



Premise Themes Worksheet

Did you know that your novel's premise sentence or 140-character Twitter pitch often reveals literary themes? Have you crafted either yet? If you answered "No" to both questions, you've found the right tool to work on these items.

The Premise Themes Worksheet is designed to help writers develop a story premise (a single sentence that describes what your story is about) and distilling possible themes from it. We'll draft a story pitch, then break it down to three essential elements before approaching theme. Think of it as starting with the big picture before zooming in on the details.

This worksheet is based on the activities in my DIY MFA article "Developing Themes In Your Stories: Part Two – The Premise." You may want to read the article [here](#) before continuing.

Instructions:

1. Draft Your Story Pitch

A story pitch is like a published book's jacket copy or the pitch section of a query letter. It consists of two to three paragraphs (roughly 10 sentences) and establishes the following:

- Your protagonist, hinting at what makes him / her unique
- The inciting incident
- The external conflict
- The internal conflict, or your protagonist's emotional connection to the external conflict
- The choice your protagonist has to make as a result of the internal conflict

Activity #1: Using a separate electronic document or blank sheet of paper, draft a potential query letter, concentrating on the story pitch using the guidelines above. If you need more pointers, check out articles [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) at DIY MFA. You can also study blurbs of your favorite novels and recall how each one hooked you into reading the story.

Use the remaining blank space below for additional notes you want to take.



Premise Themes Worksheet

3. Extract the Concepts and Lessons Representing the Premise Theme(s)

According to [DIY MFA's working definition](#), theme can be a lesson that a character learns as a result of her internal journey through the story. When looking for possible themes that rise out of a premise, consider what lessons your protagonist might learn – or what you might learn if you put yourself in her shoes.

Activity #3: Review your premise sentence. What lessons might your protagonist learn during the story as a result of the external and internal conflicts? What will she have to choose between at some point in the story? What would you learn if you endured the same situation? Write any keywords or high-level concepts that come to mind.

Here's a list of possible themes to get you started. You may find other themes that emerge from your premise. Feel free to use the blank space at the bottom of this page.

- Trust
- Family
- Truth / Secrets / Lies and Deceit
- Friendship
- Love
- Home
- Identity
- Power
- Compassion / Forgiveness
- Social Equality