

Thesis Statements

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A **thesis** is the main idea or conclusion of a paper—the one thing you as the writer want your audience to know when they have finished reading. The thesis is both the target and destination for everything that is included in the paper. Each paragraph should work toward either explaining or defending the thesis.

When writing a thesis statement, include two things: **what** and **why**. The *what* explains what a paper is going to discuss, argue, or conclude. This part of the thesis should be specific. The *why* explains why this topic is significant—why the idea being discussed, argued, or concluded matters in the long run. Below are a few examples of theses that include both what and why:

Research Paper: Bilingual education should be reintegrated into the public school system [**what**] in order to help English Language Learners better master state objectives and integrate into a new culture [**why**].

Literary Paper: In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the image of the pear tree represents Janie's vision of marriage and romantic love, an image that resurfaces in the text whenever her achievement of this ideal seems most hopeless [**what**]. Because of where it is placed, this image is a catalyst in the text, prompting Janie and her readers to continue pursuing the ideal of true and fulfilling love [**why**].

Scientific Paper: The purpose of this paper is to analyze the correlation between hyperactivity and caffeine intake in rats over a five-month period, revealing that high levels of caffeine may result in rising heart rate, uncontrollable twitching, and lack of focus on specific tasks [**what**]. Results will then be compared with existing correlative research to substantiate health implications and suggest potentials for further research [**why**].

Exegetical Paper: As seen by a structural, historical-cultural, and textual analysis, the Luke 16:1-13 pericope on Jesus' parable of the Unjust Steward is about the importance of investing financial resources in a way that yields eternal reward. In its larger context, this pericope implies that giving money to help the poor is one such investment [**what**], compelling believers to be generous and sacrificial with the resources God provides [**why**].

Senior Seminar Paper [Ethics]: Based on the implications and applications of state regulations for single-parent adoption, it becomes clear that the current legislation is inadequate from a Utilitarian, Deontological, and Virtue Ethics lens because it fails to adequately address the needs of the growing foster child population [**what**]. By revising the current legislation to eliminate some of the red tape for single parent adoptions, the state can better equip single parents to help alleviate this need [**why**].

For each of these examples, the papers themselves would be organized around discussing and proving the theses' claims.

First, they would demonstrate that the **what** is a valid observation. This could involve paraphrases of research, quotations from experts, and personal observations based on the text/data.

Then, the papers would walk readers through the reasons that the **what** logically leads to the **why**. This can involve additional research as well as personal analysis of the facts.

If every aspect of a paper accomplishes one of these two tasks, it is on its way to being a focused product.