

# THESIS/CENTRAL IDEA STATEMENT

*Reports* summarize a historical event, person, or era. On the other hand, *analytical papers* make an argument; they work to convince the reader to support a particular point of view. A thesis statement is the central idea: the guiding force and the purpose of your paper. A good thesis has an element of controversy to it and can be proven using appropriate evidence. For example, if your topic is “The Persecution of Mormons in Nauvoo, IL,” it is not enough to just tell about the event. You must try to prove something about it, such as; “The primary reason for the persecution of the Mormons in Nauvoo is that the neighboring residents felt economically threatened by the activities of the church’s members.” However, another student could choose to take an opposing point of view and also potentially write a quality paper arguing: “The troubled relationship between the Mormons in Nauvoo and their neighbors was a result of their unique family values.” Creating an effective thesis is essential to a good paper. The answer to any of the following brainstorming questions could become an effective thesis:

1. What significance did \_\_\_\_\_ play?
2. Why did \_\_\_\_\_ make the decisions he/she did?
3. What was the role of \_\_\_\_\_ in history?
4. What were the most important factors causing \_\_\_\_\_ or the effects of \_\_\_\_\_?
5. What were the results of \_\_\_\_\_ ‘s actions or decisions?
6. What qualities did \_\_\_\_\_ possess that made him/her successful?
7. How effective was \_\_\_\_\_ ‘s policy, strategy, or plan?
8. What problems did \_\_\_\_\_ encounter in achieving his/her goals?
9. How did \_\_\_\_\_ change over time and what caused the change?
10. What were the conditions (in a certain place or at a certain time) that helped bring about \_\_\_\_\_ ‘s success, failure, etc.?
11. What was the short term or long term effect of \_\_\_\_\_ ?
12. What is the difference between \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_?

Thesis statements are fluid and often change during the course of research. However, a finalized thesis statement must be established before writing your paper. A carefully developed thesis statement, properly supported by relevant evidence, is vital to a strong paper.