Inferring Themes

Seldom does an author come right out and tell the reader what the theme of a story is. It is usually up to the reader to infer the theme based on the plot of a story.

“Themes are the underlying ideas, morals, and lessons that give the story its texture, depth, and meaning. Themes often make us feel angry, sad, guilty, joyful, frightened.

We are likely to feel themes in our gut.”

To help students with inferring theme, start with a familiar story such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears.* Have students retell the plot of the story. Then ask, “What are the bigger ideas in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears?”* Students will identify such ideas as taking things that don’t belong to you, selfishness, thoughtlessness, etc.

There are often multiple themes found within a story. Allow students to identify more than one theme as long as they provide support for their thinking.

