

DEVELOPING ARGUMENTS AND 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)

researchable (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:

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

A THESIS "FORMULA"

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)
3. 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.
4. There should be an **unstated assumption behind the thesis**. 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 as an effective starting point for the argument.
In the sample thesis above, the shared assumption might be "Economic devastation is always a result of a refugee crisis."
5. There should, ideally, be a **shared term** that appears at the beginning of both the assertion and the because clause. This ensures that there is an obvious logical 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.



After-school jobs are bad for teenagers
because
they [after-school jobs] take away study time.

1. The **assertion** is that "after-school jobs are bad for teenagers." (The term "bad" is a bit vague and would probably have to be more specific in a revised thesis.)
2. The **reason** is "because they take away study time."
3. 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.
4. The **unstated assumption** is that having less study time is bad for teenagers; this is the crux of the argument.
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

because

A liberal arts degree ...

Shared assumption=

Now write your own thesis in the formula here:

because

Shared assumption=



THE WORD STUDIO, ST. LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY