

Name: _____

Date: _____

Rudyard Kipling: What's the Theme?

The Crab that Played with the Sea by Rudyard Kipling

In the Time of the Very Beginning, the Eldest Magician was getting everything ready. He made the Earth ready and the Sea ready. When all was as it should be, he called all the Animals to come out and play. "What shall we play?" asked each Animal. "Play at being an Elephant," the Eldest Magician told the Elephant. "Play at being a Turtle," he told the Turtle. The Eldest Magician continued telling each Animal how he should play. As evening came, the Man arrived with his small Daughter. "What is this play?" the Man asked. "It is the play of the Very Beginning," said the Eldest Magician. "But you are too wise for this play." "Yes, I am," said the Man. "But make sure all the Animals are obedient to me." Next in line was the Crab, who had grown tired and restless with all the waiting. He scuttled off sideways into the Sea, saying to himself, "I will play as I like, and I will not have to be obedient to the Man." No one saw the Crab go into the Sea except the Daughter, who said nothing. After some time, the Eldest Magician came to check on how the world was doing. He went to the Man and asked, "How goes it with you? Are all obedient to you?" "All are obedient except the Sea," answered the Man. "Once a day the Sea comes flooding in and covers my house. And once a day the Sea runs back out. All I have left is mud." Something was wrong. The Eldest Magician, the Man, and the Daughter got into the canoe to visit each Animal. The Eldest Magician asked each one if they were playing as he told them and each one said yes. The Daughter said, "Eldest Magician, at the Very Beginning while you talked to my father, I saw the Crab go into the Sea before you could tell him how to play." "How wise you are, little child!" cried the Eldest Magician. "I know where to find him!" The Eldest Magician went directly to a large island. He reached under the Wonderful Tree with its two coconuts, and

touched the Crab. "You have been playing with the Sea," said the Eldest Magician. "Each day, the waters dry up when you leave your home and flood again when you return. You are making trouble for all the Animals and the Earth." "I did not know I was so important!" said the Crab. "From now on, I will do it seven times a day." "I cannot make you play as you should, since you escaped me on that first day," said the Eldest Magician. "If you are not afraid, then come out and we will talk." The Crab came out from his home and he was huge; as big as the Wonderful Tree! "You are not as important as you think. To prove this, I will remove your hard shell and you will have no protection from the Elephant or the Crocodile."



"Please give me back my shell!" cried the Crab when his shell vanished. "I promise I will play as I should." "You may have your shell eleven months of the year," said the Eldest Magician. "The other month will remind you of your promise. I will also make the weeds and rocks a safe home for you and your children." "I will make it so you can live in deep water or dry land," said the Man. "I will give you my scissors, so you can eat the coconuts from the Wonderful Tree," said the Daughter. "I will take all the gifts and play as I should," said the Crab. With that, the Crab grew smaller and smaller, until he was just a tiny Crab. After that, he always played as he should in the Sea.

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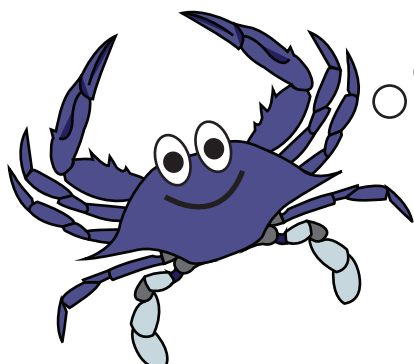
In literature, a **theme** is a central lesson that is revealed through the events in a story. The theme of a story conveys a message or lesson about life that can apply to any person, not just the story's characters. The theme is typically not stated outright, but rather revealed by the story's characters and their actions.

Directions: After reading the story, answer the questions to find the theme.

1. What **problem** did the crab face?

2. How did the crab **solve** his problem?

3. What **lesson** did the crab learn when the problem was solved?



Remember! Write your theme as a complete sentence. But do not use character names. The theme should apply to *everyone*.

4. Rewrite the lesson as a general statement that could apply to anyone. This is the **theme** of the story.

5. Describe a time that you experienced this theme in your own life.
