

Craft Lesson - Developing A Working Thesis

Standards: 11.13.2, 5 – Writing Expository Texts

Objectives: Students will understand the elements of a good thesis and complete three or four possible thesis ideas for their own papers. They will be able to generate thesis ideas that connect specific characters with key ideas or motifs. Students will practice recognizing and developing focused clear thesis statements with the understanding that these are the foundation to a strong essay. At the end of the lesson, there will be several possible theses for students to use.

A good thesis statement is essential for writing a good essay because:

- It provides a simple and concise *embedded question or clear idea* in *one sentence* that will then be answered or addressed concisely with proof throughout the essay.
- It is *arguable*
- It forces the writer to think *before* writing the essay exactly what the essay will include and seek to prove.
- It allows the writing of topic sentences that fully respond to and explain the thesis.

The parts of a good (at least for this type of essay) thesis statement include (in one or two sentences):

- The author's name
- The title of the work in italics or underlined
- A simple, yet meaningful, statement about the connection between a major character and one aspect of the American Experience as evidenced by the play. You must be able to have a good answer to the question about the thesis, "So What?"

Examples of thesis statements and why they are good or bad.

- **Bad:** In Lorraine Hansberry's play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, Beneatha wants to be a doctor, but her brother wants her to be a nurse. (This is a fact easily found in the play and doesn't clearly connect Beneatha with any of the big ideas)
- **Good:** In Lorraine Hansberry's play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, Beneatha is the perfect example of a character who struggles against racism and sexism as she attempts to fulfill her ambitions. (This is a well-written thesis statement because it connects Beneatha with idea of race and social justice, one of the parts of the American Experience.)
- **Bad:** In Lorraine Hansberry's play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, Walter is obsessed with money. (This is broad, general, and overly obvious; it does not lead to a bigger idea or an answer of the "so what" question.)
- **Good:** In Lorraine Hansberry's play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, Walter's obsession with money often causes him to act unkindly to those he loves. (This gives you a chance to show numerous relationships while addressing the impact of money on morality, one of the aspects of the American Experience.)

Write on the handout three or four thesis statements that address a connection between a character and an aspect of the American Experience in *A Raisin in the Sun*, using the above elements of a good thesis statement.

Peer edit: For each thesis statement, the following questions should be addressed to:

- Does the thesis statement include the necessary three elements?
- Does the thesis statement suggest a theory about a connection between a character and some aspect of the American Experience?
- How could you improve the thesis statement?
- So what? Why is the thesis important?
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Choose your two or three "best" thesis statements, copy them so they are clearly legible, and post them for others to see and share.

Name: _____

Thesis Feedback Handout

Each thesis should:

- Include the necessary three elements
- Suggest a theory about a connection between a character and some aspect of the American Experience

Peers:

- How could this writer improve the thesis statement?
- Does it address the “So What” question? Why is the thesis important?

Thesis _____

Response _____

Thesis _____

Response _____

