

Thesis Statements

Rules for Thesis Statements:

- Use the thesis as the **center of the essay**, so that every statement in the essay revolves around this one idea which you are trying to prove. The statement must, therefore, be one which encompasses several aspects of the novel.
- **Answer the prompt** completely in the thesis. If you do not, your essay will not be focused on the prompt. After writing your thesis statement, read the prompt again and ask yourself if your thesis will answer every part of the prompt.
- Make sure that the statement you make is **debatable**. You are not doing a report; you are thinking critically about events that happen in the novel and you must prove a theory through careful explanation and proof from the novel itself.
- In spite of the fact that the thesis is a theory of yours, **do not use the words “I believe” or “I feel”** in the thesis (or in the essay). It weakens your argument.
- Be very **clear and complete**. Do not make vague statements such as, “Ralph, Piggy, Simon, and Jack represent the world.” Explain exactly what you mean, even if it takes two or three sentences.
- If your thesis has several parts, state it in the **same order you plan to present it in the essay**. In order to prove a thesis statement, you will break it into small parts in the body of the essay and prove one part at a time (much like in a Geometry proof). Each paragraph in the body will serve to prove your thesis.
- **Refer directly to the novel** you will be discussing, not to the theme in general. Include characters, the author’s name, or the events of the novel in your statement. E.g. “In the novel *Native Son*, by Richard Wright, the author attempts to point out society’s shortcomings through the murders committed by Bigger Thomas.”

Sample Thesis Statements:

In spite of his habits of telling “stretchers” and ditching school, Huckleberry Finn is a character of high moral integrity. In fact, Huck’s adventures portray the search of a boy for true morals amid a corrupt and hateful adult world.

Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* twists More’s “Utopia” into a world which has replaced humanity with mechanization. Although the events and people of this place seem fantastical, Huxley’s world could be possible if we choose to sacrifice people for perfection.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, by Hawthorne, the Reverend Dimmesdale suffers far more than Hester Prynne because of his inability to be courageous and confess his hypocritical sins.

Although we may feel pity for the situation of the Natives in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, California is more like South Africa than most of us would care to admit.

The *Red Badge of Courage* demonstrates that courage cannot be defined simply as “the taking of action without fear.” Rather, fear is an essential element of courage, for only by facing one’s fears, in spite of the horrifying consequences that may come, can one truly be deemed courageous.