

Motif

Definition-

- A motif is an object or idea that repeats itself constantly throughout a literary work.
- A motif can be seen as an image, sound, action, contrast, or other figures that have a symbolic significance that contribute toward the development of theme.
- There is a difference between a motif and a theme. A motif is a recurrent image, idea, or a symbol that develops or explains a theme, while a theme is a central idea or message.
- Motifs are also different than symbols. A symbol may appear once or twice in a literary work, whereas a motif is a recurring element.

Example-

- The central idea of the co-existence of good and evil in Harper Lee's "To Kill the Mocking Bird" is supported by several motifs. Lee strengthens the atmosphere by using a motif of Gothic details, like recurrent images of gloomy and haunted settings, supernatural events, a full moon, etc. Another motif in the narrative is the small town life of Maycomb, which depicts goodness and pleasantness in life. These motifs, like the small town of Maycomb and its pleasantness in life, provide contrast within the plot with all of the suspense and morally wrong ideas. They make a reader think more deeply about what is actually good and actually evil, which helps develop the theme of the co-existence of good and evil.
- In Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, we see several motifs that support the central theme about the struggle of racism and slavery. Childhood itself is a motif, and it gives the novel a lighter tone and makes it enjoyable to read, despite its grave central theme. One element of childhood that matters to the theme is the fact that Huck and Tom are young and flexible enough to undergo a moral education; they are more open-minded than adults. Twain also uses Huck's youth as a way to make readers think about Jim's status. They are both vulnerable, one because he is a child and the other because he is an African American. However, because Huck is white, he seems to have power over Jim. The motif of children being open-minded and the differing social statuses of Huck and Jim each go along with the central theme. Each of these motifs make readers think more about the reality of what the author is trying to say, developing the theme about the struggle of racism and slavery.

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