Identifying the Theme in Literature

Questions to ask to help you identify the theme:

1. What does the protagonist think is the most important thing in life? How do you know this? Does the protagonist say this out loud, or do his thoughts and actions give him away?

2. What does the protagonist want? Fill in the blank: This story is about the protagonist trying to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Do his objectives or goals change throughout the story? How? Why?

4. What does the protagonist learn? Does he begin to act differently? In what ways?

5. Is he changed in his mind or heart by the events of the story?

6. Can I relate to the protagonist’s desires or “journey”?

7. What is the main conflict in the story and what type is it (man vs. man, man vs. himself, man vs. society, man vs. nature, etc.)?

8. How do the plot, setting, and characters help to develop the theme?

9. Consider the title. Does it give you any clues?