

The Peace of Wild Things Formative Assessment #3

Directions: Using what you have learned about strong thesis statements, answer the following questions.

Some tips on writing a strong thesis statement

- A strong thesis offers a **clear, direct response to the writing prompt**. Be certain that you understand what the prompt is asking you to do.
- A strong thesis is **valuable**. It offers readers the writer's most valuable insight. This insight often results from close reading and critical thinking.
- A strong thesis is **precise**. That is, it uses words that say specifically what you mean. Avoid imprecise words that leave your readers guessing. For example, consider the imprecise words below:
 - interesting* (what does this really mean? Interesting in a positive way? Negative?)
 - good* (how good is *good*?)
 - meaningful* (how? In what way/s?)
- A strong thesis is **limited** and **unified**. That is, it limits the writers to what they can reasonably write about in a single essay, and it offers one specific key idea.
- A strong thesis leaves its readers certain that they understand the writer's intent in this essay.

1. A writer is drafting her thesis statement from the following prompt:

Write an essay in which you reflect upon the lessons that some individuals learn from the natural world.

Which of the following is the *strongest* thesis statement?

- A. From the beginning of time, the natural world has been important to humans.
- B. Some writers find value in and inspiration from their experiences with nature.
- C. Finding refuge in nature, some writers share the lessons in beauty and wisdom they have learned there.
- D. There are writers who learn about themselves through nature, and there are some who celebrate the beauty of the natural world.

2. A writer is drafting his thesis statement from the following prompt:

The natural world may offer strength and peace to those who seek it. Using at least two texts we have read, write an essay in which you reflect upon this idea.

Which of the following is the *strongest* thesis statement?

- A. The works of both Henry David Thoreau, Annie Dillard, and Don Welch reveal the strength and peace they draw from nature.

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- B. Ernest Hemingway and Robert Frost write about the power and importance of nature.
 - C. Many poets, fiction and nonfiction writers find strength and peace in nature.
 - D. Poets like Don Welch and Mary Oliver find so much beauty in the natural world.
3. Choose your answer from either #1 or #2 above and justify your choice. Why is this thesis statement the strongest?

Finding refuge in nature, some writers share the lessons in beauty and wisdom they have learned there.

This is the strongest thesis because it offers the most direct response to the prompt. It clearly identifies two different types of lessons (beauty and wisdom) that some writers share. The language is precise, the insight is valuable, and the statement is limited. Although it identifies 2 different types of lessons (beauty and wisdom) it is unified because the prompt directs writers to reflect upon the lessons some may learn from nature. As such, what we can learn from nature is the unifying factor.

The works of both Henry David Thoreau, Annie Dillard, and Don Welch reveal the strength and peace they draw from nature.

This is the strongest thesis because it offers the most direct response to the prompt, which asks writers to identify at least two writers and address the idea that some draw strength and peace from the natural world. The language is precise, the insight reveals consideration of which writers best reveal this, and the statement is limited and unified by this insight.

4. Consider those thesis statements in #1 that you did **NOT** choose. Explain why you didn't choose each of these three statements.

I didn't choose **A** because: *The language is imprecise (what does "important" really mean?), and the thesis doesn't provide a direct response to the prompt which asks students to address the claim that some individuals learn from the natural world.*

I didn't choose **B** because: *Like A, the writer here doesn't directly address the prompt. There is no identification of what lessons some individuals may learn from nature. This is a broad statement that indicates the writer will explore any and all valuable and inspiring experiences with nature. It is not limited.*

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I didn't choose **D** because: *This thesis statement is not unified; that is, it offers two "directions" for readers: 1) writers who learn about themselves through nature and 2) writers who celebrate the beauty of nature. The second "direction", in particular, does not directly address the prompt.*