

Night: PowerPoint Project—Writing an Effective Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is the central point around which all the other material in the essay revolves. **It determines what does and does not belong in the essay as a whole.**

For this assignment, an effective thesis statement has two parts:

1. A specific topic.
2. Your opinion regarding that topic.

Thesis Statement (2 sentences max.) = Topic + Opinion

Topic

Thesis

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standing up for what is right | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Often, people refuse to stand up for what is right (topic) until a situation affects them directly; unfortunately, by then, it is too late (opinion). |
|---|---|

Characteristics of Effective Thesis Statements

1. **An effective thesis statement takes a stand.** Some writers use the thesis statement merely to announce the specific topic of their paper and forget to include their opinion about the topic. Beware of this common error; a thesis statement takes a stand!

Weak Example

Strong Example

I want to share with you some thoughts about our space program.
What about "our space program"?

Our space program (topic) is a waste of money, lacking significant benefits to society as a whole (opinion).

The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.
What about the "difficulty of solving our environmental problems"?

Solving our environmental problems (topic) is more difficult than many environmentalists believe because of the complexity of the issue (opinion).

My essay will discuss handgun legislation.
What about "handgun legislation"?

Banning handguns (topic) is the first step toward controlling crime in the United States (opinion).

Night: PowerPoint Project—Writing an Effective Thesis Statement**2. An effective thesis statement identifies an issue worth developing**

(OPINION). Your thesis should focus on an issue capable of being developed. If a **FACT** is used as a thesis, then you have no place to go. You can not spend an entire project supporting a statement that can be proven true or false; it needs no support.

Weak ExampleStrong Example

Many businesses pollute the environment. (fact)

Tax penalties should be levied against businesses to curb environmental pollution. (opinion)

Nowadays, many movies are violent. (fact)

Movie violence incites children to commit violent acts at home and school. (opinion)

The population of the United States is growing older. (fact)

The aging of the U.S. population will eventually create a crisis in the delivery of health-care services. (opinion)

3. An effective thesis statement is specific. Avoid stating your thesis in vague, general or sweeping terms. Broad statements make it difficult for readers to grasp your point. Moreover, if you start with a broad thesis, you're stuck with the **IMPOSSIBLE** task of trying to develop a book-length idea in a much shorter project.

Weak ExampleStrong Example

Nowadays, high school education is often meaningless. (too broad)
Why is a high school education often meaningless nowadays?

Nowadays, high school education is often meaningless because they have been devalued by grade inflation. (specific)

Newspapers cater to the taste of the American public. (too broad)
Which newspapers? Which American tastes? ALL of them?

The success of USA Today indicates that people want newspapers that are easy to read and entertaining. (specific)

The computer revolution is not all that we have been led to believe it is. (too broad)
Why is the computer revolution not all that we've been led to believe it is?

The computer revolution is a myth because home computers are still an impractical purchase for many people. (specific)

Night: PowerPoint Project—Writing an Effective Thesis Statement**EXAMPLES from Night:**

Topic	Thesis
Standing up for what is right	Often, people refuse to stand up for what is right (topic) until it affects them directly; unfortunately, by then, it is too late (opinion).
Elie Wiesel's experiences in the concentration camp.	While in the concentration camps (topic), Wiesel became more callous and self-centered (opinion) because he was forced to live with death and destruction all around him.
Elie Wiesel's experiences in the concentration camp.	Because of what he experienced in the concentration camps (topic), Wiesel grew up too quickly and changed from an innocent child into a jaded adolescent (opinion).
Elie Wiesel's experiences in the concentration camp.	After his experience in the concentration camps (topic), Wiesel can not experience his faith as profoundly as he once did (opinion).
First Person Point of View	By using first person point of view in <u>Night</u> (topic), Wiesel forces the reader to intimately connect with his experience in the concentration camps (opinion).
<u>Night</u> is based on Wiesel's life	By relating his experiences in the concentration camps in his book <u>Night</u> (topic), Wiesel has found a way to cope with his grief (opinion).
War	War (topic) is a natural consequence of human nature (opinion).
Doing Evil	People find it easier to do evil (topic) than to do good (opinion).
Authority	Most people need authority (topic) to tell them what to do (opinion).
Going with the Flow	It is easier to go along with the crowd (topic) than to stand up for one's beliefs and values (opinion).
Helping Other Countries	America has enough of its own problems and should not (opinion) help other countries (topic).
Helping Other Countries	America has a moral responsibility (opinion) to help other countries (topic).