shows its relation to this theme statement. Keep a print or electronic version of the story easily accessible and refer to it as you think aloud.
- Begin to write a reflection based on your personal story. (It is not necessary to model writing the entire piece.)
- Identify and write down the different sections you plan to include in your reflection: theme statement, personal connection, connection to the story “Growing Up.”
- Briefly model one example of how your theme statement relates to “Growing Up.”
Today we’re going to look at the way that themes from this story relate our own lives. I chose the theme statement, People can love and hate their families at the same time. Before I write a reflection, I need to think about how the theme statement I chose relates to me or someone I know. When have I loved and hated my family at the same time? I had a great-aunt who really reminds me of this story. She was very difficult – she often told me my clothes were ugly or something that I was doing was stupid, but at the same time she was very generous and loving toward me. To me she was like a grandmother. So I loved her, but I also hated her when she criticized me.

I had the same feelings that Maria had in the story, “Growing Up.” I was annoyed with my aunt the way Maria was annoyed with her father.

Now I’m going to write about how this theme statement applies to my life and how my experience relates to the story.

Preparing for Writer’s Work Time
Active engagement: Join a big idea (for example: Independence, Responsibility) group. Discuss how the big idea relates to the story for five minutes.

Give the following directions:
• Select the best theme statement related to this big idea.

• Think about a connection that applies to you specifically. Jot ideas about your connection to this theme in your writer’s notebook.

• Write your theme statement at the top of a new page in your writer’s notebook.

• Write a detailed reflection that includes three elements: the theme statement, how the theme relates to your life and how your life experience is related to “Growing Up.”

Writer’s Work Time (25 min)
Students briefly discuss the big idea from “Growing Up.” Each student selects a related theme statement and decides how it connects to their lives. Anticipate that each student will have his or her own connection to write about. Students then write their theme statements at the top of a page in their writers’ notebooks and begin writing personal reflections, trying to write a full page that covers the theme statement, the personal connection and how their reflection relates to “Growing Up.”
Conferring and Differentiation  
During Writer’s Work Time, determine if student work has:  
• a personal connection to “Growing Up”  
• a paragraph or more describing examples of the connection.

Using the chart below as a guide, conduct individual conferences and/or guided groups.  
On the Conferring Log, record what you find, what you teach and next steps for the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you might find:</th>
<th>Suggested Approaches:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited writing</td>
<td><strong>Use DI handout:</strong> Student can use Make Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Handout 1.2a) to help structure their thinking so they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>can write an organized and sustained reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different learning style</td>
<td><strong>Use another modality:</strong> Form a guided group that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>addresses questions regarding personal experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>related to their theme statements. If a student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cannot find a personal example that fits with the theme,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suggest that s/he think about other people s/he knows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have group members share their stories aloud with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>guidance. If they still cannot find a connection, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>may be necessary for them to select a different theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for more</td>
<td><strong>Provide extension:</strong> Students also visit the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center for more activities such as What’s the Big Idea?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sharing and Lesson Summary (10 min)  
Reconvene the class. Share at least two examples of student reflections you observed during Writer’s Work Time. One should be a good example of a personal connection. Another should be a good example of a connection to the text. Identify the components of each shared reflection that represent quality work.

Tell students that the kind of thinking they have been doing in this lesson will be applied to other writing as well. Explain that the next phase of the unit will be to develop thesis/theme statements for other short stories that they will read independently. If you plan to assign the short story readings for homework, distribute stories and tell students to read them carefully and think about the big ideas and themes.
Lesson 1.3: Find Big Ideas and Themes in Stories — Beginner

Lesson at a Glance
Students identify big ideas in a short story they read independently. In preparation for writing a response to this piece of literature, they formulate thesis/theme statements based on the story’s big ideas.

Objective
Students will find big ideas and themes in stories they read independently.

Focusing Question
What theme statements can you create from the big ideas in your story?

Prep & Tech

- Big Ideas/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1
- 1.3a: Find Themes: DI
- 1.3b: Write Theme Statements: DI
- Extra copies of short stories
- Speakers

Limited Tech Options
If there is no access to the technology needed for this lesson, try the following option:
- Lesson Summary: Instead of posting their theme statements in the Online Classroom, students can list them on chart paper that is posted around the room.

Note: Students will need to have read the individual short stories prior to this lesson. Reading can be assigned for homework or completed at another class time. Arrange the seating in your class so that students who read the same story are at the same table.
Mini Lesson (10 min)
Show lesson visuals, *Find Big Ideas and Themes in Stories.*

Today’s Strategy: To create a thesis or theme statement about a story by analyzing the author’s message, big ideas and themes.

**Explain that in this lesson students will look for big ideas and themes in other stories.** Review the fact that big ideas and themes are often found in literature. Students will get the chance to find big ideas and themes in the short stories they are now reading, applying the same skills they used to analyze “Growing Up.” This activity will prepare them for writing their responses to literature over the next several lessons.

**Reinforce the fact that big ideas are important concepts found in stories.** Refer to the Big Idea/Theme Chart to refresh students’ memory of some of the big ideas in “Growing Up.” Remind students that theme statements are written in complete sentences using general terms.

**Ask students to use a series of guiding questions to develop theme statements for their stories from their list of big ideas.**

- Does the theme statement match the author’s message?
- Does the statement relate to my life? How?
- Does the statement relate to the lives of others? How?

**Demonstrate checking the theme statement against the story.** For example, given the following theme statement from “Growing Up,” “People sometimes love and hate their parents at the same time,” ask whether this statement matches the author’s message. If the statement does not match the author’s message and/or relate to your life or the lives of others, then it may not be a theme statement that this story communicates. It may be helpful to demonstrate with a non-example and show the process of revising the theme statement to create one that more closely reflects the author’s message and addresses a significant issue.
Teacher Model

- Quickly review the big ideas from “Growing Up,” referring to the Big Idea/Theme Chart.
- Review how you turn one of the big ideas into a theme statement by relating the big idea to the story, using general terminology, and writing a complete sentence. (In order to reinforce this skill, demonstrate with a different big idea than the one selected in Lesson 1.2).
- Ask yourself the guiding questions as a way to check that your theme statement is a reflection of the author’s message.
- Remind yourself that the theme statement you choose has to be important enough in the piece to warrant a complete response to literature.

Narrative

In “Growing Up,” we brainstormed a list of big ideas. Then, we turned our ideas into theme statements that reflected Soto’s messages. I am going to turn another one of those big ideas into a theme statement. RESPECT is a big idea in that story. Remember, when Maria told her father that she didn’t want to go on the family vacation? He thought she was being disrespectful. What do I think that Soto was trying to say about respect? Sometimes it is difficult for children to respect adults when they are trying to assert their independence. Let me check this theme statement with the guiding questions.

Today, I challenge you to find big ideas and themes in your new story. Next time we will be writing more about these theme statements. Make sure that the theme statements you write are based on important enough issues so that you can expand upon them when writing your response to literature.

Preparing for Writer’s Work Time

Active engagement: Show DD’s Think Aloud: Finding Big Ideas and Themes.

Distribute computers to students. Give the following directions:

- Sit with a partner who read the same story.
- Write the story title at the top of a page in your notebook.
- Briefly review the characters, plot, conflict and resolution.
- Find, discuss and record the big ideas from the story. List three or four of them.
- Independently, choose at least two of the most important big ideas and turn them into theme statements. (Students should work on their own and are not expected to generate or use the same theme statements as their partners.)
- Use the following questions to determine if theme statements you developed are appropriate
  - Is the theme important?
  - Does it relate to my life?
  - Does it relate to the lives of others?
**Response to Literature - Lesson 1.3**

**Writer’s Work Time (25 min)**
Student partners spend ten minutes reviewing the characters, plot, conflict, and resolution of their stories. If more than one set of partners is reading a story, they can form a story group. After clarifying the story elements, students confer about the big ideas, generating a list of three or four from which to choose as the focus of their responses to literature. Students then work independently to formulate theme statements with the help of the guiding questions. Each student creates a unique theme statement. Students who read the same story are not expected to generate the same themes.

**Conferring and Differentiation**
During Writer’s Work Time, determine if student work has:
- a theme statement that reflects the author’s message
- a theme statement for which there will be enough evidence
- a theme statement that is written in a complete sentences using general terminology.

Using the chart below as a guide, conduct individual conferences and/or guided groups. On the *Conferring Log*, record what you find, what you teach and next steps for the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you might find:</th>
<th>Suggested Approaches:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No/unclear theme statements</td>
<td><strong>Provide another model:</strong> Some students may benefit from a list of common theme statements as models. Refer to the Big Idea/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1 which contains examples of well-written theme statements. Students can adapt or choose from the list if necessary. Examples of common theme statements include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• People who are different can become friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Animals and people have a special bond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When people love you, they will do anything for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is worth overcoming challenges to get what you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sometimes we hurt the people we love without knowing. Things work out in the end. People you meet help you see the world in a more grown up way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Use DI handout:</strong> Use <em>Find Themes</em> 1.3a or <em>Write Theme Statements</em> 1.3b as a way to scaffold the development of appropriate theme statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for more</td>
<td><strong>Provide extension:</strong> Students may visit the <em>Study Center</em> for more activities such as <em>What’s the Big Idea?</em> Students may also look at <em>DD or Z’s notebooks</em> in the <em>Online Classroom</em> to see how they completed this assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sharing and Lesson Summary (10 min)
Have students share their theme statements with one another. Ask students to briefly explain why they chose that theme statement/how it connects to their lives.

Checkpoint
Review students’ theme statements by collecting them. Assess whether they meet these criteria:

- a working theme statement that contains general terminology, reflects the author’s message and will be accompanied by enough evidence.

Record on the Teacher’s Checklist what students have completed to this point. If the majority of students have sufficiently developed theme statements, move on to Step 2. If not, it is important to reteach, using the differentiated instruction and conferring strategies listed above in order to give students another chance to build their theme statements as a critical foundation for their essays. Depending on the number of students who are struggling, you may opt to proceed and to form a small guided group during the next lesson.
Lesson 1.4: Compare Big Ideas and Themes in Stories — Intermediate and Experienced

Lesson at a Glance
Students identify big ideas in a short story they read independently. In preparation for writing a response to this piece of literature, they formulate thesis/theme statements based on the story’s big ideas.

Objective
Students will find big ideas and themes in stories they read independently.

Focusing Question
What theme statements can you create from the big ideas in your story?

Prep & Tech
- Assign reading of individual stories
- Designate partners and plan seating according to story
- Big Ideas/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1
- “Growing Up” by Gary Soto (student copies)
- Independent short stories
  1.2a: Make Connections: DI
  1.3a: Find Themes: DI
  1.3b: Write Theme Statements: DI

Limited Tech Options
If there is no access to the technology needed for this lesson, try the following option:
- Lesson Summary: Instead of posting their theme statements in the Online Classroom, students can list them on chart paper that is posted around the room.

Note: Students will need to have read the independent short stories prior to this lesson. Reading can be assigned for homework or completed at another class time. Arrange the seating in your class so that students who read the same story are at the same table.
This lesson is for **Intermediate** and **Experienced** classes only. **Beginner** classes should proceed to Step 2.

**Experienced**

**Modify Instructional Strategy:**
Have students compare two different texts rather than comparing their independent text to “Thank You, M’am.”

Model using “Inside Out” by Francisco Jiménez and comparing it to “The All American Slurp” by Lensey Namioka. These will be the teacher model texts throughout the unit.

Students will then use two other texts to write their comparative literary essay. Some possibilities for pairs are:

- “Eleven” with
  - “Inside Out”
  - “Growing Up”
  - “All-American Slurp”

- “You Decide” with
  - “Growing Up”
  - Fortune Cookie

- “The Babysitter” with
  - “You Decide”
  - “Fortune Cookie”

- “All-American Slurp” with
  - “Food from the Outside”
  - “Home of the Brave”

Since students are analyzing two stories on their own, plan on allowing two days for the generation of big ideas and theme statements.

All texts are located in the Text Binder except “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros which is readily available online.

**Mini Lesson (10 min)**

Show lesson visuals, *Compare Big Ideas and Themes in Stories.*

Today’s Strategy: To create a theme statement about a story by analyzing the author’s message, big ideas and themes.

**Review the fact that that big ideas and themes are often found in literature.** In today’s lesson, students will get the chance to find big ideas and themes in the short stories they are now reading, applying the same skills they used to analyze “Thank You, M’am.” This activity will prepare them for comparing two texts and writing their responses to literature over the next several lessons.

**Read aloud or review the second story, “Growing Up” by Gary Soto and identify a big idea and theme statement.**

Refer to the Big Idea/Theme Chart to refresh students’ memory of some of the big ideas in “Thank You, M’am.” Review how to transform big ideas into themes, modeling with “Growing Up,” and remind students that theme statements are written in complete sentences using general terms.

Distribute copies of “Growing Up” by Gary Soto so that students can follow along. (If students have read this story in the previous year, this provides a great opportunity to dig more deeply into the text and prepare more quickly for writing the essay.)

**Point out some of the big ideas that the two stories have in common.** Explain how similar themes can be found in a variety of stories and that one way writers analyze literature is to think about similarities and differences between themes.

**Teacher Model**

- Quickly review the big ideas from “Thank You, M’am,” referring to the Big Idea/Theme Chart.
- Generate a list of big ideas from the second story “Growing Up.” (Make sure students have copies of the story so that they can easily follow along.)
- Think aloud about what big ideas the two stories have in common. Jot down a list.
- Explain how you will turn several of the big ideas that the two stories have in common into thesis/theme statements by relating the big idea to the story.
- Remind yourself that the theme statement has to be important enough in the piece to warrant a complete response to literature and should be written using general language and in a complete sentence.
Narrative

In “Thank You, M’am,” we brainstormed a list of big ideas. Then, we turned our ideas into theme statements that expressed a life truth. Now I’m going to do that with another story, “Growing Up” by Gary Soto. (Read story.) Some of the big ideas are: Growing Up, Responsibility, Independence, Family and Respect. I am going to add big ideas and theme statements from “Growing Up” to the chart that I started yesterday. A possible theme statement for my second story is: As you become more independent you take on more responsibility.

These two stories actually have many big ideas in common. As I think about my two stories I realize that I can come up with a theme statement that works for both of them. They both have to do with the big idea of GROWING UP. Maria wants to be more grown up during the story, but she gets into arguments with her parents in the process. I think Roger becomes more grown up during the story because he learns that he should not steal to get what he wants. He had to get into a conflict with Mrs. Jones to learn that, though. It seems to me that both authors are expressing the life truth that “Part of growing up is clashing with adults.”

Today, I challenge you to find big ideas and themes in your independent story and add them to your chart. Pick some that are related to what you picked from “Thank You, M’am.” Next time we will be writing more about these theme statements. Make sure that you find big ideas that are common to the two stories and are based on important enough issues so that you can expand upon them when writing your response to literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROWING UP</td>
<td>Young people can learn important lessons from adults.</td>
<td>Part of growing up is clashing with adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANTING</td>
<td>People sometimes do the wrong thing when they want what they do not have.</td>
<td>Sometimes what you think you want changes over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST</td>
<td>We build or earn trust by how we act toward others.</td>
<td>Children want their parents to trust them by giving them freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSEQUENCES</td>
<td>Your actions have consequences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORGIVENESS</td>
<td>Life is better when there is forgiveness.</td>
<td>Sometimes it is really hard to be the first one to forgive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENCE</td>
<td></td>
<td>With independence comes more responsibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experienced

Modify Technology Use:
Have students who require additional scaffolding watch the think aloud. All others should proceed directly to the assignment.

Modify Instructional Strategy:
Students should work individually rather than in pairs or groups

Preparing for Writer’s Work Time
Active engagement: Show DD’s Think Aloud: Finding Big Ideas and Themes. Ask students to talk with a partner about one big idea that is present in their new story.

Give the following directions:
• Sit with a partner who read the same story.

• Briefly review the characters, plot, conflict, and resolution.

• List and discuss the big ideas from the story, making sure to include ones that the two stories have in common.

• Turn two or three of the big ideas into thesis/theme statements.

Writer’s Work Time (30 min)
Student partners spend ten minutes reviewing the characters, plot, conflict, and resolution of their stories. If more than one set of partners is reading a story, they can form a story group. After clarifying the story elements, students confer about the big ideas, generating a list. They think about what big ideas the two stories have in common. Students experiment with possible theme statements related to their new story.
Conferring and Differentiation
During Writer’s Work Time, determine if student work has:
• a list of big ideas and theme statements from his/her new story.

Using the chart below as a guide, conduct individual conferences and/or guided groups. On the Conferring Log, record what you find, what you teach and next steps for the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you might find:</th>
<th>Suggested Approaches:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No/unclear theme statements</td>
<td>Provide another model: Some students may benefit from a list of common theme statements as models. Refer to the Big Idea/Theme Chart from Lesson 1.1 which contains examples of well-written theme statements. Students can adapt or choose from the list if necessary. Examples of common theme statements include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• People who are different can become friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Animals and people have a special bond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When people love you, they will do anything for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is worth overcoming challenges to get what you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sometimes we hurt the people we love without knowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Things work out in the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• People you meet help you see the world in a more grown up way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for more</td>
<td>Provide extension: Students may visit the Study Center for more activities such as What’s the Big Idea? Students may also look at DD or Z’s notebooks in the Online Classroom to see how they completed this assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sharing and Lesson Summary (5 min)
Reconvene the class. Share at least two examples of commonalities between texts that you observed during Writer’s Work Time.
Lesson 1.5: Connect Themes to the World — Intermediate and Experienced

Lesson at a Glance
To reinforce their understanding of the universality of themes in literature, students talk with partners about the short stories they are reading and make connections to themselves and the world. Based on their discussions, students write reflections about how the theme statement relates to their lives and the world around them.

Objective
Students will write a reflection that links a theme in a piece of literature to a personal experience and/or issues in the larger world.

Focusing Question
How do themes in literature connect to real life issues affecting you or other people?

Prep & Tech

- 1.3b: Write Theme Statements: DI
- Student computers and Internet access

Limited Tech Options
If there is no access to the technology needed for this lesson, try the following option:
- Lesson Summary: Have students share their theme statements with each other on paper.
This lesson is for Intermediate and Experienced classes only. Beginner classes should proceed to Step 2.

Experienced

Modify Instructional Strategy: Experienced students will do this work with the two independent texts that they selected in the last lesson. They will analyze these two stories throughout the next several lessons in preparation for writing a comparative literary essay.

Mini Lesson (10 min)
Show lesson visuals, Connect Themes to the World.

Today’s Strategy: To identify connections between literature and the world by using a set of prompting questions and writing a reflection.

Introduce the concept of universality; there are common themes throughout literature and throughout the world. Point out to students that many stories they have read share themes. These themes are often shown through characters who go through the same experiences that we do. This happens because authors want to show that people have a lot in common. Have a discussion about why certain themes are so prevalent.

Teacher Model
- Choose a big idea connected to both “Thank You, M’am” and “Growing Up.” Develop a theme statement that is related to both as a potential focus for the essay you will model throughout this unit.
- Think aloud to test your selection by asking yourself guiding questions regarding whether or not the theme statement reflects the author’s message and universality:
  - Does the statement reflect a life truth expressed in both stories?
  - Does the statement relate to my life? How?
  - Does the statement relate to the lives of others? How?
  - Will I be able to find evidence to support this theme statement?
- Think aloud about your responses. If time permits, select a theme statement that might not be the best choice for an essay and reject it. Then, modify it or select one that is more appropriate.
- Briefly recount a personal connection to the theme and comment on how the theme relates to the lives of others as well.
- Begin to write a personal reflection. Demonstrate with one or two sentences, indicating that you will expand the reflection.
Narrative
I am going to select a big idea from both stories to write about. First, I need to check to make sure that my statement is the best one – meaning that I have enough to say about it. Remember the theme statement I chose the other day, “Part of growing up is clashing with adults.” To test this, I will ask myself the guiding questions, substituting my theme statement in each one. The first question is, “Does this statement reflect a life truth expressed by both authors?” Is the theme of people clashing with adults a life truth in the story? Yes! Let me try the next question. Have I ever clashed with an adult? Yes, when I was a teenager I argued with my parents all the time. This is something that happens to many teens so I know it relates to the lives of others. The last question is about evidence. I know that I can find evidence to support my theme statement because there are examples in both stories of kids having a conflict with adults.

Preparing for Writer’s Work Time
Active engagement: Have students turn and talk to a classmate to discuss one way one of the big ideas they selected relates to their own lives. Ask for one or two volunteers to explain their choices and check that students are on track before having the group continue with the assignment.

Give the following directions:
- Make a list of the big ideas that your two stories have in common.
- Write a theme statement that you want to use for your essay.
- Test out your selection using the guiding questions below:
  - Does the statement reflect a life truth expressed in both stories?
  - Does the statement relate to my life? How?
  - Does the statement relate to the lives of others? How?
  - Will I be able to find evidence to support this theme statement?
- Decide if the theme statement is appropriate and a good focus for the essay.
- Write a different theme statement if the first one does not work.
- Write a reflection about the connection of the selected theme statement to your life and the lives of others in your writer’s notebook.
  - Include three parts: theme statement, personal connection and connection to the larger world.

Writer’s Work Time (25 min)
Students pick a big idea that is common between the two short stories. They write a theme statement that connects the two stories and check it with the guiding questions. Then they write a reflection addressing a personal connection to the big idea, making sure to include three parts: theme statement, personal connection and connection of their story to the world.
Conferring and Differentiation
During Writer’s Work Time, determine if student work has:
- A theme statement that applies to both stories
- A written reflection that shows the connection between the author’s message and the chosen theme.

Using the chart below as a guide, conduct individual conferences and/or guided groups. On the Conferring Log, record what you find, what you teach and next steps for the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you might find:</th>
<th>Suggested Approaches:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme statements written as sentence fragments</td>
<td>Prompt with questions: Help student phrase theme statement in complete sentences. One way to do this is to say their theme statements out loud and ask them to fill in the missing parts. Use DI handout: Use Find Themes (Handout 1.3a) or Write Theme Statements (Handout 1.3b) as a way to scaffold the development of appropriate theme statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme statement not related to the story</td>
<td>Refer to mentor text: Ask the student to try to locate where in their story the theme is apparent. Have him/her revise accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme statement does not connect to both stories</td>
<td>Reconnect with earlier work: Ask student to give an example from each story where the theme is evident. Have him/her go back to the list of big ideas and try to find a different big idea that the two stories have in common.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme statement is too specific</td>
<td>Provide another model: Refer student to the theme statements on the class chart and suggest s/he remove characters’ names, other specific references or first person terminology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for more</td>
<td>Provide extension: Have students write about another example in their life that connects to the theme. They can also circle/underline parts of their story that support the theme statement. Students can look at DD and Z’s Notebooks in the Online Classroom to see how they completed the same task. Students may complete the optional activity, Share Your Reactions to “Thank You, M’am.” in Step 1 of the Online Classroom. Students may also visit the Study Center for more activities such as What’s the Big Idea?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sharing and Lesson Summary (10 min)

Reconvene the class. Ask one member of each story group to summarize its elements for the whole class so that students have some context when they respond to each other’s posts.

Have students share their theme statements with one another by posting in Step 1 of the Online Classroom in the assignment named Share Your Theme Statement. When posting, they should identify their story and big idea in the subject line and write their theme statement in the body of the post. If time permits, students can also briefly explain why they chose that theme statement and/or how it connects to their lives.

Then have students read and respond to their classmates’ posts. They should think about similarities between theme statements as well as connections to their own lives. Initiate a class discussion about what students have noticed with a focus on looking for universality.

Checkpoint

Review students’ theme statements by logging into the Online Classroom. Assess whether they:

- are written in general terms
- reflect the author’s message
- will have sufficient evidence to write an extended response

If the majority of students have acceptable theme statements, move on to Step 2. If not, it is important to reteach, using the differentiated instruction and conferring strategies listed above so that the themes lend themselves to developing an extended response. Depending on the number of students who are struggling, you may opt to form a small guided group during the next lesson. Since the rest of the writing process depends upon a clear understanding of theme, it is essential that students complete this task proficiently. Record on the Teacher’s Checklist what students have completed to this point.