

What makes a strong thesis statement for the Exploratory Essay?

Thesis checklist:

1. Is it *relevant* to our topic (i.e., it is related to language and literacy)?
2. Is it *arguable* (i.e., it presents a particular side that could be debated)?
3. Is it *driven by* our shared readings (i.e., it is inspired by our course texts)?
4. Is it *qualified* (i.e., it is not too big, too broad, or overstated)?
5. Is it *complicated* (i.e., it is not obvious, simplistic, polarized, or overly assertive)?
6. Is it *evolving* (i.e., it is not repetitive or predictable; your synthesis “evolves” it)?
7. Is it *audience appropriate* (i.e., it accounts for readers’ values and knowledge)?

Formats to try:

- Pose a question: Question *why* something is. Question *how* something is.
- While it appears as if X is about Y, it’s actually about Z.
- Although X is important, Y and Z help illustrate that...
- Insert qualifiers (hedging words), such as

Strategy 1 to try:

- Synthesize together two specific ideas from two sources. Then, use one of the sentence templates listed in the table below to make clear the result of putting the two ideas together. What follows could be the start of a thesis!

Signaling your interpretations/observations:	Signaling your main ideas/claim(s):
This means that...	My point here is that...
In other words...	What I am claiming is...
What’s important to notice here is...	The thesis I hope to communicate is...
Perhaps this means that...	My thesis has evolved from...
This finding might indicate...	Based on my analysis of X, I now posit that...
My analysis points to...	So this helps me to conclude that...
It is possible that this trend signals that...	This is, in fact, my principal argument:
The most significant idea here is that...	Finally, it should be understood/argued that...
In summary, it is important to note that...	Therefore, it can be assumed/concluded that...

Strategy 2 to try:

- Replace “absolutes” with “qualifiers” to signal you acknowledge room for error, exceptions to the rule, and nuance (but don’t over-qualify your thesis either).

Absolutes	Qualifiers
will	may, might, could
forms of “be” (am, is, are, was, were)	may be, could be, might have been, may have been, appears, seems, suggests, indicates
all/every	many, most, some, numerous, countless, a majority
none/no	few, not many, a small number, hardly any, a minority
always	often, frequently, commonly, for a long time, usually, sometimes, repeatedly
never	rarely, infrequently, sporadically, seldom
certainly	probably, possibly
impossible	unlikely, improbable, doubtful

Others: basically, essentially, generally, kind of, mostly, pretty, rather, slightly, somewhat, sort of, various, virtually