

Thesis Statements: Strategies, Checklist, & Samples

The thesis statement in an essay of literary analysis functions as follows:

- It narrows your topic to a central idea—all topic sentences and body paragraphs will develop and support this idea
- It asserts something specific and significant about the topic, conveying your expert opinion
- It may preview how your ideas will be arranged within your essay
- It is logical, precise, and reasonable

Here are some strategies for formulating a thesis statement:

I. Decode the writing prompt:

Pay close attention to the language of the prompt. Underline or highlight words that indicate specific areas of focus. Use the language of the prompt while composing your thesis statement.

* Depending on the prompt or assignment you are given, you may be able to simply restate the prompt while including your answer to how/why questions.

II. Take Inventory:

Determine which supporting details or passages could be used to prove your thesis.

* Be careful! Avoid arbitrarily selecting quotes. Be certain the supporting details you choose do, in fact, support the central idea.

III. Identify Relationships, Distinctions, & Categories:

Once you have a variety of supporting details, determine what various aspects of the thesis statement each detail supports. These distinctions or categories will be used to determine what your topic sentences and body paragraphs will be made up of.

IV. Revise and Draft Again:

Rewrite the thesis as many times as necessary to achieve satisfaction.

Continually refer to the prompt to be sure you are directly and specifically responding to its requirements. You may find that after you have written the body paragraphs, your paper has taken a different direction. In that case, you must revise your thesis statement to suit the rest of the essay.

Consider the following checklist when composing a thesis statement:

- Do not** use first-person point of view in a thesis statement, unless you are writing a personal autobiographical essay. Formal literary analysis requires the use of third person point of view.
- The thesis statement should be limited to one sentence. In rare cases, two sentences may be necessary.
- Refer to the writing prompt frequently while composing the thesis and be sure your statement clearly responds to all aspects of the prompt
- The thesis statement is located at the **end** of the introductory paragraph in a typical literary analysis essay.
- The thesis is a “roadmap” for the ideas presented in the essay; it informs the reader what will be analyzed in the essay and in what order.
- The thesis statement presents ideas in logical, clear, and specific language; it avoids vague or abstract language, poor diction, and slang.
- The thesis statement is analytical, not factual; it conveys the author’s expert opinion, or assertion and avoids stating the obvious. It answers **how** and **why** questions.
- The thesis statement is logical, precise, and reasonable.

Sample Thesis Statements:

Often dismissed because it is animated, *The Simpsons* treats the issue of ethnicity more powerfully than did the critically praised *All In The Family*.

Despite their high-tech special effects, today's graphically violent horror movies do not convey the creative use of cinematography or the emotional impact that we saw in the classic horror films of the 1940s and 50s.

Because half of all American elementary school children consume nine times the recommended daily allowance of sugar, schools should be required to replace the beverages in pop machines with healthy alternatives.

Because Banana Herb Tea Supplement promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, it poses a potential danger to customers.

High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college in order to increase their maturity and global awareness