

Theme and Plot Flower Essences

“Be thou thine own home, and in thy self dwell.” ~ John Donne

[Excerpted with permission from Lila Devi [The Essential Flower Essence Handbook](#) ,- Chapter 8]

METAPHORS AND MEANINGS

This chapter serves to explain a new terminology for the world of flower essences—theme and plot applications, when to use them and how they are determined. Basically, flower essences fall into two categories, of theme and plot essences. This means that we each have one theme essence, with occasional exceptions, and nineteen plot essences within the context of the 20 Spirit-in-Nature Essences, all coming into play at different times in our lives.



To simplify, we could say that we face our life challenges in one of two ways: (1) we remedy a negative quality by replacing it with its positive opposite; or (2) we build on existing strengths. The first approach summarizes the work of plot essences; the latter of theme essences. For example, Joseph, as we'll call him, had a stressful day at work, and so he returned home and took [Spinach](#) as his plot essence, to help him simplify his life. Margaret also had a difficult day, but decided to take her [Peach](#) theme essence because it reinforced her

compassionate nature. This essence allowed her to be impervious to the day's difficulties. Both individuals selected essences that helped them return to their own core of inner strength and to deal more effectively with life's infinite daily challenges.



THEME ESSENCE

It has been said that the entirety of a person's life could be encapsulated into a movie of a couple hours' length. Imagine yourself as a feature film at the local cinema. In what category of the movie reviews would you be listed—comedy, drama, musical, action/adventure or family entertainment?

Isn't this a playful thought? On a deeper level, though, you may find clues to your theme essence. In literary terms, we have the word, theme. A theme is defined as the thread of conflict through which we struggle to discover ourselves—our strengths, our shortcomings and just-who-are-we-anyway. This conflict may take any of these forms: man-versus-man, man-versus-nature or the more philosophical man versus-himself. It is through these frictions in our lives that we sculpt the masterpiece of our spiritual growth.

A theme essence refers to a dominant positive quality in our personality. It is that quality in which we are particularly strong; the one we resonate with; the one we closely resemble. In classic homeopathy, a theme essence would be called a constitutional; in flower essence therapy, a type or personality remedy. It is interesting to note that in traditional flower essence therapy, a type remedy is determined according to one's overriding negative or unperfected characteristics—which is our definition of a pivotal plot essence, explained later in this chapter.



A Grape theme, by type remedy definition, would be someone who is typically domineering and ruthless. However, according to theme essence constructs, a Grape theme is someone who is predominantly loving and devoted.

Hence, our theme essence is the one that addresses a major recurring theme or quality in our lives. We have, to a great extent, mastered this quality already but are always applying the finishing touches. Our theme essence issue is one that we return to again and again, working on deeper and more refined levels over time.

This means that we draw to ourselves the very tests we need to resolve corresponding issues in order to attain perfection of that quality—or at least to aspire in that direction!

Let's look at our Grape theme again. He may draw to himself the loss of parents or dear friends early in life. "What does this mean?" he is forced to question. Later on, perhaps divorce triggers this need to understand love on deeper levels. Or loneliness may recur. "What is this human suffering trying to teach me?" he asks again. Until he can answer these questions, he will continue to attract custom-designed outer circumstances that will afford repeated opportunities for understanding. Thus, he will magnetically draw certain tests through his need to experience love's true nature, which is the lesson of Grape.

The degree to which we express the perfected nature of our theme essence is reflective of our personal evolution. For example, the more we exhibit Almond's self-control, the more we will express its perfect state of balance. Also, the more refined our consciousness, the more difficult it becomes to pinpoint a theme essence. We may express the unconditionally loving Grape and also emanate Pear's perfect peace of mind. At this point, all the essences blend together. In this way, we grow through the vibrational support of flower essences.

One further note: since the theme essence is intrinsically linked to the personality, it can often be masked by personality-altering states such as mental retardation, diseases like Alzheimer's, and psychotropic drugs, both prescription and recreational.

EXAMPLE OF A THEME ESSENCE

Let's examine the life of Helen Keller and her corresponding theme essence. Born in 1880, Ms. Keller lost the senses of sight and hearing at the age of nineteen months. Through the efforts of her loving teacher, Anne Sullivan Macy, she learned to comprehend the connection between words and objects and, at ten years of age, achieved a major victory—speech. In her twenty-

fourth year, she graduated cum laude from Radcliffe College. Ms. Keller authored six books, and became the subject of several films, including the adapted Broadway play in 1959 entitled *The Miracle Worker*. She is also noted for her valuable contributions to the American Foundation of the Blind as counsellor on international relations.

Even without experience in intuiting theme essences, we can see that Ms. Keller's was a life of unmitigated courage, strength and the overcoming of obstacles. These are the hallmarks of a **Tomato** theme.



Faced with extraordinary barriers to the natural abilities of the senses that most of us take for granted as commonplace, she fought time and again to master the simple art of the spoken and written word. Even the titles of her books suggest the courage and will power of her undaunted spirit: *Optimism* (1903), *Out of the Dark* (1913), and *The Open Door* (1957). "Life," she professed, "is either a daring adventure— or nothing." Ms. Keller's life, indeed, exemplifies that of a warrior. The message of **Tomato** permeates her heroic courage in the face of immense obstacles.

THE FLOWER/FOOD CONNECTION: THEME ESSENCE

"I love 'real' cherries, though not in cough syrup or pies," confesses a **Cherry** theme. "I adore almonds—I eat them every morning for breakfast without fail," admits an **Almond** theme. "When I do eat pineapple, I really enjoy it, especially in jello salad—but doesn't everyone?" asks a **Pineapple** theme.

You get the picture. We have a special relationship with the food that corresponds to our theme essence. In over thirty decades of consultations, I have grown accustomed to asking clients how they react to their theme essence food. Gradually, a pattern has revealed itself. Ninety-five percent of the time, people express a particularity, and a peculiarity, toward the food that corresponds to their theme essence. Here is a sampling of theme essence food stories:

"Oh, **tomatoes**—love them, especially the cold Beefsteak variety. I love to wear that colour—the richest, ripest, most sun-drenched shade."

"I like **coconuts**, though I don't eat them a lot. But I love coconut milk, especially on oatmeal. I love it fresh. I like it, I like it!"

"I love **fig** preserves—though fresh figs are decadent! **Fig** seems like a fruit for a king."

"I even wear **strawberry** perfume and use strawberry shampoo!"

"**Raspberries** are my favourite food group. I could live on them! We've got some great ones growing here. I buy six flats and freeze them so I don't run out during the off season."

“I live on asparagus,” someone volunteered at one of my classes.

“Does this make me an Asparagus theme?” Well, obviously our system includes only the 20 [Spirit-in-Nature Essences](#), and the whole of humanity most certainly won’t fit into this finite system! For now, however, it’s the one we have to work with. Also, we need to substantiate a theme essence with more than food cravings. They are, unquestionably, important clues—though like a good Sherlock Holmes, be sure to collect more evidence!

HOW TO DETERMINE YOUR THEME ESSENCE



Sometimes others can see our theme essence more clearly than we ourselves do. Why? Because we are too close to ourselves. Distance, perspective and self-honesty are necessary in order to decipher our own theme. A friend of mine who is an excellent Spirit-in-Nature practitioner, thought that she was a [Blackberry](#) theme. She values her ability to analyse and introspect as paramount. A runner, yoga teacher and massage therapist, she often expresses a clarity of purpose. This individual whom we would playfully call a “health nut” had [Apple](#) practically shouting to be acknowledged as her theme essence!

To determine your own theme essence, you might ask yourself, “Am I really that peaceful, or that clear-thinking?” You might also spend time with true themes of the type you suspect yourself to be and see whether your energy matches theirs.

Above all, trust yourself. You will spot a [Pineapple](#) from a [Pear](#) theme a mile away—though distinguishing [Pineapple](#) from [Corn](#) may take some work. Watch for the feelings people evoke in you to determine their themes—it’s a simple issue of magnetism. A [Pear](#) theme will draw forth your own inner peace; a [Pineapple](#) will renew your innate self-confidence. And remember that the voice and eyes give us excellent theme essence clues, since they both reveal and project magnetism.

Try the following exercise to decipher your theme essence. With pen and paper, take some time to answer the following questions. Be thoughtful but also spontaneous in your answers. Your first thoughts will most likely be the most revealing. This exercise may be used for family, friends and clients in order to determine their theme essences as well.

1. The qualities I most admire in others are. . .
2. The outstanding idiosyncrasies of my personality are that I . . .
3. The main qualities I am trying to perfect in myself are . . .
4. It really bothers me when other people . . .
5. The three adjectives I would use to describe my energy are. . .
6. If my life could be ideal, what I would change is. . .
7. Am I calm? Kind-hearted? Cheerful? (pick the quality of a theme essence you suspect.)

8. Do I like and sometimes crave spinach? Grapes? (or whatever food corresponds to the theme essence in question.)



Are you still caught in the “doubting Thomas syndrome?” Here’s a little game I like to play to sharpen my theme-detective skills. While waiting in line at the checkout counter, the airport, the DMV, take a moment to observe people. Study them, breathe them, intuit them. Spinach themes are very straightforward in nature. Pineapples will draw your attention—to themselves or their actions. It’s easy. Before long, you’ll be an expert!

“I don’t want to be a Corn theme, I want to be a Peach!” shouted a client at the end of our consultation in a very loud, Corn-theme voice. “I’m really not a Raspberry theme,” one woman announced, “I’d much rather be a Strawberry.” What to do? Well, first it’s helpful, and honest, to admit that no one is infallible, including the practitioner. Do bear in mind, though, that discerning your own theme is not as easy as deciphering other people’s themes. Secondly, there is absolutely nothing wrong with being a Corn theme. Each essence has its own innate strength and beauty. And as we aspire toward our state of perfection, the distinctions of the essence definitions fade. Lastly, if you’d rather be a Peach than a Corn theme—be one! Theme essences are not set in stone—we can aspire toward whatever qualities we find particularly inspiring.

On a grander scale, countries have personalities and thus themes as well. To some extent, we are tempered by the temperament of our homeland. Fun-loving, childlike America is a true Spinach theme. A scene from a recent movie comes to mind of a man touring his friend through a prestigious part of Los Angeles. “Some of these homes,” he proclaims, “are over twenty years old.” Impressive! Then there’s the will-oriented Tomato-theme Germany; the carefree and somewhat careless Cherry-theme Mexico; the devotionally loving and passionate Italy, our hallowed Grape. This can be food for thought when planning your next vacation. (As to a country’s inevitable plot essences, well, how about Pear, “the peace-bearer,” for times of warfare and natural disaster; Orange for economic depression, followed by Pineapple to internally empower the country and restore its consciousness of abundance; and Tomato for the courage required to simply read the newspaper headlines!)

In addition to a theme essence, some individuals have a sub-theme essence. This is similar to having a major and a minor in college—both are predominant areas of study with one having a greater focus of energy. Examples follow in some of the essence chapters under Famous Theme Personalities. To summarize, a sub-theme is a lesser though still significant theme.

Lastly, it’s okay to guess wrong. It is better to try and fail than fail to try!

PLOT ESSENCES

Now on to plot essences and back to our literary metaphor. Plot refers to the path followed throughout a story. The plot may take many turns. Since the plot implies action, movement and thus energy, we would employ plot essences where different issues, problems or tests arise that require our attention. Here, unlike the theme essence, we see the negative indications of an essence surfacing—nervousness requiring Pear, immoderation wanting Almond, rigidity leaning toward Fig. The term “negative” does not imply dark, bad or wrong. It merely suggests a lack, or absence, of the positive quality, as in photographic negatives where the light and shade of a subject are reversed.



Plot essences are straightforward. Are you studying for an exam? Avocado. Are you working too late and too often? Almond. If you find yourself feeling out-of-sorts, select the essence that can help you to return to your natural state of balance.

Plot essences are divided into two categories—pivotal and peripheral. A pivotal plot essence is a strongly needed, recurring plot essence. Our pivotal plot essence may masquerade as our theme due to its predominance and our repeated need for it in our lives. The difference between the two is that the pivotal plot essence is indicated by a lack of expression of the desired quality, while the theme essence strengthens an existing positive quality. Both are indicated on a frequently recurring basis.

Consider, purely on a level of magnetism, the saying that opposites attract. Applying our new terminology, this means that we are drawn to friendships, and especially love relationships, with those whose theme essence matches our pivotal plot essence. Sara, for example, is a loving Grape theme. Also, a mother of three and involved in numerous volunteer jobs, her pivotal plot essence is the energetic Corn which is her husband’s theme essence. Sara finds herself drawn to other Corn themes for friends, since their Corn energy supplies her with “missing vibrational vitamins.”



Here’s another intriguing concept: theme/theme connections, or the “birds of a feather” syndrome. We are also drawn to people of our same theme essence, who are familiar and thereby comforting to us. Thus, connecting with others of our own theme is fortifying and reinforcing. To explore the match of a theme essence with a pivotal plot essence can be dynamically charged.

Now, on to peripheral plot essences. These include the remaining essences that surface as needed from time to time. “Gosh, I’m fuzzy today, I need Apple.” Or, “I’m too caught up in this argument—where’s my Banana?” Peripheral plot essences generally do not manifest with quite the same urgency or depth of need as pivotal plot essences. They are more surface-layered, or peripheral, to our nature. The difference between pivotal and peripheral essences is easily

deciphered by both frequency and intensity. Because flower essences delight in breaking rules, there are always exceptions. Pear may be urgently indicated for accidents, for instance, or Lettuce for extreme emotional agitation.

EXAMPLE OF A PLOT ESSENCE

Madeleine worked in a gift shop in a small West Coast tourist town. She often found herself judgmental and impatient with customers and co-workers. After a week on Date, her pivotal plot essence indicated by a curt nature, she reported feeling more irritated than ever. Madeleine experienced a seeming setback, as if the essence had “backfired.” We discussed this turn of events and decided that the problem had actually not worsened; her awareness of it had grown, a common reaction to flower essences. Two days later, Madeleine called with this news—her judgmental, easily irritated pattern of reacting to customers had dissolved and she felt more at peace with herself than ever.

FLOWER/FOOD CONNECTION: PLOT ESSENCES

We find the flower/food connection operative with both theme and plot essences, the difference being that plot essence foods surface less often than theme foods and tend to relate more to specific events.

“The week my divorce proceedings began, I ate nothing but oranges and bananas.” “I started craving tomatoes when I moved to the city.”

“Every time I have a rough day at work, a fresh spinach salad really does the trick.”

“I ran out of bromelain that I was taking for athletic overuse of the muscles and resultant inflammation. So, I ate pineapple instead—one a day. I started feeling like a really bumptious, cocky, swaggering sort of person!”

“I have never liked peaches, but I started eating them during the breakup of my marriage. I had started thinking too much of “me.” I ate lots and lots of peaches and found myself getting really interested in other people and listening to them.”

HOW TO DETERMINE PLOT ESSENCES



It’s both simple and easy. The prerequisites are being in touch with your feelings and honestly assessing your needs. Above all, please remember that we want to identify negative traits, not identify with them. How can we determine our plot essences? By observing the discrepancy between how we are thinking and acting and how we want to be. By accessing the positive Coconut qualities within our nature, we can then assess the qualities we need to draw upon from within the storehouse of all our existing fine qualities.

THE ULTIMATE PARADOX

Assuming you've got the basic concepts down, try to grasp this concept—the rare person with the same theme and pivotal plot essence! Here we see an individual expressing both the strengths and weaknesses associated with a given essence in equal intensity. Gemma, for example, is an Apple theme/pivotal plot. She teaches hatha yoga, boasts of an impeccably clean diet and actively inspires others to be more mindful of their own psycho-physical conditions. This same woman is herself always questioning herself, afraid of reliving the illnesses of her genetic family and filled with doubt about which therapies to explore for her own healing.



Then there's Jake, an obvious Fig theme/ pivotal plot. Good nature and good humour are his positive Fig theme characteristics. Extreme fanaticism and rigidity around health issues are the negative. The magnetism he projects to others is indeed a mixed bag—inspirational with his noteworthy disciplines and repellent by an inferred sense of their own imperfections. So, if you're sitting on the fence, metaphorically speaking, about a client's theme or pivotal plot essence, they could be one and the same.

“DOING” VERSUS “BEING”

To summarize, plot essences are symbolized by doing; theme essences, by simply being. Our theme essence is the framework on which plot essences are stacked. The theme essence signifies being at home; plot essences are the path we take to get there.

Consider Madeleine, described earlier, a Coconut theme (this was determined in the course of a consultation). We noted that her life revealed the repeated theme of tests that required great amounts of sustained, persevering energy and thus much inner growth as a result of finding superconscious solutions. Her Coconut “stick-to-it-iveness,” in fact, helped her to remain on Date as a pivotal plot essence.

How do we know which essence to take at a particular time—plot or theme? As a general rule, plot essences work with negative states; theme essences, when things are going well but not quite well enough—or when theme issues arise. Taking our theme essence provides a special sense of comfort and familiarity, a sort of at-homeness. We might even say—when in doubt, try your theme essence. Our theme essence can, and does, change as different character strengths emerge, rather than remaining stationary throughout our lifetime.

To put it differently, our theme essence is the individuated way we express our divinity. And it is through this expression that we return to that divinity. We could also say that the flower essence is the vibrational quality, the theme essence is our expression of that quality, and the plot essence represents our need to express that particular quality.

Above all, remember there is no need to worry about your essence choices. Trial and error are our best friends. Fortunately, essence selection is not as serious as choosing a life partner, a matter in which Socrates lightly encouraged us not to worry: *“By all means marry; if you get a good wife, you’ll become happy; if you get a bad one, you’ll become a philosopher.”*

THEME AND PLOT ESSENCES IDENTIFIED

FLOWER ESSENCE	A positive vibrational quality
THEME ESSENCE <i>Sub-theme Essence</i>	Our positive, dominant expression of that quality <i>A secondary positive expression</i>
PLOT ESSENCE <i>Pivotal Plot Essence</i> <i>Peripheral Plot</i>	Our need to express that particular quality <i>A frequently recurring need to express that quality</i> <i>A need expressed occasionally in specific situations</i>