

## **Let's Talk About It Theme Policy**

### **Criteria for New Themes**

When Oklahoma Humanities (OH) considers a new theme for "Let's Talk About It" (LTAI), the foremost requirement is that the theme must examine the human experience through reading and discussing literature. New themes should be engaging, introduce readers to new and diverse perspectives, encourage lifelong learning, include perspectives of authors from a variety of backgrounds, and promote empathy and open-mindedness.

OH will look for themes that cover topics not already covered in the LTAI theme list as there is much to explore and OH wishes to introduce its audiences to a wide variety of humanities-based ideas.

On occasion, it may be deemed appropriate to develop a new theme that complements or expands on an existing LTAI theme. When this happens, a new theme of similar subject matter may be considered if it is determined that the content will present a new perspective to its audience. The decision to create a new theme will be made by OH based on the overall needs of the LTAI program at any given time.

### **New Theme Development**

When a scholar is contracted to develop a new theme, specific criteria must be met prior to the release of their stipend. Scholars shall consider five *diverse* texts unified under a common theme. Scholars should explore diversity in content, authors, protagonists, ethnicity, regions, timeframes, etc. to ensure that the books are not repetitive in nature and offer maximum potential for participant growth. Themes based in history should include at least two works of fiction. Care will be taken to ensure that the books selected for the new series are not already in use in the LTAI program. Scholars will need to verify with OH that the books being considered have not been used in recently-retired themes, as well.

LTAI participants are instructed to read the books in the order designated by the theme's author; therefore, the books should be ordered in a logical manner, whether it is chronological or building on a concept or idea. It should be clear to other LTAI scholars and participants that the books are organized in a rational sequence. This will assist scholars in connecting their presentations with the overarching theme and where their book falls within the series.

The theme's accompanying essay should be no longer than four typed pages in 12 pt font. The essay should give an overview of the theme and general plot summaries for each book. It should entice its audience to read the books without giving away any spoilers regarding how the books end. This is an opportunity for the theme's author to demonstrate how the human experience is reflected through the selected literature. The essay should communicate, whether directly or indirectly, how these books relate to the overall theme and how the order of the books is relevant.

Consideration must also be given to whether the books are available for purchase and will remain in print for the foreseeable future. This is critical to the sustainability of the theme.

Books being considered for LTAI may contain a small degree of sexuality, profanity, and/or violence; however, these elements should not be considered gratuitous in nature. Due to the abundance of high-quality literature available for exploration, books that focus heavily in these areas will not be accepted by OH as they are likely to alienate some of the program's participants.

### **Retirement of Themes**

LTAI themes will be considered for retirement when they have not been reserved for a period of five years. Thought should be given to how many times this series has been used since its introduction to the LTAI program and whether this theme is likely to be reserved by newer LTAI audiences.

A theme may also be considered for retirement if the books are in especially poor condition. If the theme has been in circulation for many years, and the books show significant signs of aging, retirement should be considered. However, if the theme has been used consistently over many years, OH may consider refreshing the theme with new books. An analysis of the theme's history and usage should be conducted at that time so an informed decision can be reached.

### **Disposal of Books**

When themes are retired, the books from those themes may be donated to Friends of the Metropolitan Library System's annual book sale. Large quantities of books may be taken directly to their sort site facility located at 300 NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street in Oklahoma City. The facility is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. Books that are in poor condition, and not suitable for sale, will be sorted and recycled by the MLS volunteers. OH may contact the sort site by calling (405) 236-4734. Volunteers on site are available to assist with unloading books for donation.

### **General Humanities Themes for Consideration**

- Oklahoma, US, and World History
- Culture: religion, ethnicity, race, values and attitudes, characteristic features of everyday existence, customs and traditions, ways of life
- History of religion
- Ethics, justice, and politics and their impacts on society
- Literature/poetry
- Children, young adult, and coming of age stories
- Sense of family and community
- Life and death, especially end of life struggles and concerns
- Books for which noteworthy films were created (film/media studies). These films can be offered or recommended as supplemental programming
- War and veterans issues
- Folklore and oral traditions
- Women's and gender issues
- Heroes, nonfictional and fictional
- Beginnings and endings that happen in one's life (having children, career changes, retirement, opportunities to start over and re-create ourselves, etc.)
- Difficult decisions or quandaries
- Betrayal and forgiveness
- Suffering: poverty, oppression, etc.
- Self-examination: my human experience. Who am I? What is my responsibility to the planet, my community, to positively impact the lives of others?
- The Other among Us
- Memory
- Spirituality
- Animals
- Place/Home

- Education
- Technology
- Mystery
- Myth
- Privacy
- Creativity
- The Environment
- Exploration/Discovery
- Hope and fear
- The Future
- Work