

NECRWA 2019 – Theme: Enhancing and Deepening Your Story  
Presenter: Jeannie Lin ([www.jeannelin.com](http://www.jeannelin.com))

- I. Introduction
  - a. What is Theme?
    - i. A main, overarching idea contained within a work that can be directly or indirectly stated.
    - ii. A statement you can argue for or against
    - iii. Common themes?
  - b. Why Theme?
    - i. Theme makes a basic story BIG
    - ii. Works for plotters and pantsters....maybe?
- II. Strengthen Your Story
  - a. Identifying Your Themes
    - i. Often from your own values
    - ii. Common themes are fine – even preferred!
    - iii. What is the theme of your current WIP?
  - b. Tricks of the Trade – Ways to Show Theme
    - i. Characters/Secondary Characters
    - ii. Plot/Secondary or Sub-Plots
    - iii. Symbols/Icons
    - iv. Stories/Anecdotes
    - v. Direct Statements
- III. Case Study: The Warlord and the Nightingale by Jeannie Lin

IV. Theme and Story Structure

- a. Before, during or after the writing process
- b. First and last scene
- c. Black moment – Theme and Opposition at highest conflict
- d. The Big Showdown – How does the theme win out....or not.

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V: YOUR TURN: Brainstorming

Use your current work in progress to brainstorm these questions:

- ▶ What is the theme of your current work?
  
- ▶ Characters: How do they embody the theme?
  
- ▶ Plot: Does the central goal/quest speak to Your theme?
  
- ▶ Do the shared stories, anecdotes, back stories highlight the theme?
  
- ▶ Are there any objects or locations that can be used to symbolize the theme?
  
- ▶ Which secondary characters support the theme through what they say?
  - ▶ Are they allies of the hero?
  - ▶ Are they enemies of the hero?