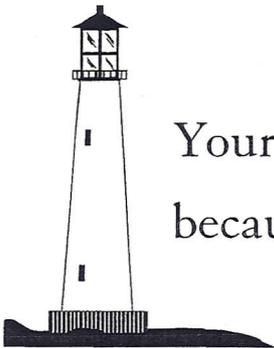


WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

“An effective thesis statement tells readers specifically what you plan to write about in your paper. A thesis statement usually takes a stand or expresses a specific feeling or feature of your subject.”

—Writers, Inc.

Your thesis statement will explain what you believe your research project can prove or support with appropriate facts and details.



Your thesis statement is like a lighthouse ...
because it will guide you along the way.

DEVELOPMENT OF THESIS STATEMENTS

SAMPLE 1

1. History Day Theme = *Turning Points*

Basic Interest Area = *Civil War*

Narrowed Subject = *Battle of Gettysburg (event)*

Working Thesis Statement = *The battle of Gettysburg was a major turning point of the Civil War.*

Final Thesis Statement = *The Battle of Gettysburg was a major turning point of the Civil War. It turned the tide of the war from the South to the North, pushing back Lee's army that would never fight again on Northern soil and bringing confidence to the Union army.*

SAMPLE 2

2. History Day Theme = *Science and Technology*

Basic Interest Area = *air conditioning*

Narrowed Subject = *air conditioning changing the American way of life (idea)*

Working Thesis Statement = *The advent of air conditioning spurred the migration of Northerners to the Southern states such as Florida.*

Final Thesis Statement = *The advent of air conditioning spurred the migration of Northerners to the Southern states such as Florida. This shift significantly changed the economy and culture of the South.*

TESTING YOUR THESIS

A thesis statement expresses an informed opinion, which is to say, it provides an explanation based on research and analysis. To test the strength of your thesis, think about what an opposing opinion might be. If someone could argue that your topic is not significant in history, or that it is significant for a different reason, how would you argue against their interpretation? Why is your view stronger?

Here is an example of a thesis you might have developed based on your research on Jackie Robinson:

When Jackie Robinson broke the color bar in professional baseball, he was the catalyst for the civil rights movement, and a champion for the rights of African Americans.

Here are some other interpretations:

Rosa Parks was a more important catalyst for the civil rights movement than Jackie Robinson. The movement was launched in Southern communities, not on the playing field.

This does not mean your thesis is wrong. It does mean that you might want to think about the wording some more, and carefully consider what you actually want to say about the significance of Robinson in history.

To visualize and organize your ideas, try drawing a chart like this one on a piece of paper. List all the possible arguments you can imagine in the top row, then in the next row, write notes on the specific evidence that supports each one. (If you're just beginning your research, don't worry if you can't fill in a lot of information. Your ideas will grow and develop as you learn more about your topic.)

Now consider the strength of each argument. Do you need more evidence to support your thesis statement? How will you deal with evidence that supports a different argument? Thinking about questions like these can help you decide what the next step in your research and thesis development should be.

TESTING YOUR THESIS (cont.)

My argument: (Why my topic is significant in history)

Opposing argument:

Evidence that supports my argument:

Evidence that supports the opposing argument:

Which argument is strongest? Why?

Should I modify my argument? How?

Can I strengthen my argument by presenting more evidence or stating my thesis more clearly? How?

Adapted from "A Student's Guide to National History Day: Almost Everything You Need to Know to Get Started on Your History Day Adventure." Wisconsin History Day