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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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theme  (thēm)

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n.

1. A topic of discourse or discussion. See Synonyms at [subject](#).
2. A subject of artistic representation.
3. An implicit or recurrent idea; a motif: *a party with a tropical island theme*.
4. A short composition assigned to a student as a writing exercise.
5. *Music* A recurring melodic element in a composition, especially a melody forming the basis of a set of variations.
6. *Linguistics*
 - a. See [topic](#).
 - b. A stem.

[Middle English *teme*, *theme*, from Old French *tesme*, from Latin *thema*, from Greek; see **dhē-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

theme *less adj.*

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Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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