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## Theme

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### K-2

Gleeson, Libby. *Half a World Away*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007. Best friends Amy and Louie are never far apart – until Amy's family moves "half a world away." The theme, that true friends share unbreakable bonds, can be understood by looking at the book's beginning (friendship: a world of special words and secrets), middle (loss: when there is no one to call to and clouds hold only raindrops) and end (reconnection: their special call rings across the yard, the street, the ocean, and strange seahorses and wild, wild, dragons race across the ocean).

Spinelli, Eileen. *Someday*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2007. A little girl imagines what she'll do *someday*. The A/B/A/B pattern contrasts dreamy visions with ordinary routines and reveals the primary theme: it is O.K. to dream. A second theme is revealed in the final double-page spread that ends, rather than begins, with *someday*, breaking the expected pattern. *Someday is right now*.

### 3-4

MacLachlan, Patricia. *Edward's Eyes*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007. When three-year-old Jake is presented with his new brother, he is mesmerized by the baby's gaze and overwhelmed with awe and love. Their special bond grows, and it becomes clear that Edward is an unusual, insightful child who sometimes senses things before they happen. In a tragedy foreshadowed in the prologue, Edward dies in a biking accident, shattering everyone who has known him. The theme can be considered at three levels: a. (literal) Edward's eyes, the corneas donated to another, allow Edward to live on; b. ('eyes' as metaphor) Edward lives in Jake and all who have experienced the gift of his vision and insight; c. (gestalt or 'unified whole') Gifts given freely remain, relieving the pain of loss.

Pennypacker, Sara. *The Talented Clementine*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2007. Convinced that she has no talents, eight-year-old Clementine tries to find a way to avoid participating in the class talent show. She does not know what the title lets the reader understand: Clementine *is* talented. Gradual plot development reveals the theme: Talents that are not so easily seen – such as empathy – may be greatest of all.

### 5-6

Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. New York: A. A. Levine, 2007, c2006. From a bleak, sunless city haunted by the threat of scaled and serpentine monsters, a man sets forth to seek a new life in a new land, leaving his wife and daughter behind. Among historical imagery and science fiction elements he faces a new world both bizarre and awesome. He finds struggle and dehumanizing industry but also friendship and a new life. The protagonist finds friends everywhere, from the other immigrants who help him and tell their own tales of escape from oppression, war and fear to the whimsical beastie who attaches itself to him as his pet. Readers are put right into the refugee's shoes: we are as out of place as he. Thus we understand and experience the theme, an homage to the immigrant's spirit, tenacity and determination.

Zimmer, Tracie Vaughn. *Reaching for Sun*. New York: Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2007. In a series of free-verse poems, seventh grader Josie, a girl with cerebral palsy, tells us of her life, her limitations and the strengths she possesses. Through growing maturity, Granny's wisdom, and the friendship of the wealthy but neglected boy who moves in next door, Josie gains confidence in herself and fulfills the theme metaphorically stated in the title and in the first poem:

*Let not winter's ragged hand deface  
In thee thy summer. --William Shakespeare (Sonnet VI)*