

## Additional Work with Literary Thesis Statements

A thesis statement is to an essay what a topic sentence is to a paragraph. It sums up the central idea and purpose of the paper in one sentence and serves as a guide to help arrange material and maintain focus on the topic.

### Formula for writing thesis statements

Central idea + purpose = thesis

### Questions to ask while analyzing and writing a thesis statement

What is my central idea and what is my purpose in writing about this idea?

#### Example #1

Bad: *Yolonda's Genius*, by Carol Fenner, is an excellent book to read.

Better: In *Yolonda's Genius* by Carol Fenner the characters were brave, the setting was realistic, and the plot was believable.

#### Example #2

Bad: Hawthorne discusses evil in "Young Goodman Brown."

Better: In "Youngman Goodman Brown," Hawthorne uses light and darkness to emphasize good and evil in the world.

#### Example #3

Bad: *Grease* at Debbie's Dinner Theatre was a spectacular performance.

Better: An exciting plot, harmonious musical members, outstanding staging, and expert acting combined to create a spectacular performance of *Grease* at Debbie's Dinner Theater.

#### Example #4

Bad: Hemingway's war stories are very good.

Better: Hemingway's stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong Anglo-Saxon words.

#### Example #5

Bad: Peter Taylor has unity of effect in the story, "A Spinster's Tale."

Better: In "A Spinster's Tale," Peter Taylor uses three elements, the passing of time, the use of mirrors, and a character named Mr. Speed, in order to give the story its unity of effect.

#### Example #6

Bad: Hawthorne uses impressive symbols throughout *The Scarlet Letter*.

Better: Most impressive are the symbols which Hawthorne sustains through *The Scarlet Letter*, allowing them to grow and to take on various appearances and meanings as the book progresses.

