

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:

Step 1: Unpack the Essential Question

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: ***Why is it important to be responsible to others on a personal, local, global, and digital level?***

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

- “Why is it important?” or “Why might it NOT be important?” Consider which text creator might value this importance or want to showcase what might happen if this importance is neglected in some way.
- What responsibility means and what levels of responsibility various characters might have.
- Who might the “others” actually be referring to?
- The differences between personal, local, global, and digital. Consider the subtle differences between these terms and how a text creator might distinguish their meaning or focus on one or more.
- Which character(s) are most affected by the consequences of responsibility or lack of responsibility?
- What might this topic mean to the author? (Is it significant? Vital?)

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!

Step 2: Consider progression of ideas

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:

- Consider the significance of being accountable to others.
- What are the impacts of being irresponsible?
- What happens when we only think of ourselves?
- Who determines the level of responsibility necessary?
- Being responsible ultimately means that individuals are obligated to do something or care for someone. There's a trust involved that individuals will be morally responsible.
- A personal level could refer to the responsibility that someone has for him/herself, friends, or family members.
- A local level could refer to one's neighborhood/community, school, or peer group.
- A global level could refer to one's province, country, and even world community.
- Digitally, this could refer to the internet, discussion boards, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. This could reference an individual's integrity online.
- Synonyms for responsibility: accountability, duty, obligation, concern.

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)

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

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: *When individuals are responsible to others, they can build personal connections, bridge generations, and destroy discrimination.*

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: *building personal connections*
- Body Paragraph 2: *bridging generations*
- Body Paragraph 3: *destroying discrimination*

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