

2 Thesis statements that do work – Part 2

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English

Write it 3 times (English)

thesis

defensible

Recall

- You have written an introduction that announced what you would discuss.
- You know a title is not an argument.
- You have read an essay and been unsure what it was arguing.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 A thesis is a claim

A **thesis** states the position the essay defends. Announcing a topic - “this essay examines the causes” - names a subject and takes no position.

Worked example. “This essay examines the causes of the flood” announces; “the flood was caused by decisions taken years earlier” argues.

■ 2 Defensibility

A thesis must be **defensible** - arguable with evidence and disputable by a reasonable reader. A thesis nobody could dispute needs no essay.

Worked example. “Pollution is bad” is not defensible because there is no opposing position to defend against.

■ 3 Scope

A thesis must be narrow enough to defend in the space available. Narrowing means attaching the claim to something specific, not adding qualifications until it says nothing.

Worked example. “Cities should reduce car use” is too wide; “this city’s bus subsidy did more than its cycle lanes” can be defended.

Watch out: Adding “in some ways” and “to an extent” does not narrow a thesis; it weakens it. Narrowing means being more specific about what is claimed, not less committed to it.

Practice

2.1 State the difference between announcing a topic and stating a thesis. [2]

2.2 Define a defensible thesis. [2]

2.3 Explain why “pollution is bad” is not defensible. [2]

2.4 State what narrowing a thesis means. [2]

2.5 Explain why adding “to an extent” does not narrow a thesis. [2]

2.6 Rewrite “this essay examines the causes of the flood” as a thesis. [1]
