

## What Is a Thesis Statement, and How Do I Write One?

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A thesis statement in an essay is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas.

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A thesis statement is an **assertion**, not a statement of fact or an observation.

- Fact or observation: People use many lawn chemicals.
  - Thesis: People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns clean.
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A thesis **takes a stand** rather than announcing a subject.

- Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.
  - Thesis: Solving our environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.
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A thesis is the **main idea**, not the title. It must be a complete sentence that explains in some detail what you expect to write about.

- Title: Social Security and Old Age.
  - Thesis: Continuing changes in the Social Security System makes it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.
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A thesis statement is **narrow**, rather than broad. If the thesis statement is sufficiently narrow, it can be fully supported.

- Broad: The American steel industry has many problems.
  - Narrow: The primary problem if the American steel industry is the lack of funds to renovate outdated plants and equipment.
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A thesis statement is **specific** rather than vague or general.

- Vague: Hemingway's war stories are very good.
  - Specific: Hemingway's stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong Anglo-Saxon words.
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A thesis statement has **one main point** rather than several main points. More than one point may be too difficult for the reader to understand and the writer to support.

- More than one main point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist, and his book is the subject of a movie.
  - One Main point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world renowned physicist.
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You can revise your thesis statement whenever you want to while you are researching your topic. As you learn more about your topic, you will almost certainly revise and refine what you want to prove about it!

### Compare Thesis Statements

	<p>If Abraham Lincoln hadn't given the Emancipation Proclamation, the South would have won the Civil War. There would still be slavery in the United States.</p>	<p>On January 1, 1863, during the heightened concerns about a Union victory in the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln demonstrated bold leadership by taking a stand and issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves in the Confederate States. The Proclamation made the ending of slavery an explicit war goal, inspired Union troops, and laid the foundation for the passage of the 13th Amendment.</p>	
	<p>During the 1919 World Series, eight players were accused of intentionally losing games. The resulting scandal and public's loss of confidence in the game forced the owners to take a stand and appoint a commissioner of baseball to lead regulations in the game of baseball and charged him with the right to ban players.</p>	<p>During the 1919 World Series, eight players were accused of throwing games. Decide for yourself – were they innocent or guilty?</p>	
	<p>Susan B. Anthony, a true leader, born February 15, 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts. Susan B. Anthony fought for the right to vote. The 19th amendment was passed in 1919. Susan B. Anthony died in 1906 at her home on Madison Street in Rochester.</p>	<p>Through social actions and her writings, Susan B. Anthony was a leader that inspired thousands to take a stand on the issue of women's suffrage, which left a legacy fueling the women's rights revolution and eventually resulted in the 19th amendment.</p>	
	<p>Rachel Carson wrote <i>Silent Spring</i> in 1962 and forever changed the environmental movement in the United States.</p>	<p>Rachel Carson became a leader for the environmental movement in the early 1960's when she took a stand by publishing her controversial book, <i>Silent Spring</i>. The book increased public awareness to environmental concerns and sparked the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency as a government force for environmental protection.</p>	
	<p>In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama. Leader Martin Luther King Jr.'s stand of helping to organize a 381 day bus boycott, resulted in a Supreme Court victory which earned King national prominence as a civil rights leader which inspired him to organize other non-violent protests.</p>	<p>Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929. King earned his doctorate from Boston University and was a leader in the civil rights movement</p>	

<b>Thesis</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
<i>Richard J. Daley died in 1976.</i>			
<i>Artists of Chicago: 1890-1990</i>			
<i>The Juvenile Court system was established to remove children from the adult criminal justice system and help youth reform, but over the years it became a source of punishment and imprisonment.</i>			
<i>Pesticides kill thousands of farmworkers and must be stopped.</i>			
<i>German immigrants in Chicago had enormous difficulties during World War One as they were forced to choose between being "German and an enemy" or forsaking Germany to be "American".</i>			
<i>Before Title IX, there were few female basketball players.</i>			
<i>How did The Jungle make an impact on the foods we eat?</i>			
<i>The reversal of the Chicago River, which improved sanitary and health conditions of Chicagoans, demonstrated that science, technology, cannot solve problems unless there is economic motives and political will.</i>			

**Rewrite two of the weak statements to make them stronger.**

## 2014 "Rights & Responsibilities in History" Thesis Statement Examples

background



topic rights (theme words) responsibilities *immediate impact* **long-term significance**

### I. "Tuskegee Experiment: No Rights, Plenty of Responsibilities"

In the segregated 1930s, when blacks were considered physically and mentally inferior to whites, the Tuskegee Experiment was created as a back-up plan in the event of a national emergency. Even though they did not yet have civil rights amongst their countrymen, the Tuskegee Airmen took on the responsibility of defending their country during WWII. *The Airmen's success led to President Truman's 1948 executive order 9981*, with the U. S. Air Force becoming the first service to soar above the color line. **Today, 40% of America's military personnel is non-white.**

### II. "Mississippi Institute: Providing the Right to Learn"

Three decades before Helen Keller made her breakthrough understanding of 'water' (1884), and at a time when there were very few educational opportunities for deaf people, the Mississippi Legislature established the Mississippi Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (March 1, 1854) in Jackson, Mississippi. Because it was believed that all students deserved the right to learn and communicate, the Mississippi Legislature took the responsibility to provide that opportunity. *At first instructors were difficult to find*, but the Institution **currently serves 150 students each year and has prepared many to attend universities, including Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.**

### III. "Phillip Martin: Mississippi Choctaw's Moses"

After they somehow survived Indian Removal in 1830, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1945 gave the Mississippi Choctaw Indian Tribe the right to settle in Neshoba County. However, they continued to struggle economically due to bigotry, cultural isolation, and lack of jobs. In 1960, Phillip Martin, who was later called the 'Moses of the Choctaw', took responsibility to help his people restore their culture. *Serving in leadership for nearly 5 decades*, **Martin took the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians from abject poverty to prosperity.**

### IV. "President Truman: Military Right and Responsibility"

As World War II raged on, there was great debate at the highest levels of the United States

Government regarding the use of the atomic bomb. President Truman, taking the responsibility to minimize the loss of human lives, made the decision that he also had the right to accomplish that by any means possible. *The dropping of the atomic bomb in Japan ended World War II*, and **began the Atomic Age.**

**THESIS STATEMENT:**

**INFORMATION GOAL (“Facts Store”), DUE:**  
**AT LEAST 50 facts about YOUR TOPIC – divided this way:**

<b><u>BACKGROUND/CONTEXT</u></b> (the big picture; historical perspective and circumstances which led to the triumph/tragedy) (10 facts)	<b><u>CONTEXT—BUILD UP</u></b> (events that immediately preceded the triumph/tragedy) (10 facts)	<b><u>TRIUMPH &amp; TRAGEDY</u></b> (heart of story—the events themselves—who, what, why, how; multiple perspectives) (10 facts)	<b><u>SHORT-TERM IMPACT</u></b> (what changed at the time) (10 facts)	<b><u>LONG-TERM IMPACT</u></b> (long-term significance; why it matters today; “So what?”) (10 facts)