

When setting up an analytical essay, it's important to direct the focus of one's writing into an argument. Writing that an article or a novel or a poem is "about" something leads the paper towards summary instead of analysis. Students should instead develop thesis statements that direct their writing (and the essay) towards a critical reading.

The basic literary analysis thesis structure:

**Author's + Title "argues" or "claims" that:**

Examples:

Langston Hughes' poem "Theme for English B" argues that a young, black student writing an essay that shows his true self for an older, white professor is not as "simple" as the professor suggests.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* claims that cold ambition can turn an honorable warrior like Macbeth into an evil, paranoid murderer, a theme repeatedly stressed in the play through the "fair is foul and foul is fair" lines.

Other Power Verbs for Literary Analysis:

acknowledges	describes	narrates
adds	determines	notes
admonishes	dismisses	observes
affirms	disparages	opens
alludes to...	displays	persuades
analyzes	downplays	points out/ points to
argues	draws a parallel between...	portrays
articulates	draws attention to the...	praises
asserts	emphasizes	proves
attests	ends	qualifies
begins	entails	questions
belittles	establishes	quotes
berates	evokes	represents
calls attention to...	exaggerates	reveals
casts	excoriates	ridicules
challenges	exemplifies	sheds light
cites	explains	shows
clarifies	explores	signifies
classifies	expounds	substantiates
closes	exposes	sugarcoats
compares	finishes	suggests
concedes	flatters	summarizes
concludes	foreshadows	supports
confirms	highlights	transitions to...
connects	hints	trivializes
connotes	illustrates	turns to
contrasts	implies	typifies
conveys	indicates	underscores
criticizes	induces	vilifies
debates	intimates	
defines	juxtaposes	
demonizes	lionizes	
demonstrates	lists	
denigrates	masks	
denotes	minimizes	
depicts	mocks	