

## Writing about Theme

1. Read the poem “Invictus” by William Ernest Henley.
2. Answer the questions while reading the poem.
3. Answer the questions at the end to determine the theme and how it is conveyed.
4. Use the template to write a paragraph.

<p>Out of the night that covers me, Black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be For my unconquerable soul.</p> <p>In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance My head is bloody, but unbowed.</p> <p>Beyond this place of wrath and tears Looms but the Horror of the shade, And yet the menace of the years Finds and shall find me unafraid.</p> <p>It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.</p>	<p>What is being personified here?</p> <p>What could the pit symbolize?</p> <p>Break apart the word “unconquerable” to get a true definition. Research the meaning of “Invictus” in Latin.</p> <p>What words in this stanza have negative connotations?</p> <p>Read the background information about Henley. What do you know about him that connects to this stanza?</p> <p>What is the significance of his head being unbowed?</p> <p>What place could Henley be referring to?</p> <p>What does he mean by “menace of the years?”</p> <p>How is this final line similar to the final previous of the last stanza?</p> <p>What tone does Henley have towards his present condition based on these lines?</p> <p>What is the significance of the parallelism in the final two lines?</p> <p>Why is this a fitting conclusion for the poem?</p>
---	--

### **William Ernest Henley Biographical Information**

- ❖ By William Ernest Henley (1849-1903)
- ❖ Diagnosed with tubercular arthritis when 12 years old
- ❖ Amputated leg; other leg almost amputated
- ❖ Wrote “Invictus” while healing in the infirmary; published 1888
- ❖ Other published works include *A Book of Verses* (1888), *London Voluntaries*(1893), and *Hawthorn and Lavender* (1899)

### **What is the Theme?**

- ❖ What was occurring in Henley’s life when the poem was written?
  
- ❖ Why did he write the poem?
  
- ❖ What point is he trying to make?
  
- ❖ What does the poem say about human nature?
  
- ❖ What life issues are addressed in the poem?
  
- ❖ How do you as a reader connect with the poem?

**The theme of the poem is...**

### **How is the Theme Conveyed?**

- ❖ Personification & Symbolism
  - What do these words personify or symbolize? *Night, Darkness, Pit, Shade*
  
- ❖ Contrasting Word Choice
  - What 4-5 words in the poem have negative connotations?
  
  - What 3-4 words have positive connotations?
  
- ❖ Connection to Author’s Life
  - When the author refers to “circumstance” and “chance,” what might he be referring to in his own life?

