

Finding the Theme Exercise

Part 1

Looking at each of the key scenes that you identified in the last module, determine the needs and or desires of your ancestor in these scenes. The needs/desires may appear in a variety of ways.

1. Physical Needs - a ticket, land, money, etc.
2. Emotional needs - understanding, support, friendship, etc.
3. Secondary Needs - Information, curiosity, etc.
4. Higher Value Needs – these are a more universal need like truth or justice, need to hope, a longing for love. etc. I've given you a link to list to help you get started. By all means, this is not an inclusive list, there might be something else that comes to mind that is not on the list.

Repeat this process for each of the key scenes. If you have more than 3 plot points, you are welcome to use the exercise for all of them, you do not need to limit yourself to three. Use as many as the story requires.

Part 2

Once you've completed Part 1, go through a compare #4 and #5, the Higher Value Needs for each scene. Is there a repetition between any of your scenes? Is there a common thread. If so this could be the overall theme of your story. Don't be surprised if there is more than one theme.

Finding the Theme Exercise

Opening Scene

1. Physical Need _____
2. Emotional Need _____
3. Secondary Need _____
4. Higher Value Need _____
5. Higher Value Need _____

Inciting Incident

1. Physical Need _____
2. Emotional Need _____
3. Secondary Need _____
4. Higher Value Need _____
5. Higher Value Need _____

Plot Points

1. Physical Need _____
2. Emotional Need _____
3. Secondary Need _____
4. Higher Value Need Need _____
5. Higher Value Need _____

Plot Points

1. Physical Need _____
2. Emotional Need _____
3. Secondary Need _____
4. Big Picture Need _____
5. Big Picture Need _____

Plot Points

1. Physical Need _____
2. Emotional Need _____
3. Secondary Need _____
4. Big Picture Need _____
5. Big Picture Need _____

Climax

1. Physical Need _____
2. Emotional Need _____
3. Secondary Need _____
4. Big Picture Need _____
5. Big Picture Need _____

Closing Scene

1. Physical Need _____
2. Emotional Need _____
3. Secondary Need _____
4. Big Picture Need _____
5. Big Picture Need _____

How to Create a Thematic Statement

The list of theme ideas I have given you is not in of themselves a theme.

The thematic statement of your family history story will be **what you feel** is the message of the story or the meaning **you wish to convey**.

Here's an example.

Let's suppose I have an ancestor who refuses to leave the family farm. She is afraid of leaving, fearful of the outside world. After reviewing the scene, I think of a message I wish to convey about this ancestor and this particular scene.

Start by writing it this way:

The author (that's you) believes that change is necessary for growth.

Now remove 'the author believes.'

Change is necessary for growth – this is a theme.

Repeat this several times over for various scenes and see if you have come up with one or two that you feel stand out for you. That could easily be represented throughout the story.

Keep in mind that not all scenes need to demonstrate the theme but a good portion of the key scenes should.