

Constructing Thematic Thesis Statements

Complete the following sentence using the instructions below:

**[Title] is a novel/short story/poem/play/essay about _____;
it shows that _____.**

1. Write a single word or a short phrase indicating a thematic issue or topic (an abstract idea or concept) in the first blank. In the second blank, explain the message or observation the work offers about human nature, the life experience, or the world where we live.
2. Your completion of the sentence should demonstrate insight into at least one of the issues in the literary work. You should ask yourself: "What is the work *really* about?"
3. Do not complete the sentence with plot summary. Telling what happens in the story is *not* analysis.

Ex 1: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a book about slavery; it reveals the horrors of man's inhumane treatment of his fellow man.

Ex 2: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a book about standing up for what is right; it shows doing what is right is better than following tradition or conforming to the views of others.

Ex 3: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a book about America before the Civil War; it illustrates the hypocrisy of a Christian society that chose to uphold the institution of slavery.

The length of this sentence will vary; what is more important is that it reveal insightful thinking and close reading!

Abstract Ideas and Concepts to Consider discussing (these are frequently explored in literature):

Alienation	Falsity/Pretense	Music/Dance
Ambition	Family/Parenthood	Mysterious/Stranger
Appearance vs. Reality	Free will/Will power	Persistence/Perseverance
Custom/tradition	Games/Contests/Sports	Patriotism
Betrayal	Greed	Poverty
Bureaucracy	Guilt	Prejudice
Chance/Fate/Luck	Heaven/Paradise/Utopia	Prophecy
Children/Child-rearing	Home	Reason
Courage/Cowardice	Initiation	Repentance
Cruelty/Violence	Illusion	Resistance/Rebellion
Defeat/Failure	Innocence	Revenge/Retribution
Despair/Discontent/Disillusionment	Instinct	Ritual/Ceremony
Domination/Suppression	Journey	Scapegoat/Victim
Dreams/Fantasies	Law/Justice	Social Status
Duty	Loneliness	Supernatural/Time/Eternity
Education/Knowledge	Loyalty	War
Escape	Materialism	Women/Feminism
Exile	Memory	Secrecy
Faith/Loss of faith	Mobs/Mob mentality	The "Other"/Outsiders