

CREATING A THESIS STATEMENT

- **The thesis statement is the most important part of your essay.**

Think of it as the foundation of a house. If your foundation is weak and poorly constructed, what do you think happens to the house?

- The thesis statement is the announcement of the **argument** that you intend to **make and prove** through the rest of your essay. It is a road map for the essay—it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of your writing.
- A thesis statement **makes a claim** (a statement that conveys an argument), **not a statement of fact or an observation**.

X Fact/Observation: *People use many lawn chemicals.*

✓ Thesis: *Individual households are harming the environment through their reliance on pesticides and fossil fuels, thus impacting the overall health of the planet.*

- Successful thesis statements provoke thought and should present your argument in a way that is **accessible** (easy to understand) for your reader. It should clearly **identify** & provide **direction** on what will be discussed through the body of the essay.
- Your thesis statement should be **specific**—it should cover only what you will discuss in your essay and should be supported with specific evidence.
- It should be the **last sentence** in the **introduction paragraph** of your essay.
- Your thesis statement should include **three** parts:
 - **Identification:** What is the topic you are discussing?
 - **Direction:** What are the three main reasons or ideas that support your claim? Each of these will make up one of the three body paragraphs.
 - **Claim:** What claim or argument are you making about the topic's meaning?

Examples of Literary Thesis Statements:

1. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is a great American novel.

This is a **weak** thesis statement. It includes identification of the text the writer will analyze, but it does not have direction or a claim. It simply states an opinion about the quality of the book, **not** the significance of the book's meaning.

2. In the novel, *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.

This thesis statement is more specific, but is still **weak**. It includes identification, and some direction (it will discuss contrast), but **it does not make a claim** about the text's meaning. This leaves the reader wondering: what is the point of the contrast and/or what does the contrast show the reader?

3. Through its use of contrast, symbolism, and personification within river and shore scenes, Mark Twain's novel, *Huckleberry Finn*, suggests that to find the true expression of American ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature.

- ✓ This thesis is **strong**. It makes a **claim** that presents an interpretation of the literary work based on an analysis of its content (**a theme statement**); thus, it creates an argument that can be discussed throughout the rest of the essay!
- ✓ It is also **specific**, as it provides the reader with **complete identification** (the type of text, title & author's full name), as well as **clear direction** on what parts of the novel it will discuss in detail through its body paragraphs (contrast, symbolism & personification).

4. There is a lot of symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*.

This is a **weak** thesis statement as it does not give us enough information. The writer **provides minimal direction**, and **does not provide complete identification or make a claim**, leaving the reader with several questions: Who is the author? What type of text are they writing about? What is the author using as symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*? Why is the symbolism used? What is the theme?

5. The use of setting, character development and symbolism in the novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne shows the effects that guilt can have on one's mind and ultimately proves that unresolved guilt can destroy one's sense of self.

- ✓ This is a **strong** thesis, as it provides clear **identification** (the type of text, the title and the name of the author), **direction** (the three literary devices that will be explained in the body paragraphs) and a **claim** (the **theme** of the novel).