Writing a Thesis Statement

***What is a thesis statement?***

1. A statement that explains the main idea or point of view of the essay.
   * It is a general statement with which there can be disagreement. In other words, it is not a simple statement of fact that needs no support, nor a personal observation with which no one can disagree, nor a statement of truth so self-evident that there is really no reason even to say it.
   * It is restricted, cut down to size to fit the scope of the assignment. Remember your task is to develop in detail. If the subject is large and the assignment asks for only three paragraphs, it will be impossible to cover the subject in complete detail.
   * It is precise; it is stated in words that can be interpreted in only one way
   * Finally, the thesis reflects the writer’s point of view. The author takes a stand in relationship to the subject rather than just planning to write about it in general.
2. A thesis should have the following characteristics:
   * It should be expressed as a declarative sentence(s), not as a question, or merely a word or phrase.
   * It should not be a self-evident fact (Many Americans enjoy apple pie.), but should be at least somewhat arguable (Apple pie is America’s favorite dessert.).
   * It should not be simply a statement of personal preference (I like apple pie.), but should be a statement of the writer’s opinion on an issue that includes more people than just the writer (Americans should eat more apple pie in order to stay healthy.).

***What does a thesis do?***

For the writer, the thesis statement:

* + serves as a tool.
  + helps the writer determine the paper’s focus.
  + becomes a reference point for all topic sentences in support of the argument.
  + anticipates questions about the topic.

For the reader, the thesis statement:

* + serves as a “map” to follow through the paper.
  + keeps the reader focused on the argument.
  + engages the reader in the argument.
  + offers enough detail for the reader to grasp the argument.

***How do I write a thesis statement?***

1. Brainstorm for ideas. [**In this case you have your Crucible packets, your class notes, the play itself and your study guides. Now all you have to do is organize your ideas and decide what you want to write about]**
2. Learn to differentiate between a subject and an idea.
3. *“Dining outside of the home”* is a subject, whereas, *“Many people enjoy dining at restaurants”* is an idea that tells the reader what the writer thinks about the subject.
4. Try the “I think” test: Say to yourself, “I think” before your main idea. For example, *“I think dining outside of the home”* doesn’t make any sense, but *“I think many people enjoy dining at restaurants”* does make sense. \*However, don’t write *“I think”* before your thesis statement in your essay.
5. Make your statement narrow and specific: *“Many people enjoy dining at restaurants”* can be revised to: *“In our busy society, dining out has become Americans’ favorite pastime.”*
6. Remember the thesis statement may change or develop as you write your rough draft.
7. In William Shakespeare’s tragic play, *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo’s impetuous nature causes him to make many destructive decisions, eventually leading to his downfall. = thesis statement
8. Through the protagonist, Romeo’s motives and behaviors, William Shakespeare, in his tragic play, *Romeo and Juliet*, portrays potential human qualities that are universal. = thesis statement.
9. A thesis **can be two sentences**. For example, you could combine the above two sentences to make one thesis.
10. Remember the thesis statement may change or develop as you write your rough draft.

***Once I have a tentative thesis statement, how do I sharpen it?***

Make sure your thesis has the following characteristics:

* It’s a complete idea that can be stated in one or two sentences.
* It’s limited or narrow enough so that the writer can explore it fully in the number of pages to be written.
* It’s appropriate to the writer’s purpose and intended readers.
* It’s reasonable and true.

***How do I know if I have good thesis statement?***

Ask yourself:

1. What’s my point?
2. What do I believe about this subject?

Ask someone to read your thesis statement and to answer the following questions:

1. Is the thesis statement clear?
2. Is the thesis statement interesting?
3. Would the person read a piece of writing based on this sentence?
4. What suggestions does the person have for changing or improving the sentence?

***What does a strong thesis statement sound like?***

**Weak Thesis Statement Strong Thesis Statement**

1. I like to write. People who don’t learn to write are limited in their personal development.

1. Going to school is good for you. A strong high school education is the foundation for a productive life.

# Practice

*Subject -* “Teenagers and their Favorite Pastime”

*Statement -* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Thesis statement -* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Practice***

*Subject -* “The First Day of High School”

*Statement -* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Thesis Statement -* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resources

Hollingsworth, Helen. Teaching Writing in Every Class: A guide for grades 6-12. Allyn and Bacon, Inc. Newton, Massachusetts, 1936. 106-107.

Macdonald, Kathleen. When Writers Write. Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1987. 60-79.