

INTRODUCTION TO HIGH SCHOOL WRITING

Lesson 4B: Thesis Statements

Notes below from this teaching resource: <https://clas.uiowa.edu/history/teaching-and-writing-center/guides/argumentation>

Step One: Choose a Topic

Write about...

- something you already know a lot about
- something you would like to research
- something you are passionate about
- something on which you can have an opinion

Remember that fine-tuning your essay-writing skills is really strengthening your power of thought and your power to express what you think effectively.

Step Two: Make an Argument

An argument takes a stand on an issue. It seeks to persuade an audience of a point of view in much the same way that a lawyer argues a case in a court of law. It is **NOT** a description or a summary.

- This is an argument: "This paper argues that the movie JFK is inaccurate in its portrayal of President Kennedy."
- This is not an argument: "In this paper, I will describe the portrayal of President Kennedy that is shown in the movie JFK."

Step Three: Write a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a sentence in which you state an argument about a topic and then describe, briefly, how you will prove your argument.

- This is an argument, but not yet a thesis: "The movie 'JFK' inaccurately portrays President Kennedy."
- This is a thesis: "The movie 'JFK' inaccurately portrays President Kennedy because of the way it ignores Kennedy's youth, his relationship with his father, and the findings of the Warren Commission."

A thesis makes a specific statement to the reader about what you will be trying to argue. Your thesis can be a few sentences long, but should not be longer than a paragraph. Do not begin to state evidence or use examples in your thesis paragraph.

Thesis Statement: Weak or Strong?

Have the class brainstorm examples of thesis statements. Discuss the statements and what makes each weak or strong. Brainstorm ways to strengthen the weak thesis statements.

Some examples:

Why cell phones are bad for children.

Sam Gamgee is the hero of *The Lord of the Rings*.

The government should have control over children's education.

Capitalism is not a perfect economic system, but it is better than the rest.

Pontius Pilate was a man.

Discussion Questions

- What are some topic brainstorming techniques?
- What is the difference between a topic and a thesis?