

What, Why, and How?



THESIS STATEMENTS

Definition and rationale

Locating opinion words in a thesis

Narrowing down a topic

Writing text-based thesis statements

Creating a thesis

Revising a thesis

Where to put a thesis

WHAT IS A THESIS?

TOPIC VERSUS THESIS?

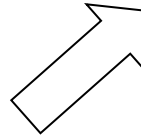
The subject you are writing about is the topic.
Add your opinion to a topic to create a thesis.

Topic + opinion = thesis

Add the significance to make a more complex thesis:

Topic + opinion + so what? = thesis

Another way to look at it!



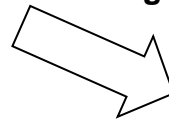
Topic
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So what?

WHAT IS A THESIS?

The thesis is the main point of an essay, a focused, arguable statement which allows the reader to make predictions about the reading.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE THESIS?

- The language is clear, straight-forward and can't be misunderstood.
- It is contestable and arguable. Ask yourself: Could someone disagree? The answer should be yes.
- It is concentrated on a focused point: not too broad and not too narrow, but the right size for the assignment.
- It is complex and delves into the larger significance or impact.
- It is compelling and draws in your readers' interest and makes them want to read more to see how you prove your claim.
- It is directly connected to the prompt/question/assignment for the essay.



Just remember the 6 Cs!

A THESIS IS NOT:

- A fact
- A quote
- A question

Clear
Contestable
Concentrated
Complex
Compelling
Connected

WHY USE A THESIS?

- It allows the reader to make predictions about the reading.
- It guides the writer to stay focused on the main idea of the essay.
- It generates thought, evidence and analysis.
- It provides a purpose for the essay and answers questions like these:
 - What am I trying to accomplish in this essay?
 - What do I want to convince my reader of?

HOW DO I KNOW IT'S A THESIS?

PRACTICE LOCATING OPINION WORDS IN THESIS STATEMENTS:

A thesis is topic + opinion so you need to make sure that opinion is present or else it is not a thesis statement. The opinion is what makes a thesis arguable and it provides the purpose and focus for the paper: to convince your reader of that opinion.

Locating the Opinion in a Thesis: When you look for the opinion in a thesis, ask yourself: What is the writer's attitude towards the topic? For example, in the sentence "Backpacking in the mountains last year was an exciting experience," the topic is "backpacking" and the opinion is that this trip was "exciting." Another person on the same trip might have had a different attitude and may have found the trip boring or exhausting. "Exciting" reveals the writer's attitude and also indicates what the essay with this thesis statement will be focused on: demonstrating why it was "exciting." This thesis statement limits the writer's focus and clearly tells the reader what the essay will be about.

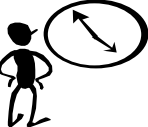



PRACTICE

Underline the opinion words below. If there are no opinion words, it is not a thesis:

- 1) The subject of unwarranted fears, most bats are harmless and highly beneficial.
- 2) Vigorous exercise is a good way to reduce the effects of stress on the body.
- 3) Buffalo and Toronto differ in four major ways.
- 4) Developing color film is more complicated than developing black and white.
- 5) In this essay I will discuss abortion.
- 6) Television is destroying the unity of the modern family.
- 7) In her essay, Erlich shows that there is a balance of community and isolation in her hometown.

HOW DO I NARROW A TOPIC?

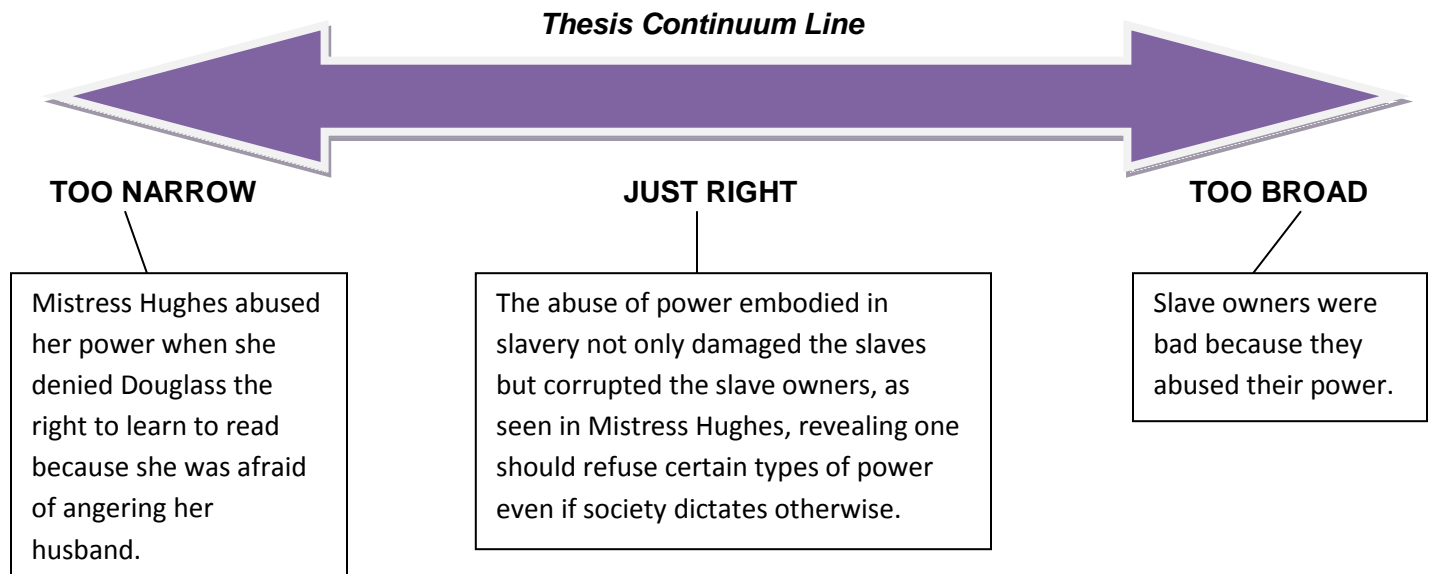
Before creating a thesis, you want to focus on narrowing down your topic. Typical undergraduate academic papers range from 2 to 20 pages. You generally won't be writing book length papers (150 pages plus), so you don't want to begin with topics that would require the length of a book to investigate and prove like "the worldwide drug trade" or "racism in America." You want to use focus strategies to help you narrow down to a manageable topic you can effectively and concretely prove in a shorter paper. You can use these strategies individually or combined.

Focus Strategy	Narrowing the topic	<div>PRACTICE</div> <p>Narrow down the "too broad" topic using each focus strategy:</p>
Time 	<p>Too broad: "In the past..."; "Since the dawn of time..."; "In the beginning of society..."</p> <p>In the early 14th century? In the late 1960s? Summer of 1985? Since 1990? This year? 10 years from now?</p>	<p>Topic that is too broad: The enslavement of people since Roman times</p> <p>Narrow the topic (by time):</p>
Place 	<p>Too broad: "In the world today..."; "In the United States, all citizens..."; "People who live in Africa..."; "In the Middle-East, everyone..."</p> <p>Can the place be narrowed to a country? A state? A town? A neighborhood?</p>	<p>Topic that is too broad: Abuse of slaves in the United States</p> <p>Narrow the topic (by place):</p>
Population 	<p>Too broad: "All Latinos..."; "Men and women in Asia..."; "Every English-speaker..."; "All doctors..."; "Older people always..."</p> <p>Which population should be the focus and why? Can you make an accurate statement about the entire group?</p>	<p>Topic that is too broad: Slaves who were discontent</p> <p>Narrow the topic (by population):</p>
Viewpoint 	<p>Too broad: "The Holocaust was bad."; "Men are violent."; "We need to get rid of poverty"; "Racism hurts people."; "People shouldn't do things that are bad for them."</p> <p>Can you break your topic down into smaller parts? What aspect of your topic is most interesting to you? What particular aspect of your topic is the most important or has the largest impact? Who exactly is affected?</p>	<p>Topic that is too broad: Slavery was harmful.</p> <p>Narrow the topic (by viewpoint):</p>

PRACTICE

EVALUTING A THESIS USING A CONTINUUM LINE:

Applying the advice on narrowing a topic in regards to time, place, population and viewpoint, you can evaluate thesis statements using a continuum line. Some will be too narrow, some too broad, but your goal as a writer is to create a thesis that is just right.



Evaluate the following thesis statements and decide where they fall on the continuum line. Explain your reasoning.

- (1) Even though most people believe school has influenced them or taught them the most, it was my father, not school, that taught me the value of reading and writing.
- (2) Literacy is the key to success, and you must be literate to be successful in today's world.
- (3) The only way to achieve literacy is by learning the five paragraph essay.
- (4) The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some were the same and some different.
- (5) While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.
- (6) The main argument of the Civil War was whether individual states had a right to self-govern independent of federal law.
- (7) Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is a great American novel.
- (8) Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society in order to find one's basic humanity.
- (9) Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* shows that Huck grew when he realized people missed him when he was presumed dead.

HOW CAN I WRITE A TEXT-BASED THESIS?

When writing about a text, it can be challenging to separate your opinion from the author's when forming a thesis. Oftentimes, students will create an arguable thesis statement, but it will be the author's thesis. Or sometimes, the thesis will summarize what happened more than argue a clear point. Your reader knows what the author thinks because s/he will have read what the author wrote, but your reader doesn't know what YOU think which should be the focus of the paper. Lead papers with your own, original argument—arguing your point on the text is the purpose of the essay.

When writing about a text, DON'T:

- (1) Give the author's thesis as your own.
- (2) Summarize what happened instead of giving an argument.
- (3) Give general advice that doesn't directly address the text and is too large to prove in an essay.

When writing about a text, DO:

- (1) Give your own original take and opinion on the text.
- (2) Only summarize parts of the text that directly prove your thesis.
- (3) Provide a specific, text-based argument that can be fully proven in the assigned page length of the essay.

How do I write an original, arguable thesis about a text?

- (1) Figure out the central argument or moral of the story and give your opinion on it. Ask yourself "so what?" So what is the significance or importance of this? So what are the outcomes or repercussions? So what has been overlooked? So what are some different opinions? So why should someone care?
- (2) Narrow the topic down. Oftentimes, when responding to an author's text, it is a long piece—much longer than the paper you are assigned to write on it. Therefore, don't take on the entire text. Break down its elements and respond to a motif, a character, a symbol, a chapter, a smaller issue that was raised.

PRACTICE

For the following text-based thesis statements, tell which of the following descriptions best fit each one?

Revise it: It gives the AUTHOR'S THESIS instead of the writer's own argument

Revise it: It SUMMARIZES what happened instead of giving an argument

Revise it: It gives GENERAL ADVICE that doesn't directly address the text and is too large to prove in an essay.

FINE AS IS: Thesis is arguable, text-based and should lead to a good analysis of the reading

- (1) In *Generation Me*, Jean Twenge shows how those born in the 70s, 80s and 90s were raised with too much self-esteem and she argues that this leads to apathy, depression, loneliness and higher suicide rates.
- (2) Life is short so follow your own path and make the best of what you have.
- (3) In Sarah Katin's "Naked," the narrator's experience in a Korean bathhouse reveals that American notions of nudity are unhealthy because how American women are taught to view their own bodies produces feelings of shame, discomfort in their own skins, and it distances women from each other.
- (4) Margot Schilpp provides us with a declaration of her thoughts, feelings and views of the world and what she thinks about love.
- (5) On the surface, in Layne Mosler's "Cab Fare," an American food reviewer seeks the recommendations of local cab drivers to find the best, non-touristy restaurants in Buenos Aires, but here food becomes symbolic for the fundamental nourishment people seek and their desire to reestablish control in the face of instability and uncertainty.
- (6) Eric Schlosser in his book *Fast Food Nation* describes how the fast food industry has been subsidized by the government, and how this has enabled the general public to be overly exposed to unhealthy food.
- (7) Jim Rogers reports in his book that the music industry has tried to hold three parties responsible for copyright infringement, but when looked at more closely, the websites that facilitate file-sharing should be the ones most heavily prosecuted because if we concentrate our efforts to fine them, we can kill the problem at the root.
- (8) Maria Mazziotti Gillan shows that when she became an adult, she started to appreciate the things she previously felt shame for.
- (9) Obstacles may seem impossible to overcome but are surmountable because anything is possible when you work hard.
- (10) The characters in Kelly Hayes-Raitt's "Tongue-Tied," the older reporter and the young impoverished Iraqi girl, symbolize the parent-child mentality the United States has towards developing countries and this attitude that shapes our foreign policies is damaging to us and other nations, as seen in our failures in Iraq.
- (11) Emmanuel experiences trials and tribulations and in the end, he did not get recognized for his accomplishments and he remained troubled due to dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

HOW CAN I CREATE A THESIS?

TOPIC + OPINION + SO WHAT? = THESIS

Step 1: Brainstorm Topics

Here are some questions that could help you:

- What in the text inspired, confused, angered, excited, annoyed, and/or surprised you?
- What in the text was important for you to understand or you feel others should be aware of?
- What does the prompt/assignment ask you to focus on and explore?

Brainstorm the issues, ideas, and themes raised in the reading (create at least 15 for a range of options):

Step 2: Select a topic

Choose one of the topics that most interest you and you want to explore further:

Step 3: Create complex questions about your topic

Create complex questions to be answered with opinion, not facts or yes/no answers.

Here are some question formats that could help you: How is (topic) connected to (outside issue)? How do the flaws in the author's arguments on (topic) result in (outcome)? What angles on (topic) have been overlooked? How can we apply the information about (topic)? How did/will (effect) occur because/if (cause) happened or will happen? How can (problem) be addressed or changed for (topic)?

Step 4: Answer your best question with your opinion.

This creates a rough thesis statement.

Step 5: Ask yourself “so what?” So what is the impact, importance, outcomes, or larger implications?

This strengthens and deepens your thesis statement.

Step 6: Using your answer with its significance, write a 1-2 sentence thesis statement.

This refines and focuses your thesis statement.

Step 7: Test the thesis by seeing if you can gather good evidence to support it.

Go through the main text(s) you are writing on and list all the passages (using page numbers) that directly prove and/or illustrate your argument:

List potential outside evidence, such as research, outside sources, real-life examples, personal knowledge, personal examples that could possibly further prove and/or illustrate your argument:

If you cannot find strong or sufficient evidence, then rethink your thesis statement.

EXAMPLE

HOW CAN I CREATE A THESIS?

TOPIC + OPINION + SO WHAT? = THESIS

Step 1: Brainstorm Topics

Here are some questions that could help you:

- What in the text inspired, confused, angered, excited, annoyed, and/or surprised you?
- What in the text was important for you to understand or you feel others should be aware of?
- What does the prompt/assignment ask you to focus on and explore?

Brainstorm the issues, ideas, and themes raised in the reading (create at least 15 for a range of options):

forbidden to read and write
humans treated as beasts
depravity of slave owners
abuse of power
slavery turning good people bad
reading and writing as dangerous
education and slavery incompatible
fear of rebellion
dehumanization
used white boys as teachers

impressive determination
bread for knowledge--both feeding
Christian country?
rights to freedom
emancipation—liberation
slavery as indefensible
reading a curse or blessing?
wretched condition--no remedy
ignorance is bliss?
building consciousness

Step 2: Select a topic

Choose one of the topics that most interest you and you want to explore further:

Reading and writing as dangerous

Step 3: Create complex questions about your topic

Create complex questions to be answered with opinion, not facts or yes/no answers.

Here are some question formats that could help you: How is (topic) connected to (outside issue)? How do the flaws in the author's arguments on (topic) result in (outcome)? What angles on (topic) have been overlooked? How can we apply the information about (topic)? How did/will (effect) occur because/if (cause) happened or will happen? How can (problem) be addressed or changed for (topic)?

How is control of human beings connected to writing and reading?

Why were the slaveholders so fearful of slaves learning to read and write?

When has reading lead to violence and uprising?

What about becoming educated leads to Douglass's despair?

Step 4: Answer your best question with your opinion.

This creates a rough thesis statement.

How is control of human beings connected to writing and reading?

Slaves were controlled by not being able to read and write because they could not learn by reading the arguments and experiences of others and from history what is fair, just and reasonable and what is not.

Step 5: Ask yourself “so what?” So what is the impact, importance, outcomes, or larger implications?

This strengthens and deepens your thesis statement.

So what? We should be concerned because in certain parts of the world today, what the public can read and write is controlled and as a result the rights of the people are violated and they are powerless or ignorant of this.

Step 6: Using your answer with its significance, write a 1-2 sentence thesis statement.

This refines and focuses your thesis statement.

The control and limitations over reading and writing during slavery sought to make slaves like Douglass ignorant, powerless, and more easily controlled, and this control over literacy and education is still happening in the world today.

Example continued on next page...

Step 7: Test the thesis by seeing if you can gather good evidence to support it.

Go through the main text(s) you are writing on and list all the passages (using page numbers) that directly prove and/or illustrate your argument:

- Douglass discovers that “...education and slavery were incompatible with each other.” (1)
- On page 2 it describes how Douglass read in “The Columbian Orator” how a slave used logic and persuasive argument so well that his master freed him (shows education can lead to change).
- Reading and education makes one intolerant of injustice: “The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers” (2).
- Douglass says: “...that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity” (2) (But Douglass did not give up and later was instrumental in abolishing slavery)

List potential outside evidence, such as research, outside sources, real-life examples, personal knowledge, personal examples that could possibly further prove and/or illustrate your argument:

- Mukhtar Mai in her memoir *In the Name of Honor*, tells how as a woman in Pakistan, she was not allowed to learn to read and write. As a result, when she was publically gang raped in 2002 by members of a more powerful clan, she went to the police and they wrote down an incorrect statement of the account so after years of going through the court system, the men were acquitted. Since then she has learned to read and write, she has started schools to educate girls, and remains today an outspoken advocate for women’s rights.
- In Alex S. Jones’s *Losing the News: The Future of the News that Feeds Democracy* he argues that in the United States we are losing funding and support for investigative journalism so Americans are getting sound bites of news and no real understanding of what is going on politically or financially so we don’t protest and don’t understand the sources for the larger societal problems like the recent financial collapse.
- Jonathan Kozol in *Savage Inequalities*, looks at different cities and sees how many of the urban poor, most of whom are black and Latino, are not given an equal education because school funding is based on income and property tax. As a result, there is an enormous dropout rate and many of these kids can barely read and write.

HOW CAN I REVISE AND STRENGTHEN A THESIS?

PRACTICE

CHANGING INEFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENTS TO EFFECTIVE ONES:

1. A strong thesis statement takes a stand: your thesis needs to show your conclusions about a subject.

WEAK THESIS: Douglass makes the interesting point that there are some negative and positive aspects to reading.

This is a weak thesis statement. It fails to take a stand and the words *interesting* and *negative and positive aspects* are vague.

STRONGER THESIS:

2. A strong thesis statement justifies discussion: your thesis should indicate the point of the discussion.

WEAK THESIS: Christians practiced slavery in the United States.

This is a weak thesis statement because it merely states a fact, so your reader won't be able to tell the point of the statement.

STRONGER THESIS:

3. A strong thesis statement expresses one main idea: Readers need to be able to see that your paper has one main point. If your thesis statement expresses more than one idea, then you might confuse your readers about the subject of your paper.

WEAK THESIS: People should not follow unjust laws and showing strong determination is what helped Douglass to be successful.

This is a weak thesis statement because the reader can't decide whether the paper is about unjust laws or strong determination. To revise the thesis, the relationship between the two ideas needs to become clearer.

STRONGER THESIS:

4. A strong thesis statement is specific: A thesis statement should show exactly what your paper will be about and the argument should be narrow enough to be concretely proven.

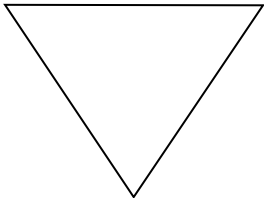
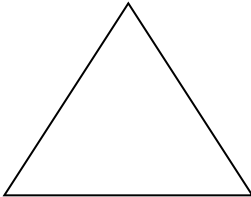
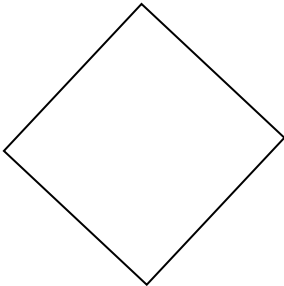
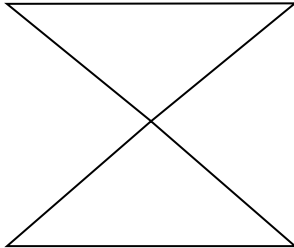
WEAK THESIS: Slavery in the United States damaged many lives.

This is a weak thesis statement for two reasons. First, *slavery* can't be discussed thoroughly in a short essay. Second, *damaged* is vague and *many lives* is very general. You should be able to identify specific causes and effects.

STRONGER THESIS:

HOW DO I KNOW WHERE TO PUT A THESIS?

Research shows that you comprehend better when the thesis is directly stated, particularly when it is stated at the beginning of an essay. Such an initial thesis statement offers a signpost briefing you on what to expect and overviews the author's message. Unfortunately, writers do not always follow this pattern. In a research study using psychology texts, the main idea was clearly stated in only 58 percent of the sampled paragraphs. Thus, you should be skilled in identifying stated and implied thesis statements.

An introductory statement of the thesis is given at the beginning of the paragraph: <div>Thesis Context Context Context Context</div> 	A concluding statement of the thesis appears at the end of the paragraph: <div>Context Context Context Context Thesis</div> 
Details are placed at the beginning and end to arouse interest, with a statement of the thesis in the middle of the paragraph: <div>Context Context Thesis Context Context</div> 	Both the introductory and concluding sentences state the thesis: <div>Thesis Context Context Context Context Thesis</div> 

For Implied Thesis Statements:

Details combine to make a point but the thesis is not directly stated:

1. Context
2. Context
3. Context
4. Context



PRACTICE

LOCATING THESIS STATEMENTS:

Don't meddle with old unloaded firearms, they are the most deadly and unerring things ever created. You don't have to take any pains with them at all; you don't have to have a rest, you don't have to have any sights on the gun, you don't have to take aim even. No, you just pick out a relative and bang away, and you are sure to get him. A youth who can't hit a cathedral at thirty yards with a Gatling gun in three-quarters of an hour, can take up an old empty musket and bag his grandmother every time at a hundred.

---Mark Twain, "Advice to Youth"

In *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America*, Pati Poblete gives her account as a young girl growing up in America being raised by her culturally foreign grandparents, and the results reverberate with her well into her adult years. Her parents, on the other hand, play a deafeningly silent role throughout the upbringing of Pati. The failure of Pati's parents to provide her with guidance, attention and to control her exposure to popular media at a young age prevented her from having a healthy relationship with her grandparents and a healthy identity. Ron Taffel, a child-rearing expert, advised: "Even as kids reach adolescence, they need more than ever for us to watch over them. Adolescence is not about letting go. It's about hanging on during a very bumpy ride." Pati unfortunately didn't have this support so seemed to hit every bump.

---Student paper on Pati Poblete's *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America*

In the 1940s, George Orwell warned "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 30). In the 1990s a band called Rage Against the Machine, the name itself referring to a people's movement to fight against control (corporation, government or otherwise) used this mantra in their song "Testify," a warning to not silently endure oppression. This warning is not only relevant to the 20th century, but has been applicable since human beings started forming structures of power to control and oppress one another. This can vividly be seen during the times of slavery in the United States when blacks were enslaved for two and a half centuries. In Frederick Douglass's novel *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass reveals how this long and brutal control of human beings was partly accomplished through control over literacy. The control and limitations over reading and writing during slavery sought to make slaves like Douglass ignorant, powerless, and therefore more easily controlled, and this control over literacy and education is still happening in the world today.

--Sample essay on Frederick Douglass's [*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*](#)

A TV set stood close to a wall in the small living room crowded with an assortment of chairs and tables. An aquarium crowded the mantelpiece of a fake fireplace. A lighted bulb inside the tank showed many colored fish swimming about in a haze of fish food. Some of it lay scattered on the edge of the shelf. The carpet underneath was a sodden black. Old magazines and tabloids lay just about everywhere.

---Bienvenidos Santos, "Immigration Blues"

ANSWERS

PRACTICE LOCATING OPINION WORDS IN THESIS STATEMENTS:

Underline the opinion words below. If there are no opinion words, it is not a thesis:

- 1) The subject of unwarranted fears, most bats are harmless and highly beneficial.
- 2) Vigorous exercise is a good way to reduce the effects of stress on the body.
- 3) Buffalo and Toronto differ in four major ways.
- 4) Developing color film is more complicated than developing black and white.
- 5) In this essay I will discuss abortion. **(no opinion words—not a thesis)**
- 6) Television is destroying the unity of the modern family.
- 7) In her essay, Erlich shows that there is a balance of community and isolation in her hometown.

NARROWING DOWN A TOPIC:

Narrow down the “too broad” topic using each focus strategy:

TIME:

Topic that is too broad: The enslavement of people since Roman times.

Narrow the topic (by time): Slavery during the era of Frederick Douglass during the early 1800s

PLACE:

Topic that is too broad: Abuse of slaves in the United States.

Narrow the topic (by place): The abuse of house slaves in Maryland, where Douglass lived.

POPULATION:

Topic that is too broad: Slaves who were discontent

Narrow the topic (by population): Slaves, like Douglass, who rebelled against unjust laws.

VIEWPOINT:

Topic that is too broad: Slavery was harmful.

Narrow the topic (by viewpoint): Slavery demoralized human beings and destroyed families.

EVALUTING A THESIS USING A CONTINUUM LINE:

ANSWERS

- (1) Even though most people believe school has influenced them or taught them the most, it was my father, not school, that taught me the value of reading and writing. **JUST RIGHT**
- (2) Literacy is the key to success, and you must be literate to be successful in today's world. **TOO BROAD**
- (3) The only way to achieve literacy is by learning the five paragraph essay. **TOO NARROW**
- (4) The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some were the same and some different. **TOO BROAD**
- (5) While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions. **JUST RIGHT**
- (6) The main argument of the Civil War was whether individual states had a right to self-govern independent of federal law. **TOO NARROW**
- (7) Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is a great American novel. **TOO BROAD**
- (8) Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society in order to find one's basic humanity. **JUST RIGHT**
- (9) Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* shows that Huck grew when he realized people missed him when he was presumed dead. **TOO NARROW**

EVALUATING TEXT-BASED THESIS STATEMENTS:

- (1) In *Generation Me*, Jean Twenge shows how those born in the 70s, 80s and 90s were raised with too much self-esteem and she argues that this leads to apathy, depression, loneliness and higher suicide rates. **AUTHOR'S THESIS**
- (2) Life is short so follow your own path and make the best of what you have. **GENERAL ADVICE**
- (3) In Sarah Katin's "Naked," the narrator's experience in a Korean bathhouse reveals that American notions of nudity are unhealthy because how American women are taught to view their own bodies produces feelings of shame, discomfort in their own skins, and it distances women from each other. **FINE AS IS**
- (4) Margot Schilpp provides us with a declaration of her thoughts, feelings and views of the world and what she thinks about love. **SUMMARIZES**
- (5) On the surface, in Layne Mosler's "Cab Fare," an American food reviewer seeks the recommendations of local cab drivers to find the best, non-touristy restaurants in Buenos Aires, but here food becomes symbolic for the fundamental nourishment people seek and their desire to reestablish control in the face of instability and uncertainty. **FINE AS IS**
- (6) Eric Schlosser in his book *Fast Food Nation* describes how the fast food industry has been subsidized by the government, and how this has enabled the general public to be overly exposed to unhealthy food. **AUTHOR'S THESIS**
- (7) Jim Rogers reports in his book that the music industry has tried to hold three parties responsible for copyright infringement, but when looked at more closely, the websites that facilitate file-sharing should be the ones most heavily prosecuted because if we concentrate our efforts to fine them, we can kill the problem at the root. **FINE AS IS**
- (8) Maria Mazziotti Gillan shows that her maturity into adulthood allowed her to appreciate the things she previously felt shame for. **SUMMARIZES**
- (9) Obstacles may seem impossible to overcome but are surmountable because anything is possible when you work hard. **GENERAL ADVICE**
- (10) The characters in Kelly Hayes-Raitt's "Tongue-Tied," the older reporter and the young impoverished Iraqi girl, symbolize the parent-child mentality the United States has towards developing countries and this attitude that shapes our foreign policies is damaging to us and other nations, as seen in our failures in Iraq. **FINE AS IS**
- (11) Emmanuel experiences trials and tribulations and in the end, he did not get recognized for his accomplishments and he remained troubled due to dealing with PTSD. **SUMMARIZES**



CHANGING INEFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENTS TO EFFECTIVE ONES:

Possible answers to strengthen the thesis statements for exercises 1-4:

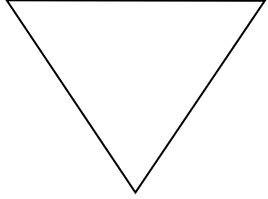
<p>1. WEAK THESIS: Douglass makes the interesting point that there are some negative and positive aspects to reading.</p> <p>STRONGER THESIS: Douglass shows how becoming educated makes it intolerable to live in slavery revealing how lack of education can lead to submissiveness.</p> <p>This is a strong thesis because it takes a stand, and because it's specific.</p>	<p>3. WEAK THESIS: People should not follow unjust laws and showing strong determination is what helped Douglass to be successful.</p> <p>STRONGER THESIS: Through Douglass's own story of strong determination and perseverance, he leaves no room for doubt that one should break the law if it is unjust.</p> <p>This is a strong thesis because it shows that the two ideas are related. Hint: a great many clear and engaging thesis statements contain words like <i>because, since, so, although, through, unless, however</i>.</p>
<p>2. WEAK THESIS: Christians practiced slavery in the United States.</p> <p>STRONGER THESIS: Christians who practiced slavery or who continue to support any law that denies others equal rights, violate the basic tenets of the Bible and its teachings of humanity and kindness.</p> <p>This is a strong thesis because it is controversial. This is a good strategy for creating a strong thesis. Readers will be interested in reading the rest of the essay to see how you support your point.</p>	<p>4. WEAK THESIS: Slavery in the United States damaged many lives.</p> <p>STRONGER THESIS: Douglass's narrative reveals how slavery in the U.S. not only damaged the psyche of the slaves but destroyed the humanity of the slave owners.</p> <p>This is a strong thesis statement because it narrows the subject to make it more specific and manageable, and it also names who was affected rather than the vague "damaged <i>many</i> lives."</p>

LOCATING THESIS STATEMENTS:

ANSWERS

Mark Twain, "Advice to Youth"

Begins with thesis

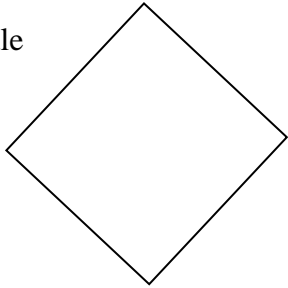


Thesis:

Don't meddle with old unloaded firearms, they are the most deadly and unerring things ever created.

Student paper on Pati Poblete's *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America*

Thesis in the middle

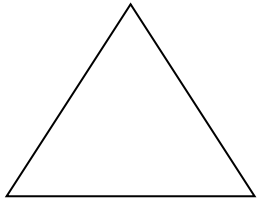


Thesis:

The failure of Pati's parents to provide her with guidance, attention and to control her exposure to popular media at a young age prevented her from having a healthy relationship with her grandparents and a healthy identity.

Sample essay on Frederick Douglass's [*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*](#)

Ends with thesis



Thesis:

The control and limitations over reading and writing during slavery sought to make slaves like Douglass ignorant, powerless, and therefore more easily controlled, and this control over literacy and education is still happening in the world today.

Bienvenidos Santos, "Immigration Blues"

Thesis implied



The thesis is implied and not stated.

The reader must put together the clues from the title, author's name and description of the immigrants' accommodations to figure out the author's opinion as he appears to have sympathy for the immigrants who suffer poverty, long hours of work, and limited education.