

Is it a thesis statement or not? Consider these possible thesis statements that might be used by students in high school:

- Hip hop is the best thing that has happened to music in 20 years.
- Italy is a country in Europe.
- Using the Big6 causes students to become better users of information.

Okay, “Using the Big6” probably isn’t a thesis statement likely to be written by many students at the high school level, but using the Big6 can help students become better thesis writers. The thesis statement

a thesis statement. Writing a good thesis statement is difficult and needs to be taught. Second, teachers should assign projects that have students easily write a thesis statement. In teaching students to write good thesis statements, it really helps to engage student interest by involving them in the topic selection and then asking them to formulate a thesis question. The best thesis questions cause students to think critically, make comparisons of information from various sources, analyze the information, and finally present the material in their own views and words.

better overall project.

Here is a simple lesson that can be used to help students understand how to write a thesis statement.

Task Definition Lesson: Writing a Thesis Statement

1. Show list of four different thesis statements or questions and have students score them on a 4-point scale.
2. In pairs, have students write their own thesis statement, based on a future topic or assignment.
3. Students write thesis statements on large pieces of paper that can be displayed around the room. Thesis statements are numbered (no names on the large pieces of paper).
4. Students then give each thesis statement a score.
5. Lead the students in creating a rubric-rating matrix to show which thesis statements received which scores.
6. Discuss with the class why the thesis statements with scores of 3 or 4 fit the definition of a thesis.

Online Resources for Developing Thesis Statements or Questions

Valenza, Joyce. “What Is a Thesis?” <<http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/thesis.html#Is%20It%20a%20Thesis>>. n.d.

Internet Innovations Incorporated. “Asking the Essential Question.” <www.biopoint.com/ibr/askquestion.html>. 1999.

Purdue University. Online Writing Lab (OWL™). <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/topic.html>>. 1995–2004. ■

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“Another way to know if a thesis statement is well written is to ask the questions, “So What?” and “Who Cares?””

is the most important part of any history or English assignment, whether a short essay or a long-term assignment such as “History Day” or the “Senior Project.” All teachers would agree—having students know how to write a good thesis statement is critical to success on assignments. A good thesis statement sets the framework for the project, essay, or report. However, teaching this important Task Definition skill can be challenging.

Task Definition has two sub-stages: Define the problem; Identify the information needed. Writing the thesis statement fits as part of “Define the problem.”



By Rob Darrow

How can teachers help students write good thesis statements? First, they should not assume students know how to write

One of the best guidelines for writing thesis statements comes from Joyce Valenza, Librarian at Springfield Township in Pennsylvania. Valenza offers two “equations” for a thesis:

Thesis = Specific topic + Attitude/Angle/Argument

Thesis = What you plan to argue + How you plan to argue it

Valenza’s Web site <<http://mciu.org/spjvweb/thesis.html#Is%20It%20a%20Thesis>> is one of the best guides in having students write thesis statements, especially her “thesis generator.”

Another way to know if a thesis statement is well written is to ask the questions, “So What?” and “Who Cares?” If one can answer these questions as a result of the thesis statement, then generally it is a good thesis statement. Choosing a topic of interest and then generating a good thesis statement will help students develop better “task definition” strategies and, ultimately, complete a

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