

What Is a Thesis or Proposition?

Thesis	Proposition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposition maintained or defended in argument • An unproved statement assumed as a premise • An idea or statement that tries to explain why something happens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subject or statement to be discussed or debated • An informative statement whose truth or falsity can be evaluated by means of logic • A statement in which you express a judgment or opinion

As you can see, when referring to statements, ideas, or arguments, these two words are similar in meaning — not exact, but similar: that is why they can be used as synonyms. And for the purposes of our English Language Arts class, we will use them interchangeably — as synonyms.

Essential Elements of a Thesis or Proposition

Characteristics

- central idea of your entire project
- strong statement, claim, judgment, opinion, or conclusion
- clearly, logically stated
- can be argued, debated
- specific, covers only what you will discuss or write about
- allows the reader to anticipate the organization of your argument
- must be supported with main ideas and evidence (e.g., details, facts, observations, statistics, research, examples)
- guides your research, is flexible
- a product of your own critical thinking

What It's Not

- not a simple statement of fact
- not only an opinion statement
- not a question
- not a list
- not usually combative

Other Considerations

- usually placed in the first paragraph
- usually needs to be refined (changed, altered, re-focused) as one develops, researches, or writes whatever is being written

Statement	Is this a thesis (proposition)?
The colonists revolted against England in 1776.	No; it is a statement of fact.
The American Revolution was not justified.	No; it is an opinion, and it is too broad.
For political, economic, social and cultural reasons, the colonists revolted against England in 1776	No; this is a list. There are no other possible reasons available to explain what happened or why. It is obvious that each of these played a role.
While tax issues contributed to the move for American independence, it was the political tension that played the key role in the drive for independence from England.	Yes; it takes a clear position on an issue that can be debated, and it is focused on something specific that can actually be addressed in the typical middle school writing project.