# 4.3 Identifying the overarching thesis

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 17 marks**

**KEY WORDS** overarching thesis • supporting claim • infer • implied • rational • vindication

## Objective

Build the skills to find the **overarching thesis** of a longer text, and to tell it apart from the claims that support it.

**You must be able to:**

- tell the overarching thesis from supporting claims
- find a thesis that must be inferred
- explain how supporting claims serve the thesis

## 1 Key knowledge and worked examples

### ■ Thesis and supporting claims

| level | example: Wollstonecraft, 1792 |
|---|---|
| **overarching thesis** | women should be educated as rational beings, equal to men |
| supporting claim | women seem weak because they are taught only to please |
| supporting claim | education would make women better citizens, wives and mothers |
| evidence | examples of girls' training in manners and dress |

### ■ Finding the thesis

1. Ask: what single idea do *all* the parts support?
2. Look at the start and the end.
3. Check: can it be argued with? A fact is not a thesis.
4. If it is never stated, **infer** it and state it in your own words.



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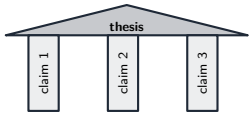
■ **Worked example**

**Task:** a writer describes three poorly lit streets, gives accident figures for each, then praises one town's new lights. State the thesis.

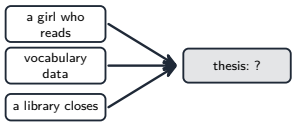
**Answer:** The thesis is implied: "Our town should install better street lighting." The streets are evidence of the problem, and the other town is evidence that the solution works.

## 2 Practice

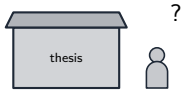
**2.1** Explain the difference between an overarching thesis and a supporting claim. [2]




**2.2** A text describes a girl who reads every night, gives data about readers' vocabulary, and ends with a story of a library closing. Infer its thesis and explain your reasoning. [3]




**2.3** Explain why a writer might leave a thesis unstated. [3]






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## 3 Exam-style questions

**3.1** Read the passage.

> "Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience... I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves."

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792

(a) Identify what Wollstonecraft says will end "blind obedience". [1]

1 Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience... I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves.

Wollstonecraft, 1792

(b) Explain the difference she draws between power "over men" and "over themselves". [1]

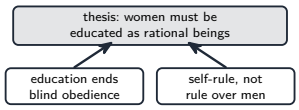
(c) Explain why this distinction helps her overarching thesis. [1]



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**3.2** Use the Wollstonecraft passage in Question 3.1. Many readers in 1792 believed that women should be trained mainly to please men.

Write a thesis that states Wollstonecraft's overarching argument, and one paragraph that explains how her choices in the passage support it. [6]






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