

Thesis Statement Cheat Sheet

Common Thesis Patterns

1. Cause/effect/ultimate result – start with a DUH statement: Macbeth is an evil character.

Driven by ambition, Macbeth commits a series of evil actions, which ultimately leads to his demise and almost to the destruction of Scotland.

_____ ultimately lead to
Character motivation, Character actions

Result in story of character's action

2. Compare/Contrast – the concession goes first

Although “Apparently with no surprise” and “Design” deal with the nature of death and God’s power, the tone and themes vary in that the Dickenson poem accepts the authority of God; whereas, the Frost poem questions and challenges it.

Although _____ they
Titles or characters Similarities/differences—one with the least (concession first)
ultimately have (more/less) in common _____.
Explanation of similarities/differences—with one more

3. Author’s use of rhetorical devices to create an effect:

Mailer uses animalistic diction to reduce Paret to a creature that is less than human.

Didion uses varied syntax, precise imagery and parallel structure to create a contrasting effect between what she knows anecdotally to be true and the scientific explanation of the Santa Ana Winds.

_____ uses _____, _____, and _____ to _____.
Author Rhet. device Rhet. device Rhet. device effect on story

4. Showing character progression:

Because Scout experiences the negative effects of discrimination first-hand the summer her father defends Tom Robinson, she changes from a naïve child to a thoughtful young woman.

Because _____, _____ moves from _____ to _____.
character trait/occurrence position before position after fall from grace