

WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

RESEARCH WORKSHOP #2

What's a thesis statement?

- Identifies the topic of the paper
- Answers a research question
- Sets up an argument
- A statement of opinion (NOT a statement of fact)
- Justifies further discussion
- Brings the reader in
- Lets the reader know what to expect
- The core of the paper

A thesis statement is

SPECIFIC

Good writing is

SPECIFIC

“Using the internet has a positive effect on people.”

Improve this thesis statement!

“Using the internet has a positive effect on people.”



“The internet improves lives by instantly connecting people across the world, creating new friendships, and serving as a forum for exchanging ideas.”

“Using the internet has a positive effect on people.”



“The internet improves lives by instantly connecting people across the world, creating new friendships, and serving as a forum for exchanging ideas.”

Try to imagine the research question that the writer is working with. What question does this thesis statement answer?

“This paper will look at the advantages
of school uniforms.”

“This paper will look at the advantages
of school uniforms.”



“School uniforms positively impact
students and their parents by lowering
clothing costs, reducing on-campus
violence and bullying, and creating a
unified school experience.”

“This paper will look at the advantages of school uniforms.”



“School uniforms positively impact students and their parents by lowering clothing costs, reducing on-campus violence and bullying, and creating a unified school experience.”

What evidence do you expect the writer to present in the essay? How will they prove their thesis?

Example thesis statement

The Egyptian collection, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is grand in size and beauty. I chose an Egyptian sculpture because I am immediately drawn to this wing. However, I specifically chose, *Statue of Haremhab as a Scribe*, because of the portrayal of power, both political and societal, through knowledge. This paper will employ close visual analysis of the Ancient Egyptian Statue, *Statue of Haremhab as a Scribe* (ca. 1328-1316 BCE), describing how the visual elements of the work relate to its function of displays of power.

Example thesis statement

Since antiquity, art has been used as a mode of spiritual expression and representation of what we cannot explain: what is greater than our human existence. From Greek and Roman art to modern-day sculpture, this attempt to explain what we do not implicitly understand continues to be one of the greatest motivations of artist's today and yesterday. The *Seated Four-Armed Vishnu* [8th–9th century CE] of the Pandya Dynasty is an iconic example of this attempt to represent the heavens on earth. In this paper, I will employ close visual analysis of this South Asian statue, describing how the visual elements of the work allow the viewer to transcend from reality to a spiritual plane. Furthermore, I will provide religious context to the work in order to understand the culture it exemplifies. Finally, I will explain how this work continues to pervade modern society with its celestial implications.

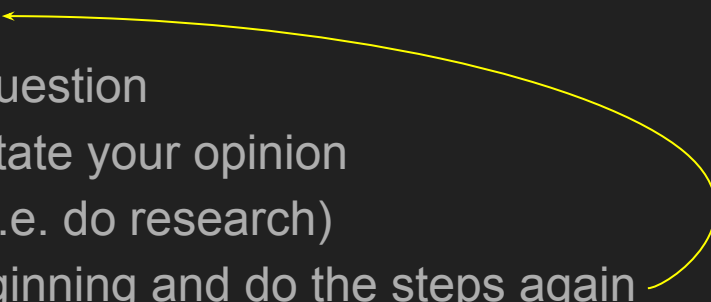
Example thesis statement

Of all the exhibits in the Met museum in New York City, the Asian Arts exhibit contains an appeal that I believe is unchallenged in its power to capture the heart of the onlooker. I believe this is because their work is so natural and realistic in its presentation. In particular, the work dating prior to 1300 is so devoutly conceptual that it almost takes on a spirit of its own. During this time period, Buddhism was widely accepted by many Japanese and one can see the impact that this religion has had on Japanese culture by performing a visual analysis of one of these works of art. Through performing a visual analysis, a better understanding of the purpose of a piece and its creator's intentions may be achieved. Additionally, a personal admiration for the artist and his/her work is likely to be gained. This paper will employ *close visual analysis* of the Heian Period joined-woodblock statue, *Wisdom King Fudo* (794-1185) AD, connecting the visual elements of the piece to the Japanese beliefs in Buddhism. Such a visual analysis should first highlight the physical elements of the piece.

How do I make a thesis statement?

1. Observe artworks
2. Pose a research question
3. Make a claim, or state your opinion
4. Collect evidence (i.e. do research)

How do I make a **better** thesis statement?

1. Observe artworks
 2. Pose a research question
 3. Make a claim, or state your opinion
 4. Collect evidence (i.e. do research)
 5. Go back to the beginning and do the steps again
- 

How do I support my thesis?

1. Make clear, precise, **specific** points
2. Each paragraph of the body starts with a topic sentence that makes a clear point.
3. The rest of the paragraph provides evidence to support that point.

Types of evidence

- **Visual analysis**
 - Look at the artwork
 - Write down your observations
 - Compose a description using key art historical terms
- **Primary sources**
 - Artist statements
 - Interviews, speeches, letters
 - Videos, voice recordings
- **Secondary sources**
 - Scholarly articles
 - Curator's texts

Where do I put my thesis statement?

The thesis statement is about **1-3 sentences**, sometimes a whole paragraph.

It appears **at the beginning of the paper**, usually at the end of the introduction.

The thesis statement **organizes** the paper. It tells the reader what to expect.

The thesis statement reappears at the **conclusion**, using different words.

Paper outline

Due Thursday,
December 2

I. Introduction

- A. The topic of the paper
- B. The research question you are trying to answer
- C. **The thesis statement**

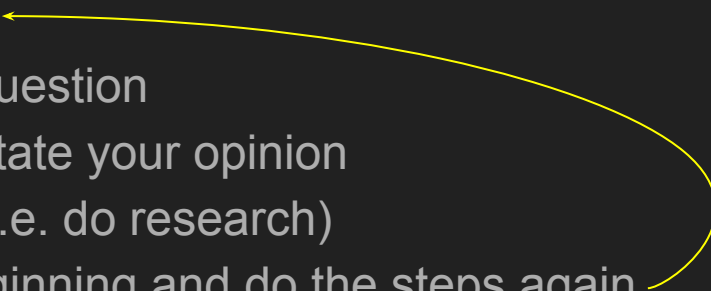
II. Body

- A. Topic sentence #1
 - 1. Evidence (artworks, primary/secondary sources)
- B. Topic sentence #2
 - 1. Evidence
- C. etc....

III. Conclusion

- A. Restate **the thesis**
- B. Propose a way forward

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- 



Kerry James Marshall, *De Style.*, 1993.
Acrylic and collage on canvas; 104 x 122 in. (264.2 x 309.9 cm).
Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Kerry James Marshall, *Untitled (Painter)*, 2009.

Acrylic on PVC; 44 5/8 x 43 1/8 x 3 7/8 in. (113.4 x 109.5 x 9.8 cm).

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of Katherine S. Schamberg by exchange, 2009.



Kerry James Marshall, *School of Beauty, School of Culture*, 2012.
Acrylic and glitter on unstretched canvas; 107 7/8 x 157 7/8 in. (274 x 401 cm).
Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art



Kerry James Marshall, *Untitled (policeman)*, 2015.
Acrylic on PVC panel with plexiglass frame, 60 × 60 in (152.4 × 152.4 cm).
Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Mimi Haas in honor of Marie-Josée Kravis.



Look at the
paintings and
come up with a
research question
to explore

Put it in the chat





Answer someone
else's research
question with a
claim or opinion
without using "I"

Put it in the chat





What point might
you make to
support your claim
or someone
else's?

Put it in the chat





Kerry James Marshall's work often explores themes of racial identity, community, and belonging. *Our Town* is part of his Garden Project series, in which low-income housing projects are ironically rendered as idyllic places. The carefully painted houses, manicured lawn, and bright sky coexist uneasily with graffiti scribbles and trees tied with yellow ribbons, suggesting war or tragedy.

Marshall contrasts the tidy scene, dominated by red, white, and blue, with deep black paint and minimal shading on the figures. Here, he emphasizes the blackness of his subjects in an art world that notably lacks images of African Americans. *Our Town* further evokes Thornton Wilder's 1938 play of the same title, posing the question: for whom does this American ideal really exist?

from Google Arts & Culture

Our Town, Kerry James Marshall, 1995

An interview with Kerry James Marshall: x +


apollo-magazine.com/kerry-james-marshall-interview/

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INTERVIEWS

'When you put black people in a picture, what should they be doing?' – an interview with Kerry James Marshall

Gabriel Coxhead 13 JULY 2019



School of Beauty, School of Culture (2012), Kerry James Marshall, Birmingham Museum of Art. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner; © Kerry James Marshall

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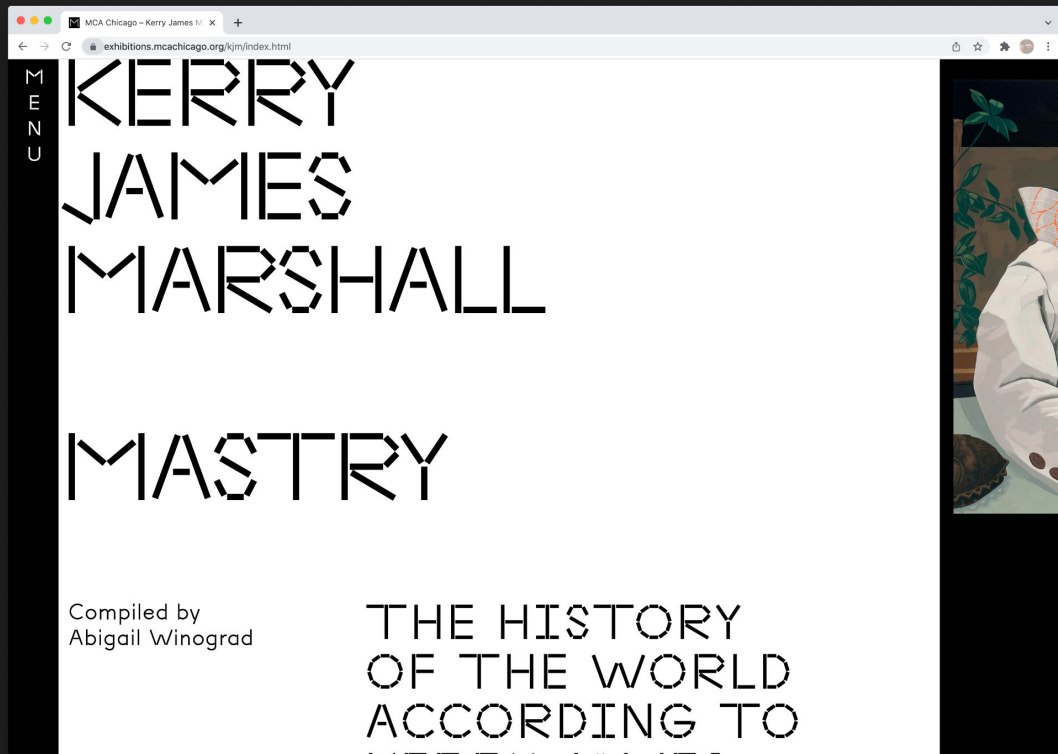
In the news



Outer space – the final frontier for the art market?

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<https://www.apollo-magazine.com/kerry-james-marshall-interview/>



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