

Sample Thesis Statements

Below are some sample thesis statements. The theses statements all originate from professionals, and are excellent examples. The first two are from your text book author, James McPherson; and the last two are from other writers.

As you draft your working thesis, continue to read. Review the Guideline in D2L titled "Developing Your Working Thesis". Also open up the sample paper and review the thesis there. Here are the professional samples:

"A self taught strategist with no military experience, Lincoln saw the path to victory more clearly than his generals."

"Who freed the slaves? The traditional answer is...Lincoln freed the slaves. ...by voting with their feet they (the slaves) forced the issue on the Lincoln administration."

"While the South made technological advances in rail and water-borne transportation in the Civil War; the North made far greater advances in innovative and technologically advanced applications during the war. These advances made the difference in the war."

"Why did the Confederates lose at Gettysburg? Ignoring direct orders from General Robert E. Lee, General Richard S. Ewell, old bald head, failed to follow up on the routed federal troops at the end of day one in Gettysburg and cost the Confederacy the battle."

These thesis statements are part of an introductory paragraph where the author sets the background and raises the main question. This introduction also notes opposition arguments, and suggests ways the author intends to lay out his argument. The statements above represent the main thesis statement extracted from this introductory paragraph for the sake of simplicity. The thesis statements also have strong commonalities:

1. Each is based on a question. Note two even make the question a part of the statement for dramatic emphasis. This is optional.
2. Each takes a specific stand, or gives a specific answer.
3. Each is debatable, with at least some evidence on the other side.
4. Each is meaningful and any answer will help us better understand history.
5. Each statement is clear, concise, and comes directly to the point.

In your working thesis you need only concentrate on the draft statement—about 1-3 sentences. In your later work you will revise the statement, add background and question, add how you deal with counter arguments, and add signposts about how you will lay out your arguments.