

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do

Thesis Development

This handout, using the often-assigned *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, provides three models for developing a thesis. We're hopeful these examples will help you figure out a way to draft a thesis for your next paper.

Process for drafting a thesis #1

Reading Assignment: *Hamlet*

1. What is it I want to argue/prove in my paper?
2. What are main points? Then research.
3. In what order do I want to discuss these points?
4. How can I make each one parallel?

Hamlet Essay

- Use evidence from the text to affirm or disapprove the argument that the Oedipus complex is found in the story of *Hamlet*.
 - 12 pt font
 - MLA Format
 - AT LEAST one outside source that PROVES your argument

Steps:

1. Choose a side
2. Find evidence in the texts (at least 3 quotes) in support of your argument
3. Use outside sources to further prove your argument
4. Organize points
5. Write a tentative sentence which includes:
 - Your side
 - Your main points that will be discussed and supported by evidence
 - Title and/or author of text
6. Revise/edit/make parallel [equilibrium]

Model Thesis

The Oedipus complex is found in William Shakespeare's Hamlet, in that the tragic hero has an attraction to his mother, distaste for his lover, and a mad disposition.

Process for drafting a thesis #2

- Read the assignment
- Line up my sources
- Review the questions of the paper
- Create my own questions to answer-what do I need to prepare?
- Pick three or more specific points/sub-points to prove in my paper
- Put it all together- go back and fix thesis while writing paper
- Look at the assignment to find clues to help develop my thesis!

Hamlet

Questions:

1. Analyze the relationship between Hamlet and another character.
2. Compare and contrast the ways that the play and the movie portrays the relationship.
3. In terms of accuracy, how does the director translate this relationship from the play to the film?

You can compare Hamlet to:

1. Claudius
2. Gertrude
3. Ophelia
4. Laertes
5. Polonius

The Ethan Hawk Hamlet (2000)

Model Thesis

1. Whereas Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship is more unstable in the play because of their relationships with their fathers, both are more independent in the film, which allows them more freedom to pursue their relationship.

Their relationship with their fathers

- Dependent in play, not as much in movie
- Movie brings them together more because of it

Process of drafting a thesis #3

- Read assignment
- Research potential topics
- Use research to answer question in assignment
- Write a statement that sums up what you will discuss in the paper
- One step in the writing process, make adjustments to thesis when appropriate

1.) Evaluate the theme of Fate in *Hamlet* using 3 or more literary elements. Use in-text citations from the play and the textbook.

Support your argument. 3-5 pages.

Examples of Literary Elements:

- Metaphor
- Symbolism
- Irony
- Foreshadowing
- Imagery

2. Questions to help you facilitate an understanding of the prompt:

- Have you read the text?
- What did you understand about the play?
- What did you not understand about the play?
- What examples of fate do you find in *Hamlet*?
- Do you know what literary elements are?
- What literary elements demonstrate fate?
- Can you give specific examples?
- What is a thesis?

3. Model Thesis

In *Hamlet*, fate is demonstrated through the use of irony, foreshadowing, and the invocation of symbols.