



Dictionary.com (<http://www.dictionary.com/>)

Thesaurus.com (<http://www.thesaurus.com/>)



(<http://www.dictionary.com/>)

theday/)

definitions

motif



motif

[moh-**teef**]

Examples

Word Origin

See more synonyms on Thesaurus.com (<http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/motif>)

noun

1. a recurring subject, theme, idea, etc., especially in a literary, artistic, or musical work.
2. a distinctive and recurring form, shape, figure, etc., in a design, as in a painting or on wallpaper.
3. a dominant idea or feature:
the profit motif of free enterprise.

Origin of motif

1840-1850

From French, dating back to 1840-50; See origin at motive (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/motive>)

Dictionary.com Unabridged

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Examples from the Web for motif

Contemporary Examples

Extra Cozy Words We Need Right Now (<http://www.dictionary.com/e/s/cozy-words-cold-day/?src=dcom-serp-tab>)

My understanding is that this artwork came first and was soon replaced with the "Sambo as a baby genie" *motif*.

(<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/30/pancakes-and-pickaninnies-the-saga-of-sambo-s-the-racist-restaurant-chain-america-once-loved.html?source=dictionary>)

Andrew Romano (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/contributors/andrew-romano.html?source=dictionary>)
June 30, 2014

This *motif* has been a classic of anti-modernism for two centuries in Europe.

(<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/11/22/sorry-naysayers-but-america-isn-t-over-yet.html?source=dictionary>)

James Kirchick (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/contributors/james-kirchick.html?source=dictionary>)
November 22, 2013

Historical Examples

I thought that you of all people could work out that *motif* adequately.

The Spinner's Book of Fiction (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20343/20343-h/20343-h.htm>)

Various

The *motif* of the work is most beautifullv and patheticallv represented.

▸ x

British Dictionary definitions for motif

motif

/məʊ'tiːf/

noun

1. a distinctive idea, esp a theme elaborated on in a piece of music, literature, etc
2. *Also* **motive**. a recurring form or shape in a design or pattern

3. a single added piece of decoration, such as a symbol or name on a jumper, sweatshirt, etc

Word Origin

C19: from French. See [motive](#)

Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition
 © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins
 Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012
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Word Origin and History for motif

n.

"theme, predominant feature," 1848, from French *motif* "dominant idea, theme" (see [motive \(/browse/motive\)](#)).

Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper
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motif in Culture

motif [(moh- teef)]

In literature, art, or music, a recurring set of words, shapes, colors, or notes. In the poem "The Raven" (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/the--raven>), by Edgar Allan Poe (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/poe>), for example, the word *nevermore* is a motif appearing at the end of each stanza (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/stanza>). Likewise, the first four notes of the Fifth Symphony of Ludwig van Beethoven (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/beethoven>) are a motif that is developed and reshaped throughout the work.

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