

# Thesis Statements

## What the heck is a thesis, and why do I need one?

A thesis consists of two parts: the topic and the comment. The topic statement is what you are going to write about, and the comment is the point you are making about the topic. A thesis is simply the main argument or point in your paper, which you will support with the evidence you provide. Even if you are not doing an argumentative paper, you must still have a central point that unifies your work. Without a cohesive thesis statement it is easy to wander off topic or slap together a bunch of ideas that are only loosely connected.

## So, where can I get a thesis?

Write your own thesis using these four steps:

1. Re-state the assignment or topic.
2. Take a position on the issue.
3. Briefly state your reasons why/how.
4. Revise: take out any wordiness or vague ideas, and make sure the thesis relates to the topic.

**Example:**

Assignment: Discuss the issue of identity in In Search of April Raintree.

1. Identity in In Search of April Raintree is . . .
2. Important . . .
3. Because April's negative perception of her mixed heritage leads to her unhappiness.

**Working thesis:** Identity in In Search of April Raintree is important because April's negative perception of her mixed heritage leads to her unhappiness.

**This thesis is weak in two spots.** First, why should we care if April is unhappy? Because it relates to the theme of identity in the book. Second, April isn't always unhappy but finds a kind of happiness.

4. In In Search of April Raintree April tries unsuccessfully to repress her Native heritage and pass as white, but she is not happy until she acknowledges both aspects of her heritage.

## What does a good thesis look like?

A good thesis statement must be unified, precise and dynamic. It also has to be something you can support with evidence, and be limited enough to cover adequately in the size of the paper you are writing.

*Examples:*

**dull, vague**

Grass is important in the African savanna.

**precise, dynamic**

Grass is the essential element in the African savanna's system of nutrient recycling.

**cannot be proven, unmanageable**

Attitudes about love vary.

**manageable, supportable**

In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley discusses Romantic attitudes about the relationship between physical beauty and love.

## Tips

1. A thesis statement is not written in stone. Don't get so attached to a thesis that you refuse to change it as your ideas change and develop.
2. Writing the working thesis on an index card and keeping it in front of you during the writing process will help you maintain your focus.

ASC 2011

