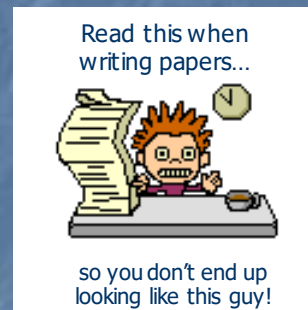


Moving from Topic to Thesis



What will I learn in this presentation?

- This presentation was created to help you understand how to organize all of the notes, journal entries, and discussion postings you've written so that you can develop a THESIS for your essay or research paper.

What is the Difference Between Topic and Thesis?

In a nutshell, your topic is general and your thesis is specific.

Topic

Once you have decided on a topic to write about, there are still many steps to take before you can really write about it. A topic is general. It is a category, frequently expressed in a single word, such as "alcoholism" or "teenage mothers." Whole books have been written on these topics or even on subtopics of these topics, such as "the causes of alcoholism." Even these subtopics are too general for the purpose of writing a short essay, so as the writer, you need to narrow your topic further, making it more specific.

It's Like Math...

Thesis = Assertion + Pattern of Organization

You need to come up with an idea you want to express or a point you want to make. This point or idea is called your **assertion**. Your assertion will express a point, idea, opinion, or a view about your topic. Your thesis will contain a topic and an assertion about that topic. Your thesis will also **imply the way you will organize** your ideas.

How do I come up with a topic?

To come up with a topic, look over your journals and worksheets about the book. As you skim and scan, make a list of words that come to mind about the book.

Now, list some ideas about the “text.”

A large, empty rectangular box with a white border, intended for listing ideas about the text.

How do I narrow my topic?

One way to get from the very general terms shown in the previous slide to more specific thesis-type phrases and statements is to brainstorm questions related to these words. In order to brainstorm questions in a productive manner, I suggest you use the following heuristic, or guiding structure, to help you. Think of the following general interrogative words and use them when you try to formulate your questions:

who...what...when...where...why...how...could...should...

Also think of the following interrogative phrases which will help you develop a pattern of organization in your thesis:

in what ways...what kinds...what causes...what effects...what reasons...

what steps...what influences...what similarities...what differences...

Combining to Create Questions

- Now simply choose a topic word and match it with an interrogative word or phrase and make a list of questions about your topic. Obviously, also be sure to set your question in the context of the book you are writing about.

Now you try it.

Create your own question now by matching interrogative words and phrases with some ideas from the book. Write these down now.

Interrogative Words and Phrases	Ideas about the book
interrogative words when where why how could should interrogative phrases in what ways what kinds what causes what effects what reasons what steps what influences what similarities what differences	

Combining to Create Questions

- What kind
- What kind of
- How does
- How does
- In what ways
- In what ways
- What effects
- When
- Why
- Where
- What happens
- With whom
- What are similarities between
- What are differences between
- What led to

Ok, I have some questions prepared. Now, how do I construct a thesis statement?

By simply changing the questions into statements you can invent possible thesis statements for an essay. However, you have to be sure that your thesis has two very important components:

- A thesis statement must **make an assertion**.
- A thesis statement must **imply a pattern of organization**.

Repeat the process.

This questioning and statement-forming process can be repeated for different topics that you have brainstormed. Or, if you are sure of your topic, work with more of the questions and statements. Students have found this simple process easy and useful if they take the time to experiment with more than one topic and with more questions.

Take your time.

Don't just go through the process to arrive at one statement. Work through until you find several thesis statements and write the essay that you think allows you the opportunity to make the strongest case. The act of brainstorming and thinking of questions will help you come up with more ideas to write about as you refine your thinking about this book.

As with all writing, be patient, take time and care, and try to enjoy it!