



4 steps to a great theme

Where to start and where to go in
theme development



About Me

I teach at Bridgeland High School in Cypress, Texas - a suburb of Houston. I love podcasts, reading, good coffee and travel. If I wasn't a journalism teacher, I would be an event planner because nothing makes me happier than when a plan comes together and people are happy!



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heyfriend.blog



01

What is a theme? Why do we care?

Breaking down themes and why they're important

02

Deciding on a theme

How do we pick a theme? What should we consider?

03

Making a plan for content

Your first consideration is always what goes in the book and why

04

Make it look good

Content drives design - how to take your theme and develop it graphically



What's in a theme?



School's identity

Look, sounds like your school. Inclusion of school colors are not required to be part of your school's brand!



This year's story

A story that connects the student body. Be mindful that the story should reach every student. Not every kid cares about school spirit - or maybe they do!



Design/look

From the fonts to the folios, consider how the look of the book helps tell the story.



01

**What is a theme?
Why do we care?**

A theme is...

Theme and/or concept is an idea, usually repeated throughout the yearbook, that unifies the book's message and gives it personality. It should provide continuity throughout the book and create unity. It helps hold the different sections together and often contributes to various elements within the book.

- Cover
- End sheets
- Dividers
- Folio
- Typography
- Photography Treatments
- Layout, Design, Graphics Module conception and design



WZ

Placing eighth out of 47 other participants, Garrett Valerick⁴ participated in the Junior Olympics for high jump. Valerick spent more than a week in North Carolina for the event. "I was pretty nervous," he said. "It was really exciting." Photo courtesy of Twitter



To learn how the soccer teams work and practice some drills, 34 boys and 26 girls participated in the soccer camps held over the summer. Photo courtesy of Twitter



Enduring temperatures of 106, Raleigh-Savannah was the top and took home the Most Valuable Photographer award at the before



JULY

Cuts games. save in Philadelphia.

with his Netflix account.

US BACK? TO HING.

"I want to be a professional sportscaster because I love sports and I have a sports journalism internship with VYPE." Reagon Carter¹⁰

AUGUST

27

FIRST DAY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Woke up early
- ☐ Planned your outfit day before
- ☐ Caught up with your friends
- ☐ Got lost on your way to class
- ☐ Met someone new
- ☐ Found a table for lunch
- ☐ Drove yourself



Posing for her Instagram post, sophomore Marissa Pascarella, spends her last day of summer vacation with her friends. "I was sad that summer was over," Pascarella said. "But I was happy that I got to see opened it with my friends." Photo courtesy of Marissa Pascarella

23

Cubs and organizations gathered on August 23 for the annual Bear Week event to welcome freshmen and transfer students. Other students were able to purchase spirit gear for the building and attend a pep rally. Photos by staff



Photos from left: Josh Bernhardt, Savita Gai, Justin O'Rourke, Caroline Scott

"I want to travel the world and live in Italy." Ashley Jackson⁹

SUMMER MISSIONS



"My favorite memory was probably meeting the pastor of the school that we were at. And just being able to see him, and meet him. And he was just very grateful for all the help we'd given him. 'Cause it was just such a big school you could just tell he couldn't do it all on his own, so helping him and being able to meet him and letting him know we were trying to help him in any way we can. He was just really grateful for that and it was just good to meet the people that we were trying to help." Emma Kalkowski⁶



"There was this one couple that we met and we just asked them if we could like pray for them. And she actually said yes, and she pointed to her husband's head, and I like didn't even see it. But I saw that her husband's foot was like super swollen, and it was just crazy and it looked like really grotesque. So, they just asked if we would pray over them. And we said of course, and we did and they just said thank-you for that and they said they were also believers, and it was just really encouraging." Abbey Roberts⁸



"Probably going to worship every night, because there was this huge band and huge speakers. So, it was really fun, and it was like really impactful." Daniel Whaley⁷

20-26

Students traveled to Pleasant City, Tenn. to attend the 10th Annual Summer Missions Conference.

WHAT WE WATCHED

JUNE
INCREDIBLES 2
JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM
OCEAN'S 8

JULY
MAMMA MIA! HERE WE GO AGAIN
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - FALLOUT
AUGUST
TO ALL THE BOYS I'VE LOVED BEFORE
CRAZY RICH ASIANS

WHAT WE HEARD

according to Billboard

1. IN MY FEELINGS
Drake
2. I LIKE IT
Cardi B
3. GIRLS LIKE YOU
Maroon 5
4. NICE FOR WHAT
Drake

IT'S WHAT

2 VACATION

7

2 CALENDAR

9

CHANGES

DIVISION

Spread by Editors

005

SUMMER CALENDAR

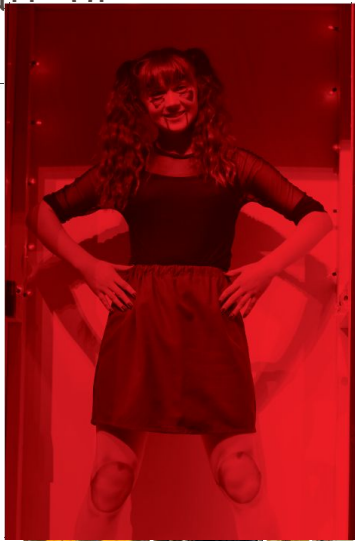
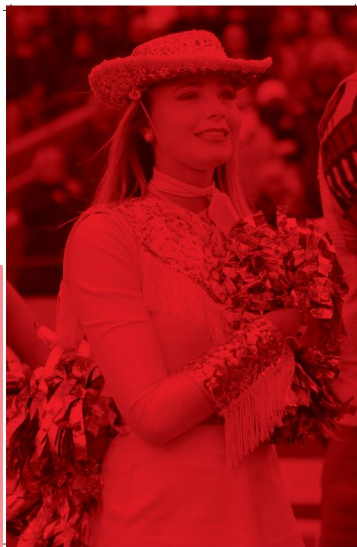
2018-2019

Spread by: Ella Barnes

009

Let's look at a theme

The cover is Plexiglass and has a pocket on the inside so students could customize their cover to what they are “part” of





ALEXA MASSEY, 10
"Going to pep rallies here were honestly better than middle school. That was really cool. I went to a private school, so they were kind of boring there. There's just more school spirit here, and it just makes everyone feel a part of it. It's bigger here. I met and talked to more people and figured out that a lot of people know each other."



MCKAYLA RILEY, 9
"At the beginning of this year, I already knew some of the teachers, so I felt welcome. I just followed my friends around. I really enjoy child development. I've learned about health. We have to take a baby home and take care of it. It teaches us how to grow up. I like this class and my P.E. period."



COOPER TIDWELL, 10
"I felt part of Legacy when I made it to playoffs. I felt part of a team, and it brought me closer with the other guys. It was a sense of accomplishment because we had made it there. Only a certain amount of sophomores got moved up for playoffs, so it was a big deal to me. I take pride in that. Football has been hard, but it's really fulfilling. The workouts are difficult, but it's only making you better in the end."



ROBERT REAGAN, 11
"I first felt a part of Legacy my first football game. I was a part of Legacy and just got a feeling when I walked onto the field. It was the first week of school back when I was a freshman. I was like 'wow' this is high school — it's going to be fine. I was on the side because I was in the pit, but it was exciting because of all the people, the student section and Friday night lights."



LIZZY BALLARD, 12
"Since I was part of the cheer team, I already had a circle of friends, so that really helped me out. Fish camp was the first time I saw my class all together, and I saw most of the people I would be with for the next four years. Since I went to Howard, not Jobe, I got to go around the whole school with my cheer friends, and that made it pretty real. Also, this was the first pep rally I cheered in, so it got me even more excited to be at this school."



NYLA RUFFIN, 9
"I realized I was in high school because of the freedom I found at lunch. You could just leave whenever and go to the library or the bathroom when you needed to. They also sell cookies some days at lunch which was pretty cool. At middle school, we had administration watching over [us] at all times. It's been great having freedom that comes with maturing to figure things out yourself."



SAM TURNBOUGH, 12
"I found my place the middle of sophomore year. That's when I started to get more involved in school. Freshman year I kind of just went through the motions. Sophomore year I got in the baseball class. Baseball was what got me to hang out with my friends. Sophomore year I started going to the baseball game with my buddies and met new people as the year went on."



WILLIAM SANZONE, 9
"Whenever the freshmen were introduced to the school with all the tours during fish camp, I started to feel a part of Legacy. Everyone was super friendly. No matter what, everyone was treated the same. We did a scavenger hunt to try and find all the classrooms and had an upperclassman take us on a tour. The first day was laid back. It was just like 'this is what Legacy is and this is what we do.'"



LAURIN MENDELSON, 12
"I really felt a part of this school when I joined the swim team. All the seniors invited us to play a cheesy name game. It really helped me get comfortable with the team and got me excited for the rest of the year and my high school years to come. I would see a teammate down the hall, and I loved how we weren't scared to say hi just because we weren't in the pool."



HARLEA LUEG, 10
"At football games, you would go into the student section and everyone is supporting one team — your team. Everyone comes together to be one. They are cheering for our team to win. You fit in with the crowd, but not in a bad way. It wasn't fit in or to be popular. I was fit in to be a part of something greater."



ZAYRON MCGRIFF-LAWRENCE, 12
"I felt part of Legacy at the end of football season freshman year. I just felt close to them like a family. I got to meet good guys and made long term friends. We bonded while going out to eat, playing side-by-side, bus rides and watching film."



ALYCIA STEENBAKERS, 11
"I first felt a part of Legacy when I started joining sports. I just felt part of the team. I run track and cross country. I got to know all the athletes and the girls who run similar events. I've found that I've really gotten to grow as a teammate and was able to get better. I had an older brother who went here, so I already knew people. It's kind of like I just fit right in."

when did you feel

PART OF LEGACY?

"EVER
INVO
GAM
DOV
THE
ETHAN C

"I WAS JUST EXPECTING TO TRY AND FIND A SPOT WHERE I WAS COMFORTABLE. I THINK I DID."
MARGARET HOWARD, 9

THE MOMENT SHE KNEW SHE WAS IN

Student Finds Her Place in Choir

Freshman Margaret Howard's shoulders hunched, her fists clenched and her eyes scanned the unfamiliar hallways. But, when she spotted the room labeled EM-107, she felt herself relax. When she walked in, her eyes went to the colorful bricks in the entryway decorated by graduates, and she felt reassured by the knowledge that her name would lay amongst them one day.

Howard found her place in Legacy when she earned a spot on varsity women's choir.

"Choir is my comfort zone, so I thought that would be a good way to introduce myself," Howard

said. "It's my way to make a contribution to Legacy."

Howard felt nervous on her first day of classes as she struggled to find her way around the enormous campus full of intimidating upperclassmen.

"I was really overwhelmed with how many people are here and how big the school was," Howard said.

Howard auditioned for advanced choir in middle school. She doubted her ability to get in at first, but still earned her spot on varsity women's choir.

"Being in choir, I feel like I'm surrounded by

people who I have a common interests with. So I makes me a bit more comfortable," Howard said.

She went to as many games as she could to contribute to the school spirit and to support her athlete friends.

"I don't really know who I was expecting," Howard said. "I was just expecting to try and find a spot where I was comfortable. I think I did."

Story by Brandy Koenig

DRAMATIC ENERGY On stage at the fall choir concert, Margaret Howard sings with the Varsity Women's Choir. "I liked the German song we performed because it was so dramatic and the energy we had," Howard said. They also performed "To Be Grown" for the 2018 UIL season.



ALEXA CREST PHOTO

Why do we care about a theme?

Every year is different. Your students are different. The story is different. Themes help distinguish your school from all the others and your year from every other year.

Themes are a roadmap for how our book should sound and look. A yearbook without a theme is a play without a plot.

cough “CATS” *cough*





02

Deciding on a theme



Where do we start?

...start by talking to each other!

Start by taking notes

As a group, talk about your school. Have honest, productive conversations. Use these talking points:

- What words would we use to describe our school?
- What words would others use to describe our school?
- When given a challenge, how does our school respond?
- What are some common themes our school revolves around?
- What are some common phrases in our school?
- What is the story of this year? What's new? What's the same? What can we rely on? What challenges are we facing?



Find the phrase

- Start spitballing ideas
 - Suggested activity: Have everyone write possible phrases on Post-it's (lots!) and put them on a board. Then sort them into similar groups based on tone/storyline. As a group, try to weed the ideas down to five-10. Break the group up into smaller groups and they all have to come up with how they will tell that story in the book with each phrase. Groups get up and present. It's ok to say "we couldn't connect with this phrase."

Find the phrase (cont'd)

Rules for collaboration

- “No” is not allowed. Instead try building off each idea. It could lead somewhere!
- No one marries an idea. You’re dating themes! Flirt with each theme!
- Try multiple themes before committing. I’ve always said I could make money selling fully developed themes we never used. And that’s ok!
- Themes should not be complicated. They should have personality and should connect with a reader right away.



03

Making a plan for content



Be purposeful about how you tell stories to match the theme

The theme goes far beyond what the cover looks like. It dictates much of the coverage in the book - specifically student life. Take your theme and brainstorm ways to tell that story on showstopper spreads! Your staff should understand your theme and be on board with telling the story. If it's hard to think of ways to tell your story, it's probably not your theme.

stress of school, peers can have negative impact on mental health

percent of students say they are overwhelmed

"I'm really overwhelmed with school and DECA, especially with state coming up. It's a lot of work. Mixed with all the AP classes, especially BC calculus, it's hard to keep up."

JACOB COHEN 12

classes

"There's so much to do for every class, and there's not really a balance. Geometry is my most stressful class. I like the class and my teacher, but we move too fast."

JAYDEN PEI | EGRINI 9

"Having band every day for three hours makes it hard to manage my time. You can take AP classes as long as you get your work done. It can be really stressful." ADDIE O'NEIL 11

"I spend a lot of time doing homework each night for chemistry. I get really stressed, but I study with my friends."

AMOD DAHERKAR 10

HIDDEN STRUGGLE

Alyssa Jimmie 12:

Struggling with mental health makes me a lot less motivated to do things. I was the basketball manager at the beginning of the year, but I was struggling with myself and being happy. Because of that, I didn't feel motivated at all to do my schoolwork.

“
Things fall apart
before my eyes
at the same time
they're falling apart
in my head.

show up to school or care about my grades. A few weeks ago, I was really struggling, so I didn't do my English projects. I just had to do some simple things. It's easy work, but I felt so unmotivated. Because of that, I failed, and I'm failing now.

It's a lot harder to get back up from that because I didn't do what I was supposed to do the first time.

Struggling with mental health is discouraging because I see it reflect in my grades and schoolwork. Seeing that fall apart really stresses me out.

Even though it's hard, things improve in small ways daily. There are always challenges that are harder than others. As the days progress, there are more things to look forward to. That motivates me and makes me want to work harder so I can see improvement within myself."

Last year I could get away with not taking notes and still get 100s on my tests, but this year I have to actually take the notes. I feel like I have more time to do my work because of A-days and B-days, but combined with band, that cancels out.

Band makes getting my work done stressful, but it definitely motivates me to keep my grades up because I don't want to fail and have to stop participating in it."

POST PRESSURE

Natalie Hamilton 12:

"When my Instagram account started to grow, I definitely felt a pressure to post stuff that's happy about myself like my family, vacations or things that I'm doing in life that inspire others. I believed I should be doing that for the people that follow me, but I've definitely come a long way and grown used to

I was dealing with things that got fulfilled with how many likes I got on my posts, but now I've realized it doesn't matter how many I get. I think it's awesome that people are able to see my posts.

Now, I'm more open about my faith and how it's affected me personally, and I don't have to worry about what people I don't even know think about me. I think recognizing the effect my story and my walk with the Lord could potentially have on others definitely inspires me to keep reaching out to people and be more vulnerable about who I am, and that nobody has a perfect life, even if it seems like they do."

THE NUMBERS **EXTRA-CURRICULARS**

Do extra-curricular activities put a strain on your ability to get homework done?

715

704

the survey was

ALYSSA JIMMIE 12

photo by grace davis

100 students surveyed

WINTER MOMENTS

"I got really stressed out when I had my first test of the year, an AP statistics test, during the third week of school." **Sarah Renelt 11**

WHAT HAPPENS

NET

SCHOOL TRAGEDIES PROMPT ADDITIONAL SECURITY MEASURES

Parkland, Florida, Santa Fe, Texas. Two of the deadliest school shootings in history prompted walk outs, marches and a push for action on a national, state-wide and local levels. CFISD Superintendent Mark Henry knew he needed to do something. And he did.

Along with the Board of Trustees, they came up with a safety plan and moved quickly to implement it. The plan included requiring students to bring clear backpacks to school, wear identification badges around campus, as well as off-campus initiatives such as a mental health response team, and canine units.

With change came criticism. The implementation of clear backpacks divided the community. Conversations on Facebook centered around concerns over privacy and durability while others applauded the move as a step toward safety.

As CFISD police chief Eric Mendez said, clear backpacks and IDs are "one of the multitude of steps" that the district took to continue to ensure safety in school.

"What you're seeing is just one step, you need to look at what we're looking at as a whole before you formulate your response to clear backpacks," Mendez said. "It's only one step, it's like locking your front door. That's one step to ensure that your home is safe every day."

In the end, however, the decision was all about students and staff working together "on the same team," Dr. Henry said.

Despite the early backlash, students like sophomore Scott Iwaskewycz adapted well and didn't mind the clear backpacks.

"They actually turned out to be pretty all right," Iwaskewycz said. "And just the fact that everybody else had them made it just a little more unified."

For some freshman like Jermaine Daloyoc, the transition from middle school to high school was already intimidating, and clear backpacks added another area of change for the freshmen.

"It's an adjustment," Daloyoc said. "I'm not used to everyone looking at all my stuff."

The mental health response team, according to Chief Mendez, worked with outside treatment facilities and counseling teams to find proper services for students struggling with mental health.

As everyone adjusted to the new policies, the school year served as an experiment to see if the new security measures would protect students.

And lastly, Dr. Henry had a message for the CFISD community.

"This is not a us versus them deal, it's not a school employee versus student deal, this is all of us together, because in every school shooting, it hasn't just been students who have been harmed or killed, it's been teachers and adults. So we're really all on the same team, so I hope we'll work that way and keep our schools safe."

Sophomore Emma Kalokowski said the initial concern surrounding the security changes phased out over the first semester. While she could not name specific instances when the security measures were effective, she said she believes the changes are still useful.

"I think the main thing that makes sure we stay safe is making sure we're being aware of potential threats," she said. "Because if we can notice the signs of it then we can report it and get it taken care of before anyone gets hurt. I think it will continue to be a useful tool in preventing tragedies from happening."

Story by Tommy Yarrish

**"AND JUST
THE FACT THAT
EVERYBODY
HAD THEM
MADE IT JUST
A LITTLE MORE
UNIFIED."**

NO CLEAR SOLUTION

Sophomore Lauren Lai-Irui sits in the situm with her clear backpack, decorated with stickers. Students were allowed two "privacy pouches" and a non-transparent lunch kit. Photo by staff



how much of a

WARRIOR

are YOU?

start here
and tally your points

3



Animal Farm is a required 9th grade read. However, it's quite obvious that the whole school hasn't read it. **1 read maybe six sentences** of that book. Caroline Kusack, 10, said,

+1 point if you skipped a chapter or two of Animal Farm.

4



Some Happy Hour is a **staple** for OGHs students. My favorite is a **blue coconut slush** with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Jenna Philpot, 11, said, "They always, always get it wrong!"

+1 point if your book mascot has suffered from Santo-speeding.
+1 more point if your card was declined on 9th grade day.

1



If you need some advice, Mr. Major's **Little Book of Wisdom** might come in handy. If you're **really** having a bad day, he might even put a penguin live head on the board!

+1 point if he's ever read to you from the book.
+1 more point if you've ever dozed on the propaganda.

2



Cowbells are essential to cheering on the warriors. I just know that I had to have a cowbell before I moved to Oak Grove," says Collin Chalm, 11. "Everyone told me that they make games so much more fun!"

+1 point if you have your own cowbell.
+1 more point if you decorated it yourself!

5

BABY WARRIOR

Although you're a student at Oak Grove, you might not be the most school-spirited. Maybe attending sporting events is a **reality** for you, you don't indulge in school traditions, or you're just an inexperienced underclassman. Either way, you don't fully grasp the "warrior way." Actually, you're not even close to it. **Yikes!**

5-10

NOVICE NATIVE

Not bad! Your warrior gear is mediocre. I guess there are academic activities that you don't participate in or the couple of perfectly timed OGHs things that you just don't understand kept you from the title of "true warrior." However, your school spirit is noticeable and hopefully steadily growing! Good job, maybe next year?

7



Every warrior knows that Java Joe's coffee is the **perfect pick-me-up** before a late night cram sess or an early-morning tutoring class.

+2 points if you like Starbucks better.

8



Friday mornings are **fun** thanks to Mr. Germany and Mrs. Hardin's blaring music and dance moves on Q! Hall.

+1 point if you've ever told them to have a happy Friday on a Friday morning.
+1 more point if you've danced with them!

9

Singing the **alma mater** at the warrior head after third block on game days has become an important warrior tradition.

-2 points if you've never participated.

10



Teachers' wooden apples are meant to be a creative happen, but Mrs. Bush's apple has been stolen so many times, she's **given up** on letting students use it.

+3 points if you've stolen an apple.

10+

TRUE WARRIOR

The warrior spirit is strong with this one! On gamedays, you wouldn't be caught dead without your cowbell, and you know the alma mater inside-out. You practically bleed black and gold! Your school pride is contagious and noticed by all. Keep being the gold medal warrior that you are!

11



Mr. Clark's Humanities classes watch classic movies in between units. My favorite is **Rear Window**. Mr. Clark said, "I like to see the students' reactions. At first, they think it's no big deal and by the end, they are screaming at the screen."

+1 point if you've seen Casablanca, Citizen Kane, or Rear Window at Tiffany's Humanities.

12



Homecoming is the most fun way to show school spirit; students come up with the **coolest** outfit. I like getting to be creative on homecoming week and trying new things!" says Moody Adin, 12. "Well, West was definitely my favorite dress-up theme. I was Woody from Toy Story!"

+1 point if you dressed up every day of homecoming this year.

13

About time! Although dresscode didn't stop anyone from wearing spirit shirts before, they were finally approved!

+2 points if you have over 10 spirit shirts.

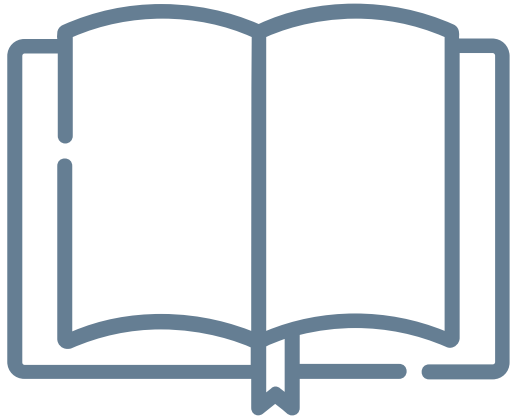
14



Warrior football made it to the **State Championship** this year, and "The Rock" was **flooded** with Oak Grove supporters - enough to **fill** the lower stands.

-5 points if you skipped the game.

score



The ladder!

When planning the ladder around your theme, take these percentages into consideration.

11% Student Life

20% Clubs & Academics

21% Sports

24% People


21% reference

This adds up to 97% for some wiggle room.



Mix it up!

Just because you've "always done it this way" doesn't mean it will work with your theme. How you organize your book can help tell your story. Try switching to chronological or maybe run all the mugs together broken down by alpha rather than grade! Let your theme dictate the organization of your book just as much as what you put in it.





04

Make it look good

Now, for design

A common mistake staffs make is deciding how they want the book to look before they decide on the story. Content drives design. Always. Have your theme and story locked down before you start to look at design. I've seen staffs lock into a design like watercolors but their theme doesn't match. Watercolors have an emotion and feeling attached to them. If your theme is "Never back down" then watercolors don't match.



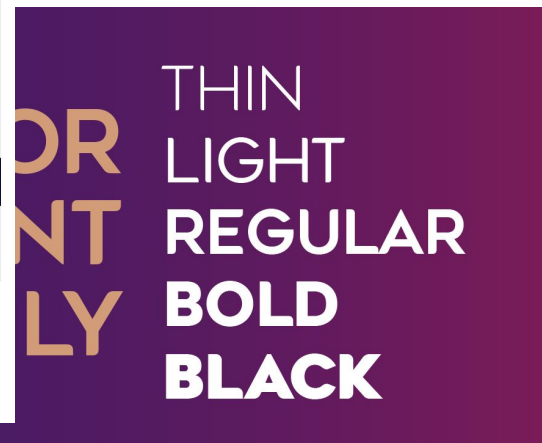
So, where do you start?

- What is the emotion/tone of your book? Is it bold? Is it classic? Is it elegant?
- Begin looking for design that matches that emotion or tone and finding inspiration
- Look everywhere! Pinterest is an echochamber for design. Every staff is looking there. Look at magazines, menus, designer's portfolios. My personal favorite place to look is at university marketing materials.
- Look for possible fonts, color swatches, photo techniques and graphic elements
 - For color swatches, use a website like [Adobe Color](#) to help pick colors that complement.





nts
ers on type



Build a design board!

Use Google Slides, PowerPoint, Canva, Spark, etc. to build a visual “mood” board for your book.

- Type treatments
- Photo editing techniques
- Copy alignment
- Headline design
- How to use color
- Spread designs you love



Wrapping up

- Themes don't have to be complicated. Don't worry if another school has done a theme, but avoid worn out themes.
- There are no bad ideas - just ideas you don't use
- Make decisions! There is no "perfect" theme. There's just the theme you chose and that you execute well!
- Brainstorm every spread and how you can integrate your theme. Brainstorming every spread as a whole class helps keep the book to theme

Thank you!

