

Suggested Exercises to Accompany “Thesis Statements”

1. First, make overhead transparencies of both pages of “Thesis Statements.” Go over the first page with the entire class, focusing on the three components of an effective thesis statement and the example of a successful thesis statement on that page. (5 min)

2. Next, you may use the second page of this document as a class exercise in a variety of ways:

A. Covering the problem descriptions (“plot summary thesis,” “proving the universal,” etc) with a sheet of paper, ask the students what is wrong with each example thesis statement on the page; discuss how one might improve each example. (5-10 min)

B. Covering the “Why is it successful?” section, have students examine the “successful thesis” on the bottom of the page and 1. explain why it is successful and 2. identify its what, how, and why components. You may choose to do this in small groups, or as a whole group if you are short on time. (in small groups, 10 minutes; as a whole group, 5 minutes)

3. Finally, you may want to have students bring in their own drafted thesis statements for an upcoming assignment to use in conjunction with this module:

A. Put the students in pairs and have them exchange thesis statements. Ask each student to label the what, how, and why components of the thesis statement.

B. When they are ready, have students point out these components to each other, assessing the effectiveness of each thesis statement in doing so, and suggesting possible improvements.

(10-15 minutes for steps 1 and 2)

*Remember that critiquing a thesis statement early in the writing process is one of the most effective ways to help a student develop a well-written and well-argued essay. So incorporating students’ own thesis statements into this kind of exercise (part 3) can help them bridge the gap between learning about thesis statements and writing them well.