

Thesis Statements




What Is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement is a sentence that usually appears near the end of a paper's introduction. It presents the paper's argument. It is a concise statement of the paper's purpose, focus, and direction. This statement is vital for both the reader and the writer. To the reader, it is a promise of what to expect in the paper. To the writer, it is a framework to use when writing the paper. Many view it as the engine that drives the creation of the paper. This thesis statement may change over time, progressing from a working thesis to a final thesis.

Differences Between a Topic and Argument

A topic is a general area to be discussed, such as "women's roles in *Romeo and Juliet*." An argument takes a stand on that topic and gives reasons for that stance. An example of an argument would be that "Female characters are more central to *Romeo and Juliet* than male characters."



Differences Between a Working and Final Thesis

A working thesis is a general statement that the writer starts with when writing the paper. It guides early drafts, giving direction for research and investigation. A final thesis is the statement that the writer has built up enough material to conclusively prove, and it appears in the paper's final draft.

Developing a Thesis Statement



Probability



Writers should be able to provide proof for their thesis statement. Thus, an opinion, such as "*Macbeth* is a great play" is not a valid thesis statement. However, "In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare places more importance on the roles of men than the roles of women" is a workable thesis.

Scope

The thesis statement should be specific enough to ensure that the paper keeps its focus. Whether or not a thesis statement is specific enough depends greatly on the length of the paper. A thesis statement of "The herbs that Ophelia mentions during her mad scene had meanings to the Elizabethan public that foreshadowed the rest of *Hamlet*" might be appropriate for a five-page paper, while a statement of "Hamlet's hesitation to act is based on his immaturity" might only be workable for a paper of 35 pages or more.

Directness

A thesis statement should capture the essence of the paper's argument in one sentence. It should clearly tell the reader what to expect. A thesis statement of "Mercutio's soliloquy might foretell the events later in *Romeo and Juliet*" is not direct enough. However, "Mercutio's soliloquy foretells the tragic outcome of *Romeo and Juliet*" is a directly stated thesis.



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