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## Theme

**Review:** The **theme** of a literary work is the writer’s underlying message about life or human nature. In fables or essays, the theme may be **stated** directly; in other genres, the theme is usually **implied**. A **recurring theme** can be found in different texts of the same period. A theme that can be found throughout all of literature, that relates to people of all time periods and cultures, is a **universal theme**.

**Directions:** First **read** the boxed poem. Then **answer** the questions that follow.

A hawk hovers in air.  
 Two white gulls float on the stream.  
 Soaring with the wind, it is easy  
 To drop and seize  
 5 Birds who foolishly drift with the current.

Where the dew sparkles in the grass,  
 The spider’s web waits for its prey.  
 The processes of nature resemble the business of men.  
 I stand alone with ten thousand sorrows.

—Tu Fu (China, 8th century)  
*Translated by Kenneth Rexroth*

1. To what does the poet compare the hawk and spider?
 

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. early death</li> <li>b. predatory people</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. early morning</li> <li>d. beauty</li> </ol>
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2. Write a theme statement for the poem.

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3. Why do you think Tu Fu titled this poem “Loneliness”?

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4. Do you think the theme of this 8th-century poem is universal or recurring? Explain.

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