

# THESIS STATEMENT AND TOPIC SENTENCES

In an expository essay, the **THESIS STATEMENT** tells your reader the subject of your essay, your argument/attitude toward the subject, and what the paper will focus on in order to prove that your argument/attitude is a valid/correct claim. Depending on the essay prompt, you may have to decide on your own what the subject, argument/attitude, and focus of the essay will be. In some prompts one or more of those elements are provided for you. Let's take a look at the following prompt:

1. Some literary critics argue that Romeo's fatal flaw (mistake that leads to death) is his rash, impulsive, and hasty behavior. Find instances in which Romeo acts before he thinks, and explain how those actions contribute to the tragedy (the deaths at the end of the play).

In the prompt above, the subject and the argument/attitude are provided for you. The subject is **Romeo's fatal flaw** and the argument/attitude is that his fatal flaw is **his rash, impulsive, and hasty behavior**. What this prompt does not provide is the focus of the essay. So your job is to decide what the areas of focus will be for this essay.

Based on our reading of Romeo and Juliet, we know that Romeo acts impulsively when he feels love. We know he also acts impulsively when he feels hatred. Therefore, the focus of this essay can be when **Romeo makes hasty decisions because he is in love and** when **Romeo makes hasty decisions because he feels hate**.

Finally, here are the three elements of the essay. The subject and argument/attitude were provided in the prompt and the focus one and focus two we had to think of on our own.

**Subject:** Romeo's fatal flaw

**Attitude/Argument:** Romeo's impulsive behavior leads to his death.

**Focus One:** The hasty decisions that Romeo makes out of love

**Focus Two:** The hasty decisions that Romeo makes out of hate

## Writing your thesis statement:

Now that you have all three elements for a thesis statement, it is time to combine them into one clear sentence. This can be challenging so take your time. Additionally, do not worry if it is not perfect after your first attempt.

## Example Thesis Statement:

In William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, he portrays **Romeo's fatal flaw** to be **his impulsive behavior** that leads to his **hasty decisions based on his emotions of love and hate**.

In the example above, you can see that the sentence includes all three elements of the thesis statement. Now that you have a thesis, you can easily write your topic sentences.

**TOPIC SENTENCES** are similar in purpose to thesis statements. Whereas a thesis statement tells your reader what your entire essay will be about, the topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph will be about. Therefore, your topic sentence needs to be the first sentence of each Body Paragraph. Each topic sentence should contain the same **subject** and **argument/attitude** as the essay's thesis statement, but only one area of **focus** presented in the thesis statement. Take a look at the following examples of topic sentences. They are based on the thesis statement used above.

## Topic Sentence for BP1:

In William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, he portrays **Romeo's fatal flaw** to be **his impulsive behavior** that leads to his **hasty decisions based on his emotions of love**.

## Topic Sentence for BP2:

In William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, he portrays **Romeo's fatal flaw** to be **his impulsive behavior** that leads to his **hasty decisions based on his emotions of hate**.