



An In-Depth Analysis

Theme in One Book

Sharon Creech's 1995 Newbery Medal winner, *Walk Two Moons*, allows readers to analyze the effectiveness of the author's use of theme and to consider how it relates to 13-year-old Sal, her grandparents, her friend, her father, and her mother, who has left home. The themes in Creech's book tie the plot, characters, and setting together into a meaningful whole. For example, Creech uses mysterious messages left by a stranger to tie together the plot, characters' actions, and motivation. The messages are also written in the form of themes.

The first message is "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins" (p. 51). Father then interprets the meaning of the message on page 61. The second message is "Everyone has his own agenda" (p. 60). This is tied to Gramps's interpretation of the message (p. 60), Prudence's and Sal's actions (p. 104), and Phoebe's thoughts about her agenda (p. 140). The third message is "In the course of a lifetime what does it matter?" (p. 105). This is related to Sal's thoughts about the meaning of the message (p. 106). The fourth message is "You can't keep the birds of sadness from flying over your head, but

you can keep them from nesting in your hair" (p. 154). This message is related to Phoebe's story (p. 155), Phoebe's father's response (p. 162), Phoebe's crying and Sal's response (p. 169), hope related to the story of Pandora's box (pp. 174–175), the birds of sadness around Phoebe's family (p. 189), and the birds of sadness around Mrs. Cadaver (p. 220). The fifth message is "We never know the worth of water until the well runs dry" (p. 198). This message is related to the discussion about Mrs. Cadaver's and Sal's realization that the messages have changed the way they look at life.

The final and sixth message is the same as the first: "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins" (p. 252). The importance of this message is emphasized when Gramps and Sal play the moccasin game in which they take turns pretending they are walking in someone else's moccasins (p. 275) and when Gramps's gift to Sal is to let her walk in her mother's moccasins. This book provides an interesting source for tracing the emergence of themes and the relation of those themes to various characters and conflicts developed in the text.