

## Grade 5 Playlist: Determine How the Speaker in a Poem Reflects Upon a Topic

*Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2:*

- Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

### Welcome

Although poetry is different from fiction, poems are similar to stories because they have topics and themes. Poems also can have action, characters, and challenges. Unlike stories, poems are written in a specific form. They use a speaker in addition to rhythm and rhyme to address a topic. The words that the speaker uses to address the topic help determine the theme.

### Objectives

In this playlist, the student will learn and practice how to:

- determine the topic and theme of a poem.
- describe how the speaker of a poem reflects upon the topic.

### Review

#### Key Terms

- The **topic** of a poem is what the poem is about.
- The **theme** of a poem is its central idea or underlying message. The theme is not usually directly stated.

### Exploring the Standard

#### A Closer Look: Determining Topic and Theme

A reader can determine the topic by asking: What is the poem mostly about?

Determine the theme of a poem by:

1. Identifying the main characters.
2. Determining a challenge the main character faces.
3. Looking at how the main character deals with the challenge.
4. Deciding on the lesson that can be learned from how the character deals with the challenge.



Read “Casey at the Bat” by Ernest Lawrence Thayer, and determine the main character and the challenge the main character faces. Find details in the poem that tell how the main character deals with the challenge. Consider the lesson that can be learned. Lessons that can be learned often are connected to how the characters act.

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day:  
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play,  
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,  
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest<sup>5</sup>  
Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast;  
They thought, “If only Casey could but get a whack at that—  
We'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat.”

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,  
And the former was a hoodoo, while the latter was a cake;<sup>10</sup>  
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,  
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,  
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;  
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,<sup>15</sup>  
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell;  
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;  
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,  
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.<sup>20</sup>

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;  
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile lit Casey's face.  
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,  
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;<sup>25</sup>  
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;  
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,  
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,  
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.<sup>30</sup>  
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—  
“That ain't my style,” said Casey. “Strike one!” the umpire said.



From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;  
“Kill him! Kill the umpire!” shouted someone on the stand;<sup>35</sup>  
And it’s likely they’d have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey’s visage shone;  
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;  
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun sphere flew;  
But Casey still ignored it and the umpire said, “Strike two!”<sup>40</sup>

“Fraud!” cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered “Fraud!”  
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.  
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,  
And they knew that Casey wouldn’t let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey’s lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,<sup>45</sup>  
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;  
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,  
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey’s blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favoured land the sun is shining bright,  
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;<sup>50</sup>  
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,  
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.

### Listen!

Listen to “Casey at the Bat” being read aloud:

[https://archive.org/details/caseyatthebat\\_1212\\_librivox](https://archive.org/details/caseyatthebat_1212_librivox)

### Read!

This resource explains a few possible themes of “Casey at the Bat”:

<http://www.shmoop.com/casey-at-the-bat/themes.html>

### A Closer Look: Identifying the Speaker of a Poem

In order to describe how the speaker of a poem reflects upon a topic, the reader must first identify the speaker. The speaker is the “voice” of the poem. Every poem has a “voice.” Figuring out the identity, or source of the voice, is the first step in determining what the speaker thinks and feels about the topic of the poem. Identify the speaker by asking, “Who is telling the story?”



**Caution!**

The speaker is not the same as the poet. The poet is the author of the poem. The speaker is the voice telling the story of the poem. The speaker is like the narrator in a fictional story. In a poem, the speaker could be one person, a group of people, or even an object.

**A Closer Look: Determining the Tone of the Poem**

After determining the identity of the speaker, a reader can determine the tone of the poem. The way that the speaker describes something is the tone. It is the attitude the speaker has toward the topic or subject of the poem. Tone can be compared to someone's "tone of voice." For example, when someone has an annoyed tone of voice, the voice reveals his or her attitude toward the subject: He or she is annoyed. Similarly, the way the speaker feels about the topic of the poem will be reflected in the speaker's words. Although tone can be generally positive, negative, or neutral, many adjectives can be used to describe the tone.

**Read!**

For a list of words to describe tone, see this resource:

[http://www.mhasd.k12.wi.us/cms/lib04/WI01001388/Centricity/Domain/123/Huge\\_list\\_of\\_tone\\_words\\_with\\_definitions.pdf](http://www.mhasd.k12.wi.us/cms/lib04/WI01001388/Centricity/Domain/123/Huge_list_of_tone_words_with_definitions.pdf)

**A Closer Look: Determining How the Speaker Reflects on a Topic**

The speaker's reflections on the topic of the poem can be shown through the topic, the theme, and the tone. In the example of "Casey at the Bat," the topic of the poem is a player up to bat in a baseball game. The theme is that if a person is over-confident, s/he will make mistakes. The tone of the poem is exciting and suspenseful. Thus, the speaker of the poem thinks baseball is exciting. The speaker also thinks that when players do not swing to try to hit, the game becomes even more suspenseful. Lastly, the speaker reflects that when a player misses, the fans should blame him or her for the mistake.



## Applying the Standard

Read “Bed in Summer” by Robert Louis Stevenson.

In winter I get up at night  
And dress by yellow candle-light.  
In summer, quite the other way,  
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see<sup>5</sup>  
The birds still hopping on the tree,  
Or hear the grown-up people’s feet  
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,<sup>10</sup>  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day?

Identify the speaker, the topic, the theme, and the tone of the poem. Then, write a paragraph describing how the speaker reflects on the topic of the poem.

Consider the following questions when writing the paragraph:

- Who is telling the story in the poem?
- What is the poem mostly about?
- What is the underlying lesson or message of the poem?
- How does the speaker feel about the topic?

### Listen!

To hear the poem read out loud, visit this resource:

<http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/59/a-childs-garden-of-verses-selected-poems/4710/bed-in-summer/>

### Read!

For information about Robert Louis Stevenson, take a look at the following resource:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/robert-louis-stevenson>



## Self-Check: RL.5.2

Read the passage. Then answer the question.

### Witness to a Battle

July 1863

- 1 The weather was hot, very hot. It was the type of weather where the discomfort of the heat far outweighed the beauty of the summer day. But far worse than the heat were the sounds of the rifles and cannon fire.
- 2 As the sounds of battle drew nearer, my parents decided I should move to a safer place. I was sent with a neighbor to stay at her father's farm near Round Top, south of the town. My parents stayed behind in Gettysburg to watch over our house and help where they could.
- 3 In need of food, clothing, and other supplies, by that time, the Confederates had already been through our market town. They had burst into homes at random, taking what they needed. They grabbed shoes, clothing, food, and anything else they could carry. The river of desperate soldiers spilled through the streets, looking for places to loot.
- 4 Sent home from school, I stood in our living room and peered through the curtains, watching the soldiers pass. Out on the streets, all was chaos. I was still as a statue, terrified they would choose our house to ransack next. Thankfully, they passed us by.
- 5 The next morning, I was sent to Mr. Walters' farm. No sooner had I arrived than the Union army began to thunder past on the very same road. It was amazing to see so many soldiers on horses, all rushing at top speed over the road and across the fields. They were hurrying to battle, and watching them, we knew that many would not return home. They kept up their courage by shouting and cheering each other on.
- 6 As the day wore on, the fighting got closer and closer to the farm. Wounded men began straggling through the yard. We brought them inside and cared for them as best we could. I think I shall never forget the low moaning and sobbing of brave men trying to endure the unendurable. By the next day, the fighting had gotten so close we had to move to another farm, farther away. We waited there for most of the day, until the sounds of battle began to fade. When all was quiet, we started back to the Walters's farm.
- 7 We returned to find the house filled with casualties from the battle. Everywhere we looked, there were men who had been injured. Army surgeons set up a tent to serve as a makeshift operating room, and we gave them whatever supplies they needed from the house. It was a terrible sight to see; so many men wounded and dead in battle.
- 8 Only later did we hear the terrible numbers. More than 28,000 Confederate soldiers were reported dead, wounded, or missing. On our side, the number of casualties amounted to 23,000.
- 9 Like others around here, my heart is with the Union cause. However, the Confederates fought nobly, as did the Union soldiers. Thinking about the death and destruction on both sides, my heart is filled with sorrow.



1. The author includes details and events in this story mainly to convey the theme of —
  - A. the thrill and excitement of battle
  - B. the horror and destruction of war
  - C. the honor and dignity of fighting for a cause
  - D. the bonds between soldiers

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

### My Time With Dad

- 1 Dad passed me the ball, challenging me to make a shot over his outstretched arms. Using what he had taught me, I wove to the right, then to the left, and then scooted around him to do an easy lay-up. Dad is over six feet tall, and I feel like I'm half his size, so I have to use every trick to score against him. That's what we did every afternoon when Dad got off work, and I always looked forward to my time with him.
- 2 The comforting sound of the ball going through the hoop seemed to bind me to Dad. Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh. Of course, once we finished, our time together ended as all my four younger siblings competed for his attention. Inside the house, I was just one of five who wanted my dad's attention, but out on the court, it was just me.
- 3 Then, my dad got an overseas assignment, which meant he'd be away from home for at least three or four months. School had just started, and Mom needed my help to make order out of chaos. With two coyotes for brothers running through the house and my twin three-year-old sisters constantly asking for something, I had my hands full. It was hectic, to say the least. The only retreat I had was outside with my basketball and the hoop.
- 4 I dribbled, I practiced lay-ups, and I shot basket after basket from ten feet away. Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh. With every successful goal, my feeling of comfort returned, and Dad didn't seem to be so far away.
- 5 One late Friday afternoon I was shooting from ten feet away, and a car on my street screeched to a stop. A woman got out of the car and watched me play for a while, and then approached me. She looked familiar. Then, I realized she was Mrs. Sanchez, one of the teachers in my school.
- 6 "You're pretty good with that basketball," she said casually.
- 7 I shot again, heard the soothing swoosh, and smiled at her.
- 8 "I want you to play on the girls' team," she said. "Practice starts next Monday after school. From what I'm seeing now, I think you'd be good."
- 9 I thought of Mom and how she needed me after school. Then, I thought of my dad, and how we shared basketball together—just the two of us. I really didn't want to play with anyone else. So, I said, "No, thanks."



- 10 Mrs. Sanchez walked back to her car. Then, she called out, "I'm in the gym every afternoon at 2:30. Let me know if you change your mind."
- 11 The next morning, we had our first video chat with my dad. He sat in a chair in front of a computer. The sun shone brightly through the beige mosquito netting behind him. My sisters and brothers all had a chance to talk to him. Then, it was my turn. He smiled at me, but then his tone turned serious.
- 12 "You're playing a lot of hoops, I hear," he said.
- 13 "It's getting cooler so my hands get a little chilly in the evening. But yes," I said.
- 14 "If you play inside a gymnasium, you will be warmer," he smiled.
- 15 I looked away from Dad and he continued without beating around the bush, "Your mother says that you don't want to play basketball with your girls' team."
- 16 I didn't know what to say, so he said, "Jennie, think of me when you play, and I'll imagine you shooting baskets while I'm here. It'll be a way we can keep close together."
- 17 I looked up at Dad, whose head was cocked in concern. I said, "Okay, dad, I'll give it a go if you think I should."
- 18 "Of course I think you should! Once you learn how to work with a team, I bet you'll be the best player!"
- 19 He put his hand up on the computer screen, touching it with his fingers. I put my hand up to match his, and said, "I'll do my best, Dad!"
- 20 The next Monday I started playing with a team. I was surprised to find that I really enjoyed learning the plays and working with other girls. However, the best part was making baskets and hearing the sound the ball made as it passed through the hoop. Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh, the sounds that bind me to my dad.
2. Why does the "swoosh" sound of the basketball going through the hoop help Jennie during her dad's absence?
- A. It helps her take her mind off her dad being away.
  - B. It gives her something to brag to her dad about.
  - C. It makes her feel connected to her dad.
  - D. It shows that her dad is watching her play.





3. How does Jennie deal with her dad's absence?

- A. She writes him letters.
- B. She makes new friends.
- C. She practices basketball.
- D. She learns to play new sports.

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Children's Hour

Henry W. Longfellow

Between the dark and the daylight,  
When the night is beginning to lower,  
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,  
That is known as the Children's Hour.

5 I hear in the chamber above me  
The patter of little feet,  
The sound of a door that is opened,  
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,  
10 Descending the broad hall stair,  
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,  
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence:  
Yet I know by their merry eyes  
15 They are plotting and planning together  
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,  
A sudden raid from the hall!  
By three doors left unguarded  
20 They enter my castle wall!



They climb up into my turret  
O'er the arms and back of my chair;  
If I try to escape, they surround me;  
They seem to be everywhere.

25 They almost devour me with kisses,  
Their arms about me entwine,  
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen  
In his Mouse-tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,  
30 Because you have scaled the wall,  
Such an old mustache as I am  
Is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress,  
And will not let you depart,  
35 But put you down into the dungeon  
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,  
Yes, forever and a day,  
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,  
40 And moulder in dust away!



## 4. Refer to “The Children’s Hour.”

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences using the options in parentheses next to each blank.

The theme of this poem focuses on \_\_\_\_\_ (love / danger / strength) and the importance of \_\_\_\_\_ (war / youth / family). The speaker wants to show that he \_\_\_\_\_ (avoids / misses / appreciates) the Children’s Hour.

## 5. Refer to “The Children’s Hour.”

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences using the options in parentheses next to each blank to create a summary of the poem.

In the beginning of the poem, the speaker is in his study. He hears three children \_\_\_\_\_ (arguing / laughing / whispering) outside his door. The group rushes into the room and \_\_\_\_\_ (hit / yell at / climb on) the man. The speaker compares this event to a \_\_\_\_\_ (play / battle / journey). In the end, the speaker implies that he will \_\_\_\_\_ (later adopt / always love / greatly miss) the children.

