

## Thesis Workshop—Script

### Materials Checklist:

- Script
- Handout
- Example intro and conclusion

Created by:  
Hudson Rollinson  
Dana Canastar  
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### Introduce yourself, the APAC (location, hours, services), and the workshop:

*This is the Thesis Statement Workshop. Its goal is to help you understand the importance of an effective thesis statement. This workshop will show you the anatomy of a thesis statement, how to evaluate a thesis statement, and, finally, how to create one.*

**What is a Thesis?** A thesis statement is the cornerstone of your paper. It serves as a roadmap for your argument and should reflect the points you plan to make throughout your essay. The importance of having this vital statement are twofold: **1)** it makes your paper easier to follow. By having a thesis and other organizational elements such as topic sentences, your paper can easily be organized in a clear and logical manner, and this goes a long way toward having a concise, informative essay. **2)** The thesis serves as a roadmap to you as well as your reader. It is easy to get sidetracked while writing, and having a thesis that you follow like a roadmap helps to keep you on point.

### A thesis statement should possess these qualities: Debatable, focused, and insightful

*(Presenter: Write this graph on the whiteboard because it's a great reference tool)*

|            |             |              |
|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Debatable  | Factual     | (Position)   |
| Focused    | Broad/Vague | (Specifics)  |
| Insightful | Boring      | ('So What?') |

**Note:** The line in the middle is the thesis statement 'sweet spot.'

*Discuss: Because a thesis statement should be debatable, focused, and insightful, it can be evaluated based on a scale of those aspects and their opposites. You are aiming for something toward the left side of the scale. The items in parentheses are the parts of the thesis that that aspect usually is governed by. For example, if my thesis is boring, I may need to work on the 'so what?' section. (5-10 Minutes)*

### How to get started writing a thesis statement.

**First you have to figure out the question that you are answering:**-- "Why is *The Walking Dead* so Popular?"

**Then you can start:** A thesis generally has three parts: a **positon**, **specifics**, and a **'so what?'**

- 1. Position:** Answers that investigative question—"Audiences are captivated by *The Walking Dead*..."
- 2. Specifics:** A roadmap of how and why you will argue that position—"...because of its variety of characters, relatability, and compelling set design..."
- 3. So What?:** Why should the reader care? What are the broader implications of this argument?—"These factors are important because they reflect the developing relationship between the everyman and modern media."



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**Exercise 1: Evaluating a Thesis (Handout)**—Have them refer to the chart and evaluate where on each scale the example thesis statements fall. Based on this, ask them to determine ways that the thesis could be improved (or not). Involve the class by asking them to resolve the issues within the following thesis statements (focus on examples 1, 2, and 3). (5-10 minutes)

1. Life as a college student is tough because there is money-risk involved, there is a lot of pressure and expectation, and many students work part-time jobs on top of their education.

*Answer: Debatable, Focused, Insightful... but incomplete*

*Solution: lacks a 'so what?'*

2. Cats are better than dogs

*Answer: Debatable but broad and boring.*

*Solution: Needs additional focus—why are cats better than dogs?*

3. Many people assert that Shakespeare is the greatest writer that ever lived

*Answer: Factual and broad but insightful.*

*Solution: Many people DO assert this so it can't be debated, also needs specific reasons why*

4. The sky is blue

*Answer: Factual, Broad, Boring*

*Solution: Needs to be changed so that it is debatable and has specificity*

5. It is best to not have any distractions when reading

*Answer: Debatable, Focused but boring*

*Solution: Needs to address why this topic is important*

6. Native American languages are important to their culture, spirituality and, in many ways, the survival of the languages is vital to the survival of the people.

*Answer: Good thesis*



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## **Exercise 2: One-Word Thesis Building**

**Presenter:** Place a word on the board—“poverty”—for example, and ask students to give him/her a **position** on that topic. It could be, “Growing up poor hurts children.” You’ll work with the class to slowly start to spin out that sentence into something **specific**: “because it hinders their ability to learn, to feel safe, and affects their emotional state,” and then conclude with the **So What?** “Thus incurring a permanent negative impact on the overall economy.”

**Now:** Divide the room into groups (If this is in room 314, use the rows to make it easier). Assign each group a word. **Examples:** Technology, cats, iPhones, sports, poverty, education, parenting, **OR** speak to the professor beforehand about any specific word ideas s/he may want covered in the workshop. (5 minutes)

Within their groups, have the students discuss how they can create a thesis based on the assigned word. They’ll debate a position, come up with specific reasons why that position is important, and then discuss the broader implications of the topic. As the presenter, visit each group to see how they’re coming along with the task.

One-word thesis building: With the word you’ve been assigned, come up with a solid thesis that has a position, specifics, answers a ‘so what?’ query, AND is specific, debatable, and interesting. (10 minutes of in-group discussion)

Go over them, try to get through at least two of them.  
(5-10 minutes of discussion)

Also hand out the example introduction as a take away from the workshop, explain that it is an example of how an introduction should be laid out: the most general information first, to lead a reader into the topic, then gradually becoming more specific until culminating in the thesis statement.

