What is Theme?

In literature, a theme is a statement or observation about life, human nature, or the world in which we live. It is the author’s underlying message.
A theme is not the conflict of a story.

Some people write, “This theme is man vs. society.”

That is a conflict, not a theme.
A theme is not a statement about specific characters or situations. A theme is a general observation or statement about life. Most often it has **UNIVERSALITY**. That means that the theme applies to most human beings even if they lived in a different time period or place.
The theme is often expressed as a sentence or statement.

This is the thematic statement.
The following slides are examples of Universal Themes in Literature
Growing up; loss of innocence; the difficult, confusing or painful process of becoming an adult.
2. Appearance vs. Reality

What appears to be real is an illusion. The desire to define or understand reality.
3. Good vs. Evil

The battle between the forces of good and evil.

Often, good triumphs over evil.
4. Alienation

The human condition which leaves one feeling alone, isolated, or disconnected from others.
5. The weaknesses of human nature

Falling to temptations such as vanity, pride, greed, or corruption.
6. The evil or dark side of human nature

People treating other humans unjustly
7. Personal or collective self-destruction

A person’s ability to destroy themselves physically or mentally.

Humankind’s ability to self-destruct.
8. The indomitable spirit

Humankind’s ability to rebuild.

(“indomitable” means unconquerable/unyielding)
9. Power corrupts

Losing one’s humanity in the vain pursuit of power, riches or success.
10. *Carpe diem*

The shortness or fragile nature of life and the desire to “seize the day.”
11. “Where no man has gone before”

The human desire to create, explore, find meaning, gain knowledge, or advance as a civilization.
12. Love conquers all.

The unconquerable power of human love. The eternal quality of human love.
13. Meaning of Life

The need to find the purpose of human existence.

“What does it all mean?”
14. *Hubris*

Excessive pride or power, usually with a tragic “fall” as a result.
15. “Rags to Riches”

From a humble beginning, hard work, self-sacrifice, and dedication lead to success.
16. The cycle of life

Patterns of change: birth, life, death, rebirth and so on.
17. Wisdom through suffering

Learning important lessons the “hard way.”
18. Use your words not your fists.

Violence can’t solve your problems.

Don’t give in to peer pressure.
Some things in life are out of your control.
21. The conflict between man and technology

Will technology improve mankind or lead to its downfall?
22. Sense of Self

Finding Strength From Within
23. Patriotism- The Greater Good vs. Conscience

Inner Conflicts that Arise from Patriotism
24. The Journey Home

Most Journeys Lead Back to Home
25. The Desire to Escape

Escape from Family or Societal Pressures
26. Spirituality and Faith

The Inner Struggle of Faith and the Meaning of Life
27. The Generation Gap

Experience and Wisdom Vs. Youthful Strength
28. Peace and War

War is tragic, Peace is fleeting
29. Man’s Struggle for Survival

Man’s Fight to Survive Against Nature and Hostile Forces
After you are assigned a universal theme to present, choose a story that seems to relate to your theme (title, character, symbols, conflicts).

Create a short presentation (3 minutes-4 minutes) that shows how your selected story demonstrates your theme.
This is a multi-media presentation so include images and sound.

- Show Title, Author, Character(s), Brief Explanation of Plot, Examples of Text, Symbols, or Patterns that relate to the theme.

- Don’t forget to explain your theme and how it connects to real life!!
In the Harry Potter series, Harry is constantly struggling against not just evil sorcerers, but also against his family, the Dursleys, and the prejudice of the other Hogwarts’ students. One of his biggest struggles is an internal one. He is haunted by the similarities between himself and Voldemort, and fears that he will become evil also. 

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upJ6XXLj-Fw

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gsi9MxbZnzU
The thing about a hero, is even when it doesn't look like there's a light at the end of the tunnel, he's going to keep digging, he's going to keep trying to do right and make up for what's gone before, just because that's who he is.

Joss Whedon

We learn from literature the importance of perseverance and to never give up.