

Write Effective Thesis Statements for Essays

Most students need guidance when they begin writing a literary essay. Teachers can help students create strong thesis statements for novels, such as Lowry's *The Giver*.

Picture 1 of Write Effective Thesis Statements for Essays

How to Help Students Improve Writing Essays About Novels

Motivating middle and high school students to write thoughtful essays is every English teacher's perpetual challenge. Teachers often assign an essay assignment once essay writers have finished reading a novel, such as *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. Here are some ways teachers can support budding writers as they embark on writing their next thesis statement.

Suggest Several Essay Topics

Teachers should look at essay topics as a way to **enhance student motivation** and heighten student interest in developing their essay thesis statement. While some teachers may prefer students to tackle one aspect of the novel, such as the resolution of the plot, others may simply want students to develop their writing and analysis skills. If the latter is the case, here are some suggested essay topics for *The Giver* that will intrigue students.

1. Predict the events that occur once Jonas and Gabriel slide down the mountain toward Elsewhere. Be sure to explain why these events are likely to occur.
2. Analyze how the author's tone contributes to the overall theme of the novel. Be sure to use specific details from the text to support the essay.
3. Explain with which character students most identify. What might a student have done differently if he were that character? How might these altered actions impact the story?
4. Persuade readers whether Jonas's community is a desirable place to live. Cite specific examples to support one position.
5. What might be the author's purpose in writing this novel about a utopian society? Provide details from the novel that support this conclusion.

Create a Variety of Student Writing Opportunities

For students to have ideas percolating throughout their reading of *The Giver*, they should be given a variety of opportunities to write along the way. One way to accomplish this is for students to maintain a **response journal** while they are reading the novel. Student responses can be open-ended; that is, students can choose the topics about which they want to write. After all, the goal of response journals is for students to express their thoughts and develop writing fluency.

Sometimes, however, students need a jumping-off point from which to write. To assist student writers, teachers can provide them with sentence starters to help jog their thoughts about the novel. Here are a few sentence starters that will help encourage student writing:

1. I am curious about...
2. One thing I don't understand is...
3. If I could change this chapter, I would...

Provide a Model Thesis Statement

While a student may have ideas about the direction he would like his essay to take, most students have difficulty formulating a succinct thesis statement that embodies the argument they plan to set forth. To help students better understand the process of formulating thesis statements, teachers can model writing one on an overhead projector or Powerpoint presentation and share their thought process with the class.

1. Once Jonas and Gabriel enter Elsewhere, they are treated with curiosity, caution, and care.
2. The author uses specific word choices to develop a cautionary tone about utopia.
3. Jonas is the easiest character for students to identify with because he is caring, thoughtful, and spontaneous.
4. Jonas's community is a desirable place to live because it is clean, safe, and orderly.
5. The author's purpose in writing this novel about a utopian society is to prove that a true utopia can never really exist.

Once students see that a thesis statement should directly answer the question or scenario presented in the essay prompt, they are more likely to tackle it with confidence. Of course, simply viewing sample thesis statements will not provide sufficient preparation on **how to write thesis statements**. Students must also be exposed to a variety of topics so that one is more likely to pique their interest. Further, students must develop fluency and analysis skills in their writing by simply practicing to write. Once these goals are accomplished, students will be prepared to write an informed and insightful thesis statement for their literary essay.

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