

Lesson Skill: Creating thesis statements

Strand Writing

SOL 6.7

7.7

8.7

Materials

- Projection screen
- Available technology
- Develop The Web: Ideas to Sort handout
- T Chart Graphic organizer
- Chart paper/markers/tape (or available technology)
- Highlighters

Lesson

1. Create a T chart on the board with the key words "thesis" and "topic sentence". Ask students to volunteer descriptions of each of the terms. When discussing the term "thesis", ask students if they recognize the term "hypothesis". Ask students where they have heard the term hypothesis and ask them to define it. Point out that thesis is from the Greek meaning something set down. Explain that as writers, their thesis statement will be the idea they are trying to prove.
2. After students have brainstormed what each term means, ask students to write the following definitions on their T charts:
 - Thesis statement: has two basic components—a topic and a comment.
For example, you want to write an essay saying that reading is a very important part of your life. Your thesis statement cannot be simply that you enjoy reading. On the contrary, it must also make a comment that is going to be proven by the details in the essay. For this topic, a possible, good thesis statement is:

Reading is an enjoyable part of my life that has provided me with the opportunity to develop my vocabulary, improve my knowledge of the world, and hone my reasoning skills.

- Topic: Reading is an enjoyable part of my life...
 - Comment: ...that has provided the opportunity to develop my vocabulary, improve my knowledge of the world, and hone my reasoning skills.
- Topic sentence: Introduces the main idea of the paragraph
 - Provides a transition between paragraphs
 - Gets the reader's attention through carefully selected vocabulary
 - States the focus of the paragraph

3. Arrange students into groups of three. Present each student with Develop The Web (template attached). Explain that students must look at each of the ideas presented on the sheet to determine the thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting details. Students use the ideas to create an organized web. Not all information will go into the completed web. Groups must determine which ideas do not support the thesis statement.
4. Allow groups to create their webs on chart paper. Groups publish their completed webs. View published webs to identify similarities and differences. The class collaborates with the teacher to determine the most accurate responses.
5. Using available technology, project the following prompt: "Describe what makes a school year great?" (Teachers may choose another prompt). Give students 3-5 minutes to brainstorm a list individually on their own paper. Ask students to volunteer the information from their lists. Record the information so the whole class can see the developing list.
6. Next, ask students if they noticed any broad categories emerging from the information in the list. Students propose categories into which the information can be sorted. Record each of these categories and designate a color for each.
7. Model the prewriting strategy of sorting information from the list into a web. In the center of the web place the topic "What makes a school year great." The categories that emerge from the class brainstorm will be placed around the topic.
8. Refer students back to the class list. Use the different colored highlighters to highlight information to go in each category. Remind students that they do not need to use everything on the list. Next show students how to sort the information from the list as details branching off from the categories of the web.
9. Model creating a thesis statement on top of the web. The topic is: "Our school is great" and the comment: "because....." The comment is derived from the broad categories the information was sorted into.
10. Collaborate with the students to compose a topic sentence for each category.
11. After modeling how to generate and organize a list of ideas to create the web, arrange students into pairs or small groups. Give students the following prompt: "Explain why our town/city/county is a great place to live." Tell students to brainstorm a list and sort the list into categories by creating a web. They collaborate to develop a thesis statement and topic sentences based on the information recorded in the web.
 - For example: Town is a great place to live because of the shopping, free Friday concerts, biking trails, and great schools.
12. Require pairs to trade their completed webs. To evaluate the thesis statement, ask students to use one color to highlight the topic and a different color to highlight the comment. Then in each category, require students to highlight the information that pertains to the topic with one color, and the details that support/prove the topic with another color.
13. Exit slip: Each student writes a thesis statement about what they learned in the lesson about thesis statements and topic sentences. Remind students that the statement includes a topic and a comment.

Strategies for Differentiation

- When creating the T-chart, provide the students with an example of a thesis statement and a topic sentence.
- Introduce the color code or marking system with the sit and sort activity and continue throughout each step of the lesson.
- When providing students with the list of Ideas to Sort, consider reducing the amount of ideas provided or increasing the font size.
- Students work with available technology to create webs.

Develop the Web: Ideas to Sort

Directions: Create an organized web using the ideas presented below. Determine the thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting details. Not all information will go into the completed web. Determine which ideas do not support the thesis statement.

- The first reason for eating breakfast before going to school is for good health.
- Gastritis and other health problems come from not eating breakfast.
- Another reason for eating breakfast is having the energy to do well in classes.
- Mom makes the best breakfast in the world.
- It's not healthy to have an empty stomach all day long.
- The body and the brain are not going to function as well as they could because they have no energy and no strength.
- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, especially for students, and skipping it has consequences for health, school work, and energy.
- The last reason to have breakfast every day is to avoid diseases by eating some breakfast in the morning.
- Dinners should be a well-balanced meal.
- It is difficult to succeed while trying to learn on an empty stomach.
- Diseases will have a stronger effect if you don't eat breakfast every day.
- Exercising is a great way to develop the discipline to focus in school.
- A lot of people think that they should not eat because they are going to feel tired, but that's not true.
- Raisin Bran is the best tasting cereal.