

## **Writing a Thesis Statement**

Questions to ask yourself when writing an analytical thesis statement:

- What did I analyze?
- What did I discover in my analysis?
- How can I categorize my discoveries?
- In what order should I present my discoveries?

### **Expository (Explanatory) Thesis Statements**

In an expository paper, you are explaining something to your audience. An expository thesis statement will tell your audience:

- what you are going to explain to them
- the categories you are using to organize your explanation
- the order in which you will be presenting your categories

Example: The lifestyles of barn owls include hunting for insects and animals, building nests, and raising their young.

A reader who encountered that thesis would expect the paper to explain how barn owls hunt for insects, build nests, and raise young.

Questions to ask yourself when writing an expository thesis statement:

- What am I trying to explain?
- How can I categorize my explanation into different parts?
- In what order should I present the different parts of my explanation?

### **Argumentative Thesis Statements**

In an argumentative paper, you are making a claim about a topic and justifying this claim with reasons and evidence. This claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. However, this claim must be a statement that people could possibly disagree with, because the goal of your paper is to convince your audience that your claim is true based on your presentation of your reasons and evidence. An argumentative thesis statement will tell your audience:

- your claim or assertion
- the reasons/evidence that support this claim
- the order in which you will be presenting your reasons and evidence

Example: Barn owls' nests should not be eliminated from barns because barn owls help farmers by eliminating insect and rodent pests.

A reader who encountered this thesis would expect to be presented with an argument and evidence that farmers should not get rid of barn owls when they find them nesting in their barns.

Questions to ask yourself when writing an argumentative thesis statement:

- What is my claim or assertion?
- What are the reasons I have to support my claim or assertion?
- In what order should I present my reasons?

This handout written by Erin Karper, August 2002