

## ENGL 100-700 Zoom Meeting 1b

### Writing Seminar 1: Crafting an Effective Thesis Statement



#### Zoom Meeting Information

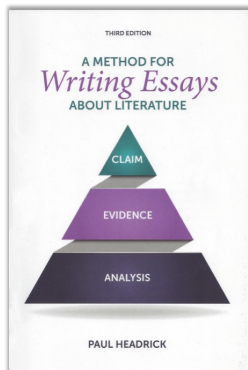
- Zoom Meetings are about 60 minutes long and are recorded.
- Recordings and PowerPoints are posted on onQ (under "Content" > "Zoom Meetings").
- Participate in the discussion by using the "Chat" window or by raising your hand under "React."
- Attendance will be taken at a random point in the meeting; your camera may be on or off.

## ENGL 100-700 Zoom Meetings

Please see the Course Syllabus for specific dates and times

	a. Informational	b. Writing Seminars	c. Live Chats
Unit 1	Intro to ENGL 100 1a. Academic Integrity	1b. Writing Seminar 1 (Crafting an Effective Thesis Statement)	1c. Live Chat 1 (Short Fiction)
Unit 2	2a. Midcourse Exam Info Session	2b. Writing Seminar 2 (Structuring an Analytical Essay)	2c. Live Chat 2 (Drama)
Unit 3	3a. TA Check-In	3b. Writing Seminar 3 (Claim, Evidence, and Analysis)	3c. Live Chat 3 (Literary Non-Fiction)
Unit 4	4a. Final Exam Info Session	4b. Writing Seminar 4 (Some Notes on Grammar and Style)	4c. Live Chat 4 (Poetry)

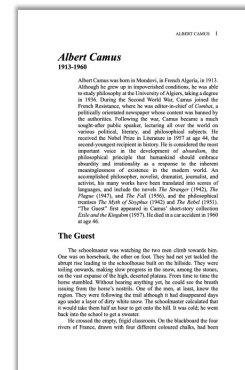
## Headrick, *A Method for Writing Essays About Literature*



#### Writing Seminar 1

- **Chapter 1: Audience and the Literary Analysis Essay**
  - The Importance of Audience
  - The Audience for the Literary Analysis Essay
- **Chapter 3: Theme**
  - Defining Theme
  - Debating Theme
  - Identifying Themes
  - A Checklist for Effective Statements of Theme
- **Appendix 2: Sample Essays**
  - A Literary Analysis Essay on a Short Story

## Camus, "The Guest" (1957)



#### onQ > "Content" > "Course Readings"

#### Synopsis

Balducci (an officer) and a prisoner ascend a rocky slope in Algeria to meet Daru (a teacher). Balducci tells Daru that he is ordered by the government to take the prisoner to the police. Daru asks about the prisoner's crime, and Balducci says that it was a domestic matter, not political. As Balducci is leaving, Daru tells him that he will not take the prisoner to the police. Daru shelters the prisoner for the night. In the morning, Daru sets him free, telling him he can either turn himself in to the police or hide with the nomads. Later, Daru sees the prisoner heading east, most likely to turn himself in. When Daru looks at the blackboard in his classroom, he sees the message, "You have turned in our brother. You will pay."

### Essay Structure

introductory paragraph	attention-getting remark
	contextualizing information
	thesis statement
analytical paragraphs	claim
	evidence
	analysis
concluding paragraph	thesis statement
	contextualizing information
	attention-getting remark

- most analytical essays contain three components, each of which contains its own three components
- analytical essays are thus highly structured rhetorically
  - each component has a specific role to play
- be sure your analytical essays contain all of these components, in this order

### Thesis Statement

introductory paragraph	attention-getting remark
	contextualizing information
	thesis statement
analytical paragraphs	claim
	evidence
	analysis
concluding paragraph	thesis statement
	contextualizing information
	attention-getting remark

- a single sentence that clearly and concisely indicates the central argument of the essay
- not the same thing as a topic:
  - must be argumentative
  - must take a clear position on some significant issue
  - must answer the questions “Why?” and/or “How?”, and not just “What?”
- characterized by all four of “the Four S’s”: significant, single, specific, and supportable

### Thesis Statement

- can sometimes be two sentences in longer essays, but one sentence is sufficient for short essays
- provides an answer to a question, a solution to a problem, and/or a statement that takes a clear position on a debatable topic
- articulates the main argument of an essay, which the body of the essay will go on to dissect and defend in its sub-arguments

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a single sentence that clearly and concisely indicates the central argument of the essay</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not the same thing as a topic:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– must be argumentative</li> <li>– must take a clear position on some significant issue</li> <li>– must answer the questions “Why?” and/or “How?”, and not just “What?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characterized by all four of “the Four S’s”: significant, single, specific, and supportable</li> </ul>

### Thesis Statement

Topics	Thesis Statements
discursive or descriptive	argumentative or debatable
broad and general	narrow and concise
answer the question “What?”	answer the questions “Why?” and/or “How?”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a single sentence that clearly and concisely indicates the central argument of the essay</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not the same thing as a topic:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– must be argumentative</li> <li>– must take a clear position on some significant issue</li> <li>– must answer the questions “Why?” and/or “How?”, and not just “What?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characterized by all four of “the Four S’s”: significant, single, specific, and supportable</li> </ul>

### Thesis Statement

<b>significant</b>	<b>single</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a single sentence that clearly and concisely indicates the central argument of the essay</li> <li>not the same thing as a topic:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– must be argumentative</li> <li>– must take a clear position on some significant issue</li> <li>– must answer the questions “Why?” and/or “How?”, and not just “What?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>characterized by all four of “the Four S’s”: significant, single, specific, and supportable</li> </ul>
should deal with an important problem or issue in the literary text(s)	should consider one issue only, rather than attempt multiple issues	
<b>specific</b>	<b>supportable</b>	
should consider as narrow an issue as possible, not a generalized issue	should be defensible through evidence from the text(s)	

### Thesis Tests

#### The “So What?” Test

- If the thesis statement prompts the question, “So What?” from a theoretical reader, it is probably insufficiently argumentative.
- It may mean that the thesis statement has not taken an identifiable position on a salient or relevant issue in the literary text.
- Revise your thesis statement to make it more argumentative.

#### The Counterargument Test

- If there is no apparent valid counterargument to the thesis statement, it is probably insufficiently argumentative.
- It may mean that the thesis statement is too descriptive, discursive, or factual, rather than truly argumentative or debatable.
- Revise your thesis statement to make it more argumentative.



**Draft Thesis 1**

X How does Camus engage with the theme of freedom in “The Guest”?

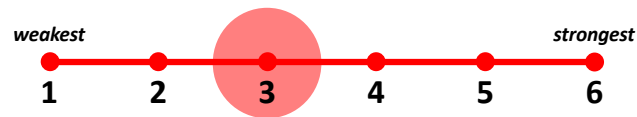
- Avoid phrasing a thesis statement as a question:** an effective thesis statement should provide a specific answer to a question, not pose a question
- Conclusion:** Draft Thesis 1 is phrased as a question and therefore does not provide a specific answer to a question



**Draft Thesis 2**

X This essay will examine how Camus engages with the theme of freedom in “The Guest.”

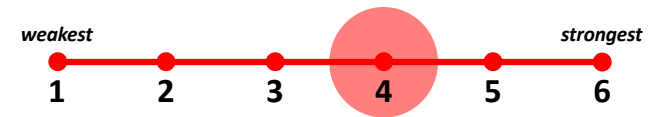
- Avoid “This essay will ...”:** constitutes *signposting*, telling the reader “out loud” what the essay will do at some unspecified future point
- Avoid words “why” and “how”:** thesis statements should answer these questions, not just indicate them as vague or undefined points of focus
- Conclusion:** Draft Thesis 2 is vague and undefined because it makes use of signposting and the word “how”



**Draft Thesis 3**

X Freedom is a significant theme in Camus's "The Guest."

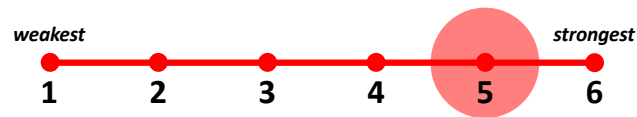
- **Apply the "So What?" Test:** this topic is significant to the story, but to what end? Why or how is it significant?
- **Apply the Counterargument Test:** to argue that this topic is not significant to the story is invalid, as it is patently obvious that it is significant
- **Conclusion:** Draft thesis 3 is vague and observational rather than concise and argumentative



**Draft Thesis 4**

X "The Guest" engages with the theme of the limitations of freedom.

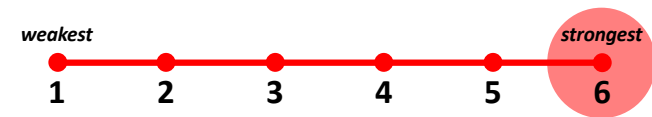
- **Apply the "So What?" Test:** the story does engage with this theme, but to what end? What, exactly, is the story saying about this theme?
- **Apply the Counterargument Test:** to suggest that the story does not engage with this theme is invalid because it is patently obvious that it does so
- **Conclusion:** Draft thesis 4 is insufficiently concise and argumentative



**Draft Thesis 5**

X "The Guest" provides an important commentary on the limitations of freedom and the importance of fostering human connections.

- **Apply the "So What?" Test:** the story is providing a commentary, but what is that commentary? Why is it important?
- **Apply the Counterargument Test:** to suggest that the story does not provide this important commentary is invalid because it turns on a value judgement
- **Conclusion:** Draft Thesis 5 is still vague and unclear because it does not adequately define "powerful statement"



**Draft Thesis 6**

✓ "The Guest" contends that although individuals might conceive of themselves as free, they are inescapably connected to the people around them, and must accept and foster these attachments.







- **Apply the "So What?" Test:** passes test because it articulates a clear theme phrased as a complete thought
- **Apply the Counterargument Test:** passes test because another critic could potentially advance a different, equally valid interpretation of the significance of this theme in the story
- **Conclusion:** Draft thesis 6 is a strong thesis because it is concise and argumentative

## For More Information

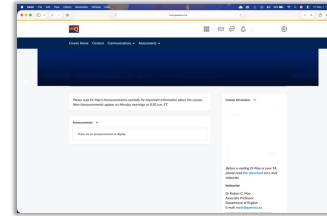
**The Purdue Online Writing Lab**  
<https://owl.purdue.edu/>

- **Tips and Examples for Writing Thesis Statements:** General Writing > The Writing Process > Creating a Thesis Statement
- **Developing Strong Thesis Statements:** General Writing > Academic Writing > Establishing Arguments
- **Developing a Thesis for a Literary Paper:** Subject-Specific Writing > Writing in Literature > Writing in Literature

**Dr May's Class Web Site**  
<https://www.queensu.ca/academia/drrgmay/docs/>

	<b>AI Drawbacks</b> Dr Robert G. May   Department of English
	<b>Avoiding Plagiarism</b> Dr Robert G. May   Department of English
	<b>Essay Writing Notes</b> Dr Robert G. May   Department of English
	<b>Formatting Titles</b> Dr Robert G. May   Department of English
	<b>Integrating Quotations</b> Dr Robert G. May   Department of English
	<b>Short vs Long Quotations</b> Dr Robert G. May   Department of English

## Quiz 1



<https://onq.queensu.ca>

- Test your knowledge of Writing Seminar 1 by writing Quiz 1.
- Access the Quiz on onQ (under “Assessments” > “Quizzes”).
- The Quiz consists of a series of multiple-choice questions.
- The suggested due date for this Quiz is soon, but you may complete it anytime until the last day of class (see onQ for specific dates).
- All Quizzes count towards your final grade in the course.

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