THEME -- The theme in a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight.  It is the author's underlying meaning or main idea that he is trying to convey.  The theme may be the author's thoughts about a topic or view of human nature.  The title of the short story usually points to what the writer is saying and he may use various figures of speech to emphasize his theme, such as: symbol, allusion, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, or irony.

Some simple examples of common themes from literature, TV, and film are:   
- things are not always as they appear to be   
- Love is blind   
- Believe in yourself   
- People are afraid of change  
- Don't judge a book by its cover