Finding Theme

Begin with this sentence frame:

_________________ is a story about _____________.

Put the title of the story/novel/play/poem in the first blank space.

The Scarlet Letter is a story about _____________.

In the second blank space, put a single word that says what the story is really about.
--no plot summary, which would look like this:
    The Scarlet Letter is a story about a woman who has a baby out of wedlock.

--Instead, use a word such as hypocrisy:
    The Scarlet Letter is a story about hypocrisy.

Now, rewrite the sentence and fill in the second blank as many times as you have words to put in there. A list of possible words for the sentence we've been using might look like this:

    The Scarlet Letter is a story about
    --hypocrisy
    --sin
    --redemption
    --revenge
    --penance
    --love
    --jealousy

These words each reflect a theme of this book.

Now make phrases out of the words you've listed for the second blank, such as:
    --the desire for revenge
    --the scourge of jealousy

Consider what the piece of literature says about these words/phrases. For example:
    Animal Farm by George Orwell is about the abuse of power.
What does the book say about the abuse of power? Once you can answer that question, you have discovered a theme of the piece.

Use your words/phrases to write a thesis statement which reflects your answer to the “about” question.