DEVELOPING THESIS STATEMENTS

Topic:
World War II

Fancy topic (what might pass for a thesis in high school):
World War II caused great economic devastation, affecting millions of people.

A thesis must be
focused (specific and narrow enough for the scope of the assignment)
arguable (not commonly accepted, open to debate)
researachable (able to be verified or supported by evidence)

THESIS:
World War II caused great economic devastation because the war displaced millions of refugees to countries whose post-war economies could not afford to support new citizens.

NOTICE THE “FORMULA” WE HAVE HERE:

WWII caused economic devastation (ASSERTION/THESIS)
[linked by repeated term] because
WWII displaced millions of refugees….(PROOF/REASON)

Shared assumption: “Economic devastation occurs when refugees are displaced” or “Economic devastation occurs when nations can’t afford to support their citizens”

THE THESIS FORMULA

A sound thesis consists of two parts:

1. An assertion (thesis) that is a complete idea answering a question at issue. (CLAIM)
2. A because clause that provides the central reason in support of the assertion. (EVIDENCE)

In addition, a sound thesis contains several other elements:

3. There should be an unstated assumption behind the enthymeme. This is the "truth" on which the argument rests. The assumption must be something everyone in the author’s audience is likely to agree with. To serve as an effective starting point for the argument, this unstated assumption should be a belief, value, or principle the audience grants.

4. The statement must answer a question at issue in the author's social or academic community. It must address something that the community cares about but does not necessarily agree upon.

5. There should be a shared term that appears in both the assertion and in the because clause. This insures that there is an obvious connection between the two. (The shared term may be implied by use of a pronoun—“it,” "they.")
Explain how this thesis statement meets these five criteria of a sound thesis:

*After-school jobs are bad for teenagers because they take away study time.*

1. The **assertion** is that "after-school jobs are bad for teenagers." The term "bad" is a bit vague.
2. The **reason** is "because they take away study time."
3. The **unstated assumption** is that having less study time is bad for teenagers; this is the crux of the argument.
4. The assertion has **more than one side**: Parents, teachers, and students are all likely to have different opinions on the matter, even within the groups.
5. There is a **shared term**: "After-school jobs are bad for teenagers because they (after-school jobs) take away study time."

Complete this thesis statement to meet the five criteria:

*A liberal arts degree is better than a business degree for success in life…*

Write your own thesis in the formula here:

_______________________

*because*

_______________________

*Shared assumption*=