



# SCRAP CITY

## Searching for Themes

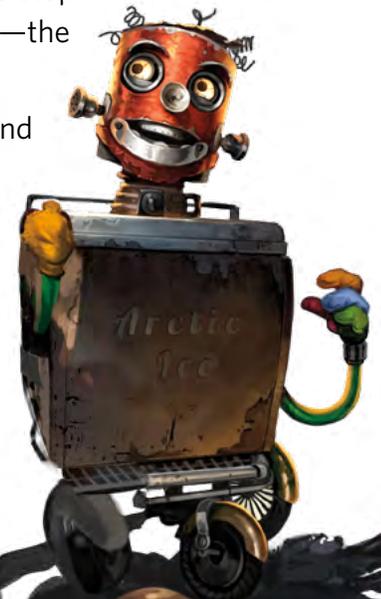
"Jerome Barnes was exploring the junkyard when something curious caught his eye." And with that, Jerome sets off on an amazing adventure filled with new and unexpected friends, a secret underground town, people made of old odds and ends brought to life, and a ruthless criminal who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

But *Scrap City* is about more than just Jerome trying to help the Scrapers. It also has different themes. A theme is a main idea in a piece of writing. You can think of themes as being little messages from the author to the reader—the author believes certain concepts are important, and wants to show them to you through their writing. Usually, themes aren't stated directly, so you have to look for clues in the text to figure out what the author is trying to say.

If you read carefully through *Scrap City*, you might find themes like:

- **We need to take care of the environment.** Jerome is shocked at all the stuff that gets thrown out and piled up in the junkyard. The Scrapers, however, are great at recycling. They find uses for things other people have thrown away. Jerome and his friends also stop Kilman from drilling for oil. They then return the land to its rightful owners—the Pinawa, who promise to protect both the earth and Smithytowne.
- **It's hard dealing with grief.** Jerome thinks constantly about his mom and brother, and struggles with the fact that they're gone. When Jerome discovers Kilman and his men were responsible for their deaths, he has to decide whether he wants to take revenge or let the police handle things.
- **Friendship is a powerful thing.** As he becomes friends with Arkie, and eventually Cici, Jerome starts feeling happy and loved—for the first time since his mom and brother died. By working together, Jerome and his friends are able to stop Kilman and his thugs.

But this isn't all of the messages in *Scrap City*. Because every reader is unique, different people might notice different themes. What would you add to the list? What do you think D. S. Thornton wants you to learn from Jerome and Arkie's quest to save Smithytowne?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Foreshadowing is something a writer does to hint at what will happen later in the story. Talk about some moments in the book that you think the author was using foreshadowing.
2. Throughout much of the story, Jerome thought that Cici was just being annoying. However, later we find out that she was actually trying to be his friend and keep him company. What did you think about Cici? Did your opinion of her change as you kept reading?
3. While exploring Wild Willy's junkyard, Jerome saw a sign that says, "One man's trash is another man's treasure." Talk about what this phrase might mean. How does it connect to the story?
4. Why do you think Jerome decided to leave Kilman's men in the pit? Talk about what was going through Jerome's mind at that moment.
5. When Willy was talking to Jerome and Cici, he said: "You look at this here junkyard—things people got no more use for—far as the eye can see. . . . People don't want nothin' 'less it's shiny and new." What is Willy saying about people's attitudes toward their possessions? Are there other moments in the book that connect to this idea?

## WRITING PROMPTS

1. Even if something is old, it can still have value. Maybe the old thing still works, maybe you found a new use for it, or maybe it reminds you of a person or place. Write about something that other people might think is useless, but that has value to you.
2. Write a short story about Jerome taking Cici to Smithytowne for the first time. What is Cici's reaction? What does Jerome show her? What do they do?
3. How did being friends with Arkie affect Jerome? Write a couple of paragraphs that explain how Jerome changed throughout the book. Be sure to use specific examples.
4. If you could bring anything to life with the Lifestream water, what would it be? Write about the object and explain why you chose it and what you would use it for.
5. Write a few paragraphs that compare and contrast Shoney Flats and Smithytowne. How are the two places similar? How are they different?