**Analyzing Thesis Statements**

LEARN THE SKILL

A thesis statement is a sentence that explains the main idea of an essay.

It is the most important sentence of any composition. A thesis should state the author’s position on an issue and explain what topics the essay will cover. When you write a thesis statement consider the elements below:

*Your thesis should answer the question directly.*

**Question:** Discuss the results of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Unacceptable Thesis the Lewis and Clark expedition was searching for a route to the Pacific Ocean, but did not find it.

Acceptable Thesis the Lewis and Clark expedition resulted in the expansion of America’s knowledge about the West.

*Your thesis should contain a strong argument that you can prove.*

**Question:** How did Thomas Jefferson’s presidency affect the United States?

Unacceptable Thesis Thomas Jefferson, America’s third president, affected the

United States in many ways.

Acceptable Thesis Thomas Jefferson’s presidency benefited the country because he introduced new policies and expanded the nation.

*Your thesis should be specific and to the point.*

**Question:** What led to the War of 1812?

Unacceptable Thesis the War of 1812 between Great Britain and the United States, was an important event in our history.

Acceptable Thesis British violations of U.S. neutrality and their influence among American Indians led to the War of 1812.

PRACTICE THE SKILL

DIRECTIONS: Examine the following sets of thesis statements. Using the information about thesis statements above, circle the best thesis from each set below.

 1. Question Explain why some Americans opposed war with Great Britain in 1812.

 a. There were many reasons why Americans opposed war with Britain.

 b. Some Americans opposed war with Britain for economic and political reasons.

 c. The New England Federalists were the greatest opponents to war with Britain.

2. Question Explain the changes in government introduced by Thomas Jefferson.

 A. Thomas Jefferson introduced Republican ideas to government, but did not make drastic changes.

 B. The most important change introduced by Thomas Jefferson was his decision to expand the territory of the United States.

 C. My paper will tell you about the ways in which Thomas Jefferson changed government policies in the United States.

 3. Question

 What was the impact of the Marbury v. Madison decision?

 a. In Marbury v. Madison the Supreme Court strengthened the power of the judicial branch.

 b. The ruling in Marbury v. Madison had a huge impact on the United States.

 c. The Marbury v. Madison decision was written by Chief Justice John Marshall.

APPLY THE SKILL

DIRECTIONS each essay question below is followed by two poor thesis statements. In the space provided on a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement of your own.

Be sure that the thesis you develop answers the question directly, takes a stand, and is specific and to the point.

 4. Question Describe the effects of the War of 1812 on the United States.

 a. The United States defeated Great Britain in the War of 1812.

 b. The War of 1812 was very important.

 5. Question Explain the reasons behind the failure of U.S. trade embargoes in the early 1800s.

 A. the United States used trade embargoes to punish France and Britain.

 B. U.S. trade embargoes failed to end violations of U.S. neutrality.

 6. Question Explain the significance of the Louisiana Purchase.

 a. The United States benefited greatly from the Louisiana Purchase.

 b. The Louisiana Purchase nearly doubled the size of the United States.

7. Question what role did political parties play in the election of 1800?

 a. The Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans were very active in the election of 1800.

 b. I will describe the role of political parties in the election of 1800.