



## Crafting a Thesis Statement

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An effective thesis makes an original claim about an important problem and hones that claim by gesturing toward the essay's supporting proofs. It thus has two parts:

- **The Claim.** This is the part that puts forth what *you* think—as opposed to what others might imagine—about your topic. The claim points *back* to the introduction, because it tries to answer the question the introduction posed.
- **The Support.** This is the part where you indicate why your reader should believe your claim. The support points *forward* to the body of the essay, using key terms from body paragraphs to show *how* you'll prove your claim.

The following thesis features a challenging claim and specific support. It comes from an essay about a colonial-era story of captivity among Native Americans.

***Jemison's story challenged European stereotypes about "savages" by placing her violent kidnapping in context of the Native Americans' values of family loyalty and warrior honor.***

This thesis puts forth a **strong claim**: despite what you might think, this story of kidnapping and captivity presented a sympathetic view of Native American culture. It also provides **specific support**, signaling that the essay will use ideas of "family loyalty" and "warrior honor" to place the violent parts of the story in a more favorable light.

### What To Avoid

**All support/no claim:** A thesis without a claim leaves one asking, "and your point is?"

*This paper will analyze Mary Jemison's description of family life, morality, and violence in Seneca culture.*

**All claim/no support:** A bold claim with no support leaves one asking, "Why!? How!?"

*Though her story includes frightening details of her violent abduction, I still think Jemison challenged European stereotypes about "savages."*

**Listing.** Strive to connect your supporting points instead of listing them randomly. What led to what? What explains what?

Listed: *The slave owners justified their inhuman cruelty using ideas of religious discipline, of paternalism, and of the supposed "crimes" of the Africans.*

Connected: *The slave owners justified this inhuman cruelty by using **the slaves' "crimes"** to imply they were **like children** who needed correction with **Christian discipline.***