

# 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: ***What does it mean to be successful, and what role does failure play?***

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

- The specific components of success depending on an individual's definition of it.
- The specific components of failure depending on an individual's perception of it too.
- How success and failure are so often intertwined.
- Which text creator might value the linking of success and failure.
- If failure is a motivating factor for successful people or endeavors and how this might impact others.
- Which character(s) are most affected by the consequences of success or failure?
- The subtle differences between these terms and how a text creator might distinguish their meaning or focus on one more than the other in a particular text.
- What might this topic mean to the author? (Is it relevant? Realistic? Appropriately conveyed?)

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:

- What are the motivating factors for success?
- Who might judge failures as only stepping stones to success?
- Why aren't individuals encouraged to embrace failures as challenges and learning opportunities?
- Are certain individuals or characters completely devastated by failures and destroyed by their effects?
- Perhaps others have more resiliency, determination, and grit to overcome hardships on the path to a successful life.
- What common strategies do successful people use?
- What are possible pitfalls unsuccessful people fall prey to?
- How might success and failure impact one's self-worth?
- What might individuals sacrifice in order to achieve success?
- Synonyms for success: achievement, accomplishment, victory, attainment, triumph
- Synonyms for failure: disappointment, catastrophe, letdown, frustrations, regret/remorse

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:** *Successful individuals view failures as challenges, inspire others to accomplish goals, and celebrate achievements with dignity.*

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: *viewing failures as challenges*
- Body Paragraph 2: *inspiring others to accomplish goals*
- Body Paragraph 3: *celebrating achievements with dignity*

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