

Handout: Comparing Thesis Statements (JUNIOR)

Sharing thesis statements with students—both good and bad—can help them understand the characteristics they should strive for in their own work. Share the following thesis statements with your students. Ask them to brainstorm possible problems or positive characteristics of each.

A strong thesis gives **specific details** and **goes beyond facts** to discuss a topic's **significance** and show the topic's **theme connection**. Keep in mind that even the “Good” statements are still a work in progress!

	Needs improvement	Better	Good
Silent Spring	<p>Rachel Carson wrote <i>Silent Spring</i> in 1962 and forever changed the environmental movement in the United States.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more specific. Saying that the book “forever changed” history is too broad. • Needs a theme connection. 	<p>Rachel Carson became a leader for the environmental movement in the early 1960s when she published <i>Silent Spring</i>. People were outraged about the harm being done to the environment and the book sold more than a million copies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public response and sales figures are short term reactions. Dig deeper for long-term significance. 	<p>Rachel Carson became a leader for the environmental movement in the early 1960s when she published her controversial book, <i>Silent Spring</i>, in response to the use of dangerous pesticides. Carson’s book made debates over environmental regulations more urgent and led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency.</p>
Mahatma Gandhi	<p>Gandhi led a march to the Arabian Sea to collect salt in April 1930. Why do you think he would do that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs a theme connection. • Doesn't mention significance in history. • Don't ask questions. Provide your own answers based on your research. 	<p>Satyagraha was Gandhi’s belief in peaceful, nonviolent resistance. Martin Luther King, Jr. used this during the Civil Rights movement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs more details connecting what Gandhi did and how it came to be used by other activists. • Needs a theme connection. 	<p>Mahatma Gandhi led thousands of Indians on a march to the Arabian Sea in April 1930 to protest the British Salt Tax. As many Indians debated the possibility of independence, the Salt March helped prove that nonviolent resistance could be a successful diplomatic strategy for future protests.</p>
Delano Grape Strike	<p>In 1965, farm workers in California went on strike for better working conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs specifics. What led to the strike? What did they do on strike? Were they successful? • What is the significance in history? • Needs a theme connection. 	<p>When California farm owners ignored workers’ rights laws and refused to negotiate, immigrant farm workers went on strike and used a successful grape boycott against the owners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs more information about workers’ actions. • Needs more details about the significance in history. 	<p>In 1965, California grape farm workers led by Filipino and Chicano labor organizations began a mass strike. By calling for a national boycott of California grapes, they brought millions of Americans to their side of the debate and forced farm owners to negotiate, leading to union rights and increased pay for thousands of farm workers.</p>
Mayo Clinic	<p>The Mayo Clinic is one of the most prominent and well-respected hospitals of today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs more specifics. What people or groups were involved? • Needs more significance. What makes the Mayo Clinic so important? • Needs a theme connection. 	<p>Founded by Mother Alfred Moes and Doctors William and Charles Mayo as St. Mary's Hospital in 1899, the Mayo Clinic’s unique success has made it one of the world’s most respected hospitals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs more significance. What makes the Mayo Clinic so important? • Needs a theme connection. 	<p>Since its founding by Mother Alfred Moes and Doctors William and Charles Mayo in 1899, the Mayo Clinic has led the debate over patient care. Using teams of specialists instead of single doctors and minimizing tests, Mayo’s innovative but controversial approach has made it one of the world’s premier hospitals.</p>

Handout: Comparing Thesis Statements (SENIOR)

Sharing thesis statements with students—both good and bad—can help them understand the characteristics they should strive for in their own work. Share the following thesis statements with your students. Ask them to brainstorm possible problems or positive characteristics of each.

A strong thesis gives **specific details** and **goes beyond facts** to discuss a topic's **significance** and show the topic's **theme connection**. Keep in mind that even the “Good” statements are still a work in progress!

	Needs improvement	Better	Good
Hormel Strike	<p>The Hormel Strike of 1985 is one of the most important strikes in Minnesota history.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs more specifics. What people or groups were involved? Needs more significance. Why is this strike so important? Needs a theme connection. 	<p>In 1985, employees of the Hormel Factory in Austin, Minnesota went on strike to demand better working conditions and pay. Many lost their jobs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go beyond just facts. Needs more significance. What did this strike lead to? 	<p>Led by the United Food and Commercial Workers' Local P-9, employees of the Hormel Factory in Austin, Minnesota went on strike for thirteen months in 1985, demanding better working conditions and wages. While the strike failed, it shifted internal debates in the union movement and led to parent unions showing greater support to locals when negotiating contracts.</p>
Apollo-Soyuz	<p>The Apollo-Soyuz Test Project was the first international space mission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go beyond just facts. Needs more significance. How did the mission change history? Needs a theme connection 	<p>The Apollo-Soyuz Test Project was a successful diplomatic effort between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs more significance. How did the mission change history? Theme connection could be stronger. What is the debate? 	<p>During tense Cold War debates over communist and capitalist systems, U.S. and Soviet spacecraft docked in the first international space mission in 1975. The Apollo-Soyuz Test Project was a major diplomatic success, leading to greater cooperation in space exploration between the two superpowers.</p>
ACT UP	<p>In the 1980s, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) pressured the government for more effective treatment of AIDS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go beyond just facts. Needs more specifics. How did they pressure officials? Needs significance. What changed as a result? 	<p>In the 1980s, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) combined confrontational protests with specific policy proposals to successfully pressure public health authorities to improve treatments for AIDS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go beyond just facts. Needs more significance. How did treatment of patients change? 	<p>Founded in 1987, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) used confrontational protests to show the need for a better response to the AIDS epidemic and force officials to negotiate. Through this "inside-outside" strategy, ACT UP accelerated scientific debate on the safety of AIDS medication and the adoption of patient advocacy policies still in place today.</p>
Highlander Folk School	<p>Highlander Folk School helped train many activists during the Civil Rights Movement, leading to important victories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go beyond just facts. Needs more specifics. What about Highlander made their students effective activists? Needs a theme connection. 	<p>In the 1950s, Highlander Folk School trained student activists in strategies to learn about and unite the communities they organized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go beyond just facts. Needs more significance. What was the long-term impact? 	<p>One of the South's few integrated schools in the 1950s, Highlander Folk School trained activists in diplomatic strategies to bring understanding and unity to the communities in which they organized. Activists who studied at Highlander led sit-ins, boycotts, and other campaigns that successfully pressured officials to end segregation laws across the United States.</p>