

## ✿ Thesis Statements: What, Why, and How?

The objective of a thesis is to stake out an argument, and the objective of the paper is to make your side of the argument convincing. A good test for an arguable thesis is to try to argue against it. If you can make a plausible case *against* your thesis, your thesis is an argument.

**Topic:** Discuss the significance of one of the main characters in *The Simpsons*.

**Attempted Thesis 1:** Marge Simpson is important to the plot of *The Simpsons*.

This statement is vague and obvious. It's readily apparent to anyone who has watched *The Simpsons* that each character adds a vital element of chemistry to the show, so no one would argue with this statement of fact.

**Attempted Thesis 2:** Marge Simpson is important to *The Simpsons* because she fulfills a significant family role as a mother and housewife.

This statement is more precise than No.1 in that it tells *how* Marge is important to the Simpson family, but it merely restates a basic premise of the show – what Marge's role is – and therefore *is not an argument*. Additionally, it adds little or no information that the informed reader of your paper did not know from just watching a few episodes.

**Attempted Thesis 3:** Marge Simpson is important to *The Simpsons* because she fulfills a significant family role as a teacher and caregiver to her husband and children.

This statement is again more precise in that it qualifies *how* Marge fulfills her role as mother: it says that she provides care and instruction to other family members. But it still does not go beyond the realm of fact.

**Attempted Thesis 4:** While Marge Simpson may be a model caregiver for her family, she is a different sort of model for her audience.

This statement introduces a new idea that begins to treat *The Simpsons* as a "text." And it is the first statement that is arguable to some extent. This position is controversial; that is, you can make a case against it. Notice that the words "important" and "significant" have been dropped. Such words are hard to define specifically and make for flimsy arguments because they are not precise. Nonetheless, the statement is once again a bit vague: exactly what sort of model is Marge? How does she model for her audience?

**Attempted Thesis 5 (best):** Despite her role as a seemingly submissive housewife and mother, Marge Simpson functions for the audience of *The Simpsons* as a subversive feminist force against "middle class" values.

This argument is better than No. 4 because it is more precise about *how* Marge affects her audience and what that effect is. Indeed, you may not agree with the statement, which is a good sign for its argumentative nature (some people, for instance, see the show as demeaning to women). Terms like "middle class values" and "feminist" will need to be defined precisely in the introduction or shortly after the thesis is stated. Additionally, this statement will require you to provide specific interpretations of *The Simpsons* to prove your case.