## **Analytical Thesis Statements**

Adapted from Writing Analytically by Rosenwasser and Stephen

To analyze something is to ask what that something means.

An analytical essay answers how something does what it does or why it is as it is.

Therefore, a thesis statement in an analysis paper should be answering a HOW or WHY question.

A *strong thesis* makes a claim about the subject that needs proving. It provides the writer (and the reader) with a clearly focused lens through which to view the subject. A *weak thesis* either makes no claim or is an assertion that does not need proving. It is a fuzzy lens that will not help the writer (or the reader) be guided to a better understanding of the subject.

Most weak thesis statements suffer because they are overly broad (or not specific enough)

Their grammar is often an indication of why they don't help the writer to bring their subject into clear focus. The following example from Rosenwasser and Stephens' *Writing Analytically* show us how this works:

		middle class	for eve	ryone.	
current administration		the tax burden on	the <b>and he</b> a	and health-care programs	
The <b>tax policies</b> of the		threaten to reduce		by sacrificing education	
Specific Noun +		Active Verb	+	Assertive Predicate	
The economic situation	is		bad.		
Broad Noun	+	Weak Verb	+Vague, Evaluat	<u>tive Adjective</u>	

The best way to remedy the problem of overgeneralization is to move toward *specificity* in word choice, in sentence structure, and in idea.

<sup>&</sup>quot;By" or "because" are words that show you are answering a how or why question.

## **Analytical Thesis Statement for the Text-in Context Essay**

Text-in-Context, your thesis needs to interweave references to the text and its context to be considered clear and specific. This is the case with Siwei Shen's essay from *A Student's Guide*:

Specific reference to a context

Specific reference to a pattern in the text

Contextual explanation of its meaning

From the Marxist view, the **process of the metamorphosis** symbolizes the class struggles of the proletariat to break out of a life of being exploited. Such representation is displayed [in *The Metamorphosis*] in the *similarity* between the causes, nature, and ending of Gregor's transformation and those of proletarian struggles.

Comparison between text and context

In this case the HOW is still defined by a pattern in the text, but the WHY is defined by a context that is implicit in the novel, but not obvious without research.

Developed by Amanda Brobbel University of Arizona Writing Program – 2002