

What is a thesis statement?

A proposition put forward for consideration and discussion—
a thesis is a cousin to a topic sentence, a main idea sentence—
and also a cousin to the hypothesis (a tentative explanation that can be tested and studied further, a possible explanation for an observed phenomenon)

Note: thesis (a claim or proposition) → antithesis (equally worthy but opposite claim) → synthesis (a deeper understanding, higher level of truth) – a way of approaching an issue or problem

How is a thesis statement developed?

A Start with a broad subject—freedom of speech

B Move toward a narrower topic—banning books in public schools and libraries

C Form a critical thinking question—According to the ALA, sex and profanity are the leading causes of book challenges by parents and school boards. Should high school students be denied the opportunity of studying books such as J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (f-word) or Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (n-word)?

D Push your question into a claim or proposition—High school students must be protected by the first amendment and allowed to study books such as Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* or Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. Furthermore, high school teachers must also be protected by the first amendment so they can assign books of literary merit that may contain sexual content or profane language. What's at stake is no less than freedom of speech and academic freedom, protected by the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

What is a weak thesis statement?

A weak thesis statement is usually too vague or too generalized—providing little solid ground for explanation, analysis, and critical thought.

Weak thesis statement:

High school students should be able to read whatever they want.

Stronger thesis:

Students in public high schools should be able to read whatever they want based on their free speech rights as cited in the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

—on thesis statements at <<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/01/>>
—more thesis tips at <<http://college.lclark.edu/live/files/10249-thesisstatementspdf>>

Quarterly Essay: Forming a clear thesis or debatable position
Introducing a claim or proposal and then supporting this with fact and reason

Read:

Benjamin Barber's "The Educated Student: Global Citizen or Global Consumer?" (handout)

Review:

"What is a thesis statement?" (side A), including OWL lab and Lewis and Clark online resources.

To do:

Develop a thesis statement based on your response to Barber's article. In the first paragraph or first page of your essay, cite Barber and article as a source and introduce your thesis.

Thesis strategy: Either (a) state Barber's thesis/main idea and then agree/disagree and explain why; or, (b) formulate your own position re: student citizen/consumer and explain why.

Key words and phrases. Develop a working vocabulary, based on the reading as well as your own resources (what you've read, observed, experienced).

Expand key words into a concept or idea for discussion. What's the author's main idea? What are the implications (indirect or unstated meaning or suggested significance) of this idea? Provide quotes or examples from the reading as a point of departure for your own critical thoughts. Also, consider raising questions or points of agreement/disagreement with the text. (Occasional use of "I" or "we" is appropriate here because, as a college student, your observations and experiences are relevant.)

Helpful hints:

Avoid sitting on the fence. Take a position. To get started, you may find it helpful to define key words—citizen, consumer, education, democracy. Do you agree or disagree with Barber's characterization of college students today? Is it reasonable or unreasonable to hold students responsible for their own education? For their daily actions as citizens? Consumers?

Alternative quarterly #2: Discuss <i>Watermark</i> and California draught, including a case study or example(s). See instructor for further consultation.

Format:

MLA format. 3+ pages. In-text citations and works cited. Give your work a title using key words. Minimum of one additional source. Include direct quotations or examples with in-text citations.

Criteria:

Clear, strong thesis statement. Introduction that includes author citation and the main issue.
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Body paragraphs that extend the thesis with fact, reason, quotes, examples, grounded questions.

Closing paragraph or page that addresses the thesis with understanding, recognizing complexity.

A free-standing essay with title in MLA format.

