

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 writing prompt is asking you to do.
- A strong thesis is **valuable**. It offers readers the writer's most valuable thinking. This thinking often results from close reading and careful 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

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

Write an essay in which you reflect upon the lessons that you might learn from nature.

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

- A. From the beginning of time, the nature has been important to us
- B. Some people are inspired by nature.
- C. Nature can teach us valuable lessons about life.**
- D. You can learn about yourself through nature, and you can enjoy the beauty of nature.

C is the strongest thesis statement because it provides a direct response to the prompt and clearly identifies what type of lesson we can learn from nature (lessons about life). C passes all the thesis statement tests: precise, specific, unified, and valuable. A is a weak thesis because it doesn't directly address the prompt. It does identify that the paragraph will be about nature, but it doesn't identify what lessons we can learn from it. B is a weak thesis because, like A, it identifies nature but fails to identify what we can learn from it. Both A and B fail the tests of specificity and value. D is a good example of a thesis statement that is not unified; that is, it identifies two ideas (you can learn about yourself through nature) and (you can enjoy the beauty of nature). The first idea is a direct response to the prompt, but the second is not. As such, it's not as strong as C.

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

The natural world may be one of the best teachers. Using at least two texts we have read, write an essay in which you develop this idea.

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

- A. In the poems “Caterpillar” and “November,” the poets teach us that we can find beauty in the natural world.
- B. Most of Gary Paulsen’s books are about nature.
- C. You can learn about nature from many books, television shows, and movies.
- D. Poets like Don Welch and Robert Frost find so much joy in the natural world.

A is the strongest thesis statement. The writer addresses the prompt directly by identifying 2 texts AND by identifying what these texts teach us about the natural world. It is precise, specific, unified, and valuable. B is a weak thesis because it isn’t specific. What lessons do Paulsen’s books teach us about nature? Which books? Like B, C is not specific, failing to identify what we can learn about nature. In addition, it is extremely general; it not only fails to identify 2 texts to examine, but it opens the paragraph up to an examination of 3 genres—obviously too much for a single paragraph or essay! D is stronger than B and C, for the writer suggests what we can learn from nature (there is so much joy there) but doesn’t clearly state that this as these poets’ lesson. In contrast to A, the writer doesn’t identify or limit herself to 2 texts.

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 **B** because: it doesn’t really address the writing prompt. It doesn’t tell us what we are supposed to learn from nature.

I didn’t choose **C** because: it isn’t limited to 2 texts and it doesn’t say what kinds of things you can learn from nature.

I didn’t choose **D** because: it could have been more precise. It doesn’t come right out and tell us what these poets learned from the natural world. I would have to guess that the writer wants me to know that they learned about joy from the natural world.