

THESIS STATEMENT

DEFINITION: A good thesis statement is specific & concise. It brings the subject into focus for the reader, suggests the scope of the paper, and shows coherently the idea or ideas the paper will develop.

Find Your Thesis

--as you think about a topic, ask yourself what you can say about it; what is the point you want to make

--the answer to the question of what the paper's point is will provide a thesis statement

--this thesis statement will become a claim, a proposition to be supported, which deals w/ a matter of probability, not a fact or matter of taste

--remember, argument concerns itself w/ neither bold assertions of fact or taste but w/ a middle ground of statements that deal w/ probability

--for ex., to say that "lakes are inland bodies of water" is a statement of fact

--or, to say "I like to vacation by lakes," is a statement of taste

--but, to say, "the shore of lake X should be zoned for commercial development" is a statement of argument, that is, a statement that reasonable people might disagree about and which requires specific support

--the clue here is to examine your subject until you can find an argumentative edge

--remember that in framing a statement w/ an argumentative edge, you are not being bellicose or pugnacious but firm, convinced, persuasive

Sharpen Your Thesis

--attempt to take a stand at this point; perhaps you need to make a value judgment. Be reasonable but don't be timid.

--sometimes it helps to think of your early versions of a thesis as a debating ?; that is a position that needs defending

--in this stage the point is to work and rework your idea until you can present it in a single sentence

Believe in Your Thesis

--this stage in thesis development overlaps the first 2; however, as you word through your ideas, continually ask yourself what is true ; what can you assume or cannot assume as being true; what

can or cannot be proved

--the point here is that you must begin w/ what you believe & then explore its validity

--in exploring validity, test your belief w/ all the possible objections you can think of

--as you explore be careful not to "beg the question," which involves taking for granted, either intentionally or unintentionally, something the opposition has not granted. This involves assuming something is proven the actually still needs to be proved.

--your concern here is w/ your audience; in some cases that audience will be quite specific & identifiable and at other times rather generalized, but no matter which type of audience you are addressing, you want to convince

Persuade Your Reader

--this brings us to our fourth consideration, once you believe in your idea, you need to make someone else believe, accept, or at least consider your point of view

--in order to persuade someone, you must provide specific reasons or pieces of evidence that will bring him/her to your position

--always attempt to offer **public reasons** to support **private convictions**

Tone

--a few words about how to state your thesis

--don't apologize w/ phrases such as "I think," "to me," "I feel," "It seems to me"

--if you state your position you are letting the reader know what you think, how you feel, what you believe, etc.

--attempt to present yourself as a reasonable adult speaking about something you believe in to other reasonable adults

Up to this point we have been dealing with mental operations in the development of an argumentative thesis; now let's translate these into some specific steps.

Examples

1. **Assertion**--Colleges must be "open"

2, **Reason**--Colleges must be "open" because it is only fair.

3. Develop--American colleges should institute "open admission" for high potential students because it would be just for all involved.

4. Refine--Despite some obvious problems, American colleges should institute "open admissions" for high potential students because it would be just for all involved.

5. Further Refining--Despite obvious problems, an "open admission" policy to American universities would promote a diversified student community, greater educational opportunities for students, and a strong sense of individual self-worth.

1. Practical jokers have similar motivations.

2. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the serious intent of practical jokers.

3. Practical jokers have four basic motivations: to obtain applause, to gain reassurance, to wield power, and to vent hostility.

Contrary to the self-interested arguments of many scientists and other groups, scientists have a social responsibility to make sure that their work is used for, not against, the benefit of society.

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However, upon closer reading, it becomes evident that White's analysis of his pig's death and his reason for writing about it is not to present a sad sentimental story about the death of his prized pig, but rather to illustrate how the pig's fate, White's fate, and therefore all of humanity's fate are intricately woven and symbolized in the seemingly uneventful event of the death of a man's pig.

The elephant acts as a symbol of Orwell in Burma, a reflector of human nature, as well as a political symbol of the British protectorate.

While White's extreme reaction to the illness of his pig can be somewhat understood, there are specific stages through which he passes that show him to be a man who is emotionally unstable.

From a Marxist viewpoint, the figure of the elephant operates as a complex political symbol representing both the repressive State Apparatus and a ritual of ideological recognition, as defined by Louis Althusser. The elephant is also symbolic of the larger class struggle evident in the essay.

White takes his pig's falling ill very seriously, but without good reason, and his demeanor contrasts sharply to those who surround him. His seemingly valiant efforts to save the pig are selfishly motivated and reflective of his inability to control his world and the living creatures within it.

To White the pig has come to symbolize disruption, the fragility of life, and the inevitability of feeling pain.

Orwell and the elephant were the only true participants, and, by its death, the elephant acquired a special significance for Orwell. It came to symbolize his own personal morality, sacrificed in the service of Empire.

In his essay "Shooting an Elephant," George Orwell observes that in the East, "a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes." In many ways, Orwell's encounter with the elephant is such a story. To the Europeans of the area, who heard of its death second-hand, the elephant was confidently discussed in concrete terms, by some as a valuable capital investment and by others as a menace to the public safety. To the Burmese, who actually witnessed the event, the elephant's death was straightforward enough. They saw it simply as entertainment, "a bit of fun," affording them the added benefit of a carcass to butcher and feast upon. Even the Burmese, however, were too removed from the event to fathom the conflict and turmoil which were at its core. Orwell and the elephant were the only true participants, and, by its death, the elephant acquired a special significance for Orwell. It came to symbolize his own personal morality, sacrificed in the service of Empire.