

## What is a theme?

(from Wikipedia)

In the [visual arts](#), a **theme** is a broad idea or a message conveyed by a work, such as a performance, a painting, or a motion picture. This message is usually about [life](#), [society](#) or [human nature](#). Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a work. Themes are usually implied rather than explicitly stated. Deep thematic content is not required in a visual work; however, some observers would say that all visual work inherently projects some kind of outlook on life that can be taken as a theme, regardless of whether or not this is the [intent of the author](#). Analysis of changes (or implied change) in dynamic characteristics of the work can provide insight into a particular theme.

A theme is not the same as the subject of a work. For example, the *subject* of [Star Wars](#) is "the battle for control of the galaxy between the [Galactic Empire](#) and the [Rebel Alliance](#)". The *themes* explored in the films might be "moral ambiguity" or "the conflict between technology and nature".

*Haystacks* is a title of a [series](#) of [impressionist paintings](#) by [Claude Monet](#). The primary subjects of all of the paintings in the series are stacks of [hay](#) in the field after the harvest season. The title refers primarily to a twenty-five [canvas](#) series ([Wildenstein Index Number](#) 1266-1290) begun in the end of summer of 1890 and continued through the following spring, using that year's [harvest](#). Some use a broader definition of the title to refer to other paintings by Monet with this same theme. The series is known for its [thematic](#) use of repetition to show differences in [perception](#) of [light](#) across various times of day, [seasons](#), and types of [weather](#). The subjects were painted in fields near Monet's home in [Giverny, France](#).

*Woman in an Armchair No.1 (The Polish Cloak)* depicts Picasso's companion Françoise Gilot sitting on a chair, wearing the coat he had brought back for her from Poland after attending the first World Peace Congress in Wroclaw in 1948 (see also *Woman at the Window*, [P11362](#)). Using lithographic ink as wash, the artist created soft tones and delicate shading to describe her face and richer, more solid areas of black and white to render her hair and ornate coat.

Between December 1948 and January 1949 Picasso made six different versions of the lithograph *Woman in an Armchair* in the atelier of the printer Fernand Mourlot in Paris. Although called *Woman in an Armchair No.1*, this print is from the definitive state of the second version. The first version was simply called *Woman in an Armchair*. The subject clearly engaged Picasso's attention. He first tackled it by making a version in yellow, red, green, purple and black which was printed from five separate zinc plates, one for each colour. Dissatisfied with the result, he then reworked all the plates to make a second, more ornate state. He then proceeded to make a second version, which comprises ten states, from the red zinc plate. At this point Picasso made six states, which varied significantly from each other. He then transferred the fifth of these onto a new zinc plate and at the same time made a 'corrected tracing' on tracing paper, which he transferred onto another plate. He then produced three more states from the transfer and

eventually reworked the corrected tracing entirely with ink wash and produced the current print, which constitutes the definitive state of the second version. Picasso originally wanted to superimpose this state over the third state of the transfer, which was to be printed in grey for this purpose, but was not entirely satisfied with the result and abandoned this idea, deciding to have the reworked tracing printed on its own instead.

The *Woman in an Armchair* series – which also comprises four further versions made from the original green, yellow, purple and black zinc plates – is widely considered the pinnacle of Picasso's lithographic work. This print in particular demonstrates his mastery of lithographic technique. It was printed on white Arches wove paper in an edition of a small number of artist's proofs plus fifty signed and numbered prints and published by the Galerie Louise Leiris, Paris.

Description of Picasso's "Bull" series of lithographs:

[http://www.artyfactory.com/art\\_appreciation/animals\\_in\\_art/pablo\\_picasso.htm](http://www.artyfactory.com/art_appreciation/animals_in_art/pablo_picasso.htm)