

## Thesis Statements

### How to Effectively Connect a Text to an Essential Question

#### *How can I write an amazing thesis statement?*

A single thesis statement impacts the entire essay's structure; it shows *the **topic** (Essential Question), your own **position** on that topic, and the **progression** of the topic* within the chosen text. So... think about which Essential Question appeals most to you and which text(s) might work best with that particular question to give you the most interesting ideas to explore.

These simple steps, with accompanying considerations, should help you:

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#### *Step 1: Unpack the Essential Question*

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An Essential Question is quite general and can apply to numerous situations and texts. De-construct the question and consider all of its components before making your choice of text(s).

Sample Essential Question: ***To what degree can an individual's choices and actions influence the direction of his or her life?***

To unpack or de-construct this Essential Question, you might consider:

- “To what degree” seems like it begs an obvious answer... “To a great degree!” Of course choices & actions influence one’s life; this seems obvious. Consider which character(s) are most impacted by choices & actions or which character(s) are most affected by the consequences.
- The differences between choices and actions. A choice seems primarily an internal struggle, whereas an action implies that a decision has already been made. Consider the subtle differences between these terms and how a text creator might distinguish their meaning.
- The term “influence”. Choices and actions can sometimes have different influences on one’s life and to varying degrees.
- The term “direction”. Maybe you might want to consider how the character(s) ends up at the conclusion of the text, but you don’t want to fall into a plot summary trap. Perhaps you might want to consider focusing on specific choices and actions that *direct* the character to a particular insight.
- What might this topic mean to the author? (Is it inevitable? Natural?)

The work you put in at this step actually guides the development of your essay the most. Markers are interested in how students connect the topic **to** the text - - not just how the topic is represented in a particular text. It is a subtle difference that can really elevate your essay.

In essence, we are interested in your thoughts first!

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#### *Step 2: Consider progression of ideas*

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*What do you want to say about the Essential Question and its connection to the text(s)?*

First, consider what ideas will guide the discussion? Possibilities:

- Choices & actions can influence one's legacy or reputation.
- Accumulated bad choices can be harmful to an individual's life.
- Choices & actions can influence relationships.
- Choices & actions can be influenced by values & beliefs.
- Individuals can be separated from others because of poor choices/actions. (Seclusion)
- Individuals can be connected to others because of choices/actions. (Attachments/Affection/Friendliness)
- Sometimes individuals need isolation/solitude in order to make life-altering decisions.
- Characters can be alienated from others or have a broadened worldview because of their choices & actions.
- Once a choice has been made, an individual's quality of life may or may not improve.
- A particular choice alters one's actions and can transform one's perspective.
- Choices/actions can alter one's viewpoint or provide purpose/guidance.
- One's future is defined by the consequences of his/her actions.
- Attitude can greatly impact one's life.
- Reaction and response to critical events are influential.
- Synonyms for Choices: decisions, judgments, resolutions, results
- Synonyms for Actions: activities, deeds, accomplishments, endeavors

Next, consider: how is this Essential Question explored in the text?

Use jot notes to help you come up with ideas. *Make lots of notes (probably more than you will actually use).* Generating many ideas will help you discover possible connections and insights you might not have considered before. Think about:

- how the Essential Question might apply to a **character**.
- how a text creator uses particular **writing techniques** which could highlight this question
- how this Essential Question and your ideas about it might apply **beyond the text** (universal idea)

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### ***Step 3: Answer the Essential Question in one sentence, using three components in progression, to show your position.***

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What do you want to state about this topic? How do you want to say it? Consider where you want to end up at the conclusion of the essay. Leave the text title, author, and genre for the introduction and focus on answering the Essential Question in one sentence/statement. The key elements should reveal a natural progression that is echoed in your body paragraphs. Your thesis statement should be a confident reflection of what you want to say in your paper and guide the reader to the expected progression.

**Sample thesis statement:** *An individual's future is defined by his relationships with others, his choices during critical moments, and the consequences of his actions.*

This thesis statement directly answers the Essential Question, focuses on three components, and suggests a natural progression of development toward a conclusion. Just from this simple statement, we know what each body paragraph will emphasize:

- Body Paragraph 1: **relationships with others**
- Body Paragraph 2: **choices during critical moments**
- Body Paragraph 3: **consequences of actions**

And therefore: we know basically *where we will end up*, so later, the conclusion will be that much easier to write.