

Lesson Name : 34

Lesson Title : Thesis Statements

Course Name : English 2 Part 1 [Honors]

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Essential Instruction



Constructing strong thesis statements will help you write excellent papers.

A strong thesis statement is the backbone of all good writing. Without a thesis statement, you have written a report that does not include any of your own opinions, beliefs, or analysis.

The best way to come up with a strong thesis statement is to answer a question about the subject. Thesis statements answer questions that start with *why* or *how*. Don't confuse the thesis statement with the topic. The topic is a simple answer to the question "What is your paper about?" A thesis statement, on the other hand, makes an argument about a topic. Look at the examples below:

- How does J.R.R. Tolkien get the reader to care about Gollum?
- Why does Hamlet take so long to respond to the directions of his father's ghost?
- Should the United States government legalize marijuana for medical use? Why or why not?
- Should drivers found guilty of texting and driving lose their licenses? Why or why not?

Answers to the questions above would make great thesis statements.

In addition to formulating a thesis statement, it is important to know how to construct and recognize a good thesis statement. Good thesis statements have four characteristics. They are argumentative, controversial, specific, and analytical or evaluative.

An argumentative thesis statement makes a case. If your thesis statement is just a statement of fact, then it is not a thesis statement, it is just an observation.

Good thesis statements are controversial. This does not mean that they must be so outrageous they cause an argument. It simply means that it is an argument worth making – it must be debatable. If no reasonable person would disagree with your thesis statement then it is not controversial and needs to be revised.

Good thesis statements are specific. You want to make sure you narrow your topic down so that it can be easily addressed within the page limits you are given.

Finally, good thesis statements are analytical – they show how or why something is the way it is – or evaluative – they judge the value or worth of a given subject.

Generally, you will write analytical papers, however, there are times when your thesis statement will need to be evaluative as well.

Once you have constructed a thesis statement, it is time to gather the evidence and support for it. In a typical paper, your thesis statement will be the last part of your introductory paragraph. You will provide support for your thesis statement as well, background information, and address opposing arguments in your body paragraphs. Any paragraph that does not do one of these three things should be deleted from your paper.

Practice A

Which of the following points do not support the thesis statement listed below?

1. The purpose of medieval cycle drama in England was to educate people about the stories of the Christian bible.

- a). All of the cycle plays start with the story of Adam and Eve and end with the Second Coming of Christ.
- b). The Black Plague began in England during the 14th century.
- c). Most people in medieval England could not read.
- d). The performance of the cycle plays were scheduled for religious s holidays when people would have the day off work.

2. Which of the following points do not support the thesis statement listed below?

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is an anti-feminist play.

- a). Macbeth is a good and loyal subject until he is tempted by the witches.
- b). Macbeth orders his soldiers to kill MacDuff's entire family.
- c). Lady Macbeth encourages her husband to kill the king.
- d). MacDuff is the only man who can defeat Macbeth because he is not "of woman born."

3. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the character who appears in Sethe's yard and calls herself Beloved is not the ghost of Sethe's murdered daughter, but the ghost of slavery itself.

- a). Sethe lives with her daughter Denver in Ohio.
- b). Beloved has no fingerprints or lines on her hands.
- c). Beloved describes a time when she was on a slave ship and died.
- d). Beloved, like slavery, slowly kills Sethe with her unreasonable and impossible demands.

4. Which of the following points do not support the thesis statement listed below?

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is a type of Christ-figure.

- a). Frodo's mother's name is Primula Bandybuck.
- b). Frodo is 33 years old at the beginning of the story, the same age as Christ when he died.
- c). Frodo sacrifices his health and a normal like to the rest of Middle Earth can be saved.
- d). Frodo is rewarded by being allowed to go to Valinor, the "Undying Lands," a place that is described as similar to heaven.

5. J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* argues that no one can avoid becoming a hypocrite, you can only hope to understand that fact.

- a). The only characters that are not hypocrites are Holden Caulfield's dead brother and his sister, Phoebe, who is still a child.
- b). Holden only begins to feel better when he realizes that a certain amount of hypocrisy is unavoidable.
- c). Holden spends much of the novel pointing out hypocrisy.
- d). The man who shot John Lennon was carrying a copy of *The Catcher in the Rye* during the murder.

Click [here](#) to see the answers.