

THESIS STATEMENT BASICS

Purpose of a Thesis Statement

A Thesis Statement informs the readers of the content, the argument, and often the direction of the paper.

What is a Thesis Statement?

A Thesis Statement is a declarative sentence.

◆ *Thesis Statements are **not titles or fragments.***

TITLE: My first smoking experience.

THESIS: Although all my friends thought cigarettes were stylish, I discovered that smoking is actually a disgusting habit with many health risks.

TITLE: Finding a solution to city parking problems

THESIS: To solve the lack of parking space in Ann Arbor, city officials should use tax funds to build parking structures.

FRAGMENT: That we should become more aware of our environment

THESIS: We should become more aware of our environment so that we can preserve our wilderness, protect wildlife, and conserve our rapidly disappearing resources.

◆ *Thesis Statements are **not questions.***

QUESTION: How could we still tolerate sexism in the military today?

THESIS: Even though Americans claim to be enlightened about sexism, sexist language and behaviors still prevail in the military.

QUESTION: What was Mark Twain trying to accomplish by using the young boy Huck Finn as narrator of his novel?

THESIS: Mark Twain's use of the child narrator in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* presents an authentic voice through which he effectively shows the ironies and inconsistencies of the pre-Civil War and post-Reconstruction South.

A Thesis Statement is an Arguable Idea

◆ *Thesis Statements are **not facts**.*

FACT: Cortez conquered Mexico in 1509.

THESIS: The colonial mentality which prompted Cortez's barbaric invasion of Mexico brought about not an advance of native society but a destruction of Aztec culture.

FACT: When I was six, my parents took me on a trip to Alaska where I experienced my first tragedy.

THESIS: Witnessing the death of a hiker in an Alaskan avalanche last winter horrified me at the time, but in retrospect taught me to appreciate the small things in life and to value my relationships.

◆ *Thesis Statements are **not announcements of your purpose or assignment**.*

ANNOUNCEMENT: In this paper I will discuss the causes and effects of the French Revolution and then argue as to whether or not it was successful.

THESIS: Though the reasons for the French Revolution were noble, the effects were devastating, ultimately leading to the unsuccessful reinstatement of monarchy and the restructuring of a classist society into a militaristic one.

ANNOUNCEMENT: this essay will explain my reasons for supporting capital punishment.

THESIS: First degree murderers should receive capital punishment because there are too many repeat offenders, because rehabilitation programs have proved ineffective, and because murder is too serious a crime to be punished by anything less than death.

◆ *Thesis Statements are **not obvious***

OBVIOUS: The computer was an important technological advancement of the 20th century.

THESIS: Even though computers have their problems, they have improved our lives tremendously by simplifying word processing, streamlining data storage, and promoting an international exchange of information.

How Do I Write a Thesis Statement?

1. Decide on your topic.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

2. Narrow Your Topic.

The use of a juvenile narrator in the novel

3. Put your topic in a sentence.

Mark Twain uses a child as the narrator for his novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

4. Add your argument, viewpoint, or opinion to your topic to make your thesis persuasive.

Mark Twain's use of the child narrator in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* presents an authentic voice through which he effectively shows the ironies and inconsistencies of the pre-Civil War and post-Reconstruction South.

Where does my Thesis Statement go?

Typically, at the end of your introductory paragraph.