

Using Critical Thinking to Develop a Thesis Statement

Observation and abstraction are central to thesis statement development

- Observation: a systematic and highly focused method of examining texts that requires sustained concentration, note-taking, and perception so that you can see more in what you are observing than the casual observer would see
 - Observation requires practice and the ability to suspend judgment in the interest of further exploration
 - Slow down and resist the urge to form general, first-response judgments
 - Try to find unusual nuances and unexpected similarities or differences
- Abstraction: a type of logical deduction used to find a connection between two or more things or ideas
 - Abstraction relies on logic and creativity, and it is especially useful for finding an insightful idea that can become the backbone of the thesis statement
 - You should use abstraction to interpret your observations (reasoning from the particular to the general in order to give significance and meaning to the observations)

Thinking critically to develop a thesis statement

- The goal of observation and abstraction is to develop an insightful idea that can serve as the kernel of the thesis statement
 - The insightful idea should be cast as a provocative perspective or point of view; it is something that is intriguing that deserves further exploration. It's a particular kind of idea that lends itself to interesting—and controversial—discussion

Five steps for using observation and abstraction to draft a thesis statement

1. Create an observation list: list as many observations on the subject as possible, describing details without attempting to understand or analyze them.
2. Freewrite: speculate on the observations by exploring each detail in writing without filtering your thoughts.
3. Use summary to identify the main point in each paragraph: distill into 1-2 sentences the main idea in each freewriting paragraph. Try to find an idea or perspective that many of your observations share.
4. Use abstraction to find an insightful idea: Try to find any insights or connections between the main point sentences. Consider multiple perspectives.
5. Draft a working thesis statement (revise as necessary): isolate 1-2 intriguing ideas and try to draw a conclusion between them. Articulate this connection in the form of a complete sentence.