

Exercise walk-through

Developing a literary thesis statement ■ 3.7

eXercise

You must be able to

- state what a thesis statement expresses
- state what it requires
- state what a thesis may do about the line of reasoning
- state what the CED explicitly does not require

Method — What it expresses

A thesis statement expresses an interpretation of a literary text, and requires a defense through use of textual evidence and a line of reasoning, both of which are explained in an essay through commentary.

Method — Interpretation

An interpretation, not an observation. “The novel has two narrators” is checkable; “the novel’s second narrator exists to discredit the first” is arguable.

Method — Previewing

A thesis statement may preview the development or line of reasoning of an interpretation. May, not must.

Method — What is not required

This is not to say that a thesis statement must list the points of an interpretation, literary elements to be analyzed, or specific evidence to be used.
The CED goes out of its way to say a thesis need not be a list.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State what a thesis statement expresses and requires.

Solution 2.1

Method: What it expresses

Worked steps

an interpretation of a literary text **B1**; a defense through textual evidence and a line of reasoning explained by commentary **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 3 marks

State what the CED explicitly does not require.

Solution 2.2

Worked steps

it need not list the points of an interpretation (B1), the literary elements to be analyzed (B1), or specific evidence to be used (B1).

Practice 2.3 ■ 2 marks

A thesis is an interpretation.

- (a) Distinguish it from an observation.
- (b) State the force of “may preview”.

Solution 2.3

Method: Previewing

Worked steps

(a) an observation is checkable as true or false **B1**; an interpretation is arguable and needs defending **B1**. (b) previewing is permitted but not required **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

A thesis statement requires a defense through textual evidence and

A a line of reasoning

B a bibliography

C a summary

D a title

Solution 3.1

Method: What it expresses

A a line of reasoning



B a bibliography

C a summary

D a title

Worked steps

A. a line of reasoning.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

The CED says a thesis statement

- A** must list the elements to be analysed
- B** need not list them
- C** must name the evidence
- D** must be one word

Solution 3.2

A must list the elements to be analysed

B need not list them 

C must name the evidence

D must be one word

Worked steps

B. the CED says it need not.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

A student writes: “This essay will discuss imagery, structure and tone.”

- (a) State why this is not a thesis.
- (b) Rewrite it as one.

Solution 3.3

Method: What it expresses

Worked steps

(a) it announces topics rather than making an interpretive claim **B1**. (b) any arguable interpretation, e.g. “the poem’s shifting imagery turns the speaker’s grief into something she can finally address directly” **B2**.