

Name: _____

Date: _____

6B- _____

Writing: Notes on the Sinker / THESIS

“The Sinker” / THESIS: In 1 sentence, provide a **general answer to the essay assignment or essay question**. A thesis is the **main idea** of the *entire essay*. It must be a provable **OPINION**, not a fact. Think of a thesis as a theory. A thesis tells readers what you think. It is, in a sentence, your position, argument, opinion, or assertion. Your entire essay is based on your thesis. Every sentence in your essay should contribute to introducing, supporting, or extending upon your thesis.

***Remember:** The question (assignment) determines the answer (the thesis).

Steps to writing a thesis:

1. Read the question / assignment: Figure out what the essay assignment is asking you to do. Sometimes, an assignment won't ask you an actual question; instead, the assignment will come in the form of a statement. If so, try to think of the assignment as a question.

Essay assignment: Describe a main character in the story.

Assignment... as a question: Which character trait best describes a main character in the story?

2. Gather evidence: Once you've figured out the essay question, gather evidence to answer it. Look through the text (book, story, poem, article, etc.) for a quote(s) or specific text details (examples, facts, events, etc.) that relate to — that even answer — the question.

Strong Quotes:

- A strong quote is usually made up of startling or dramatic language that delivers a powerful idea in brief terms; it might include almost poetic language that probes into the depths of your essay question. Good quotes often allow writers to make inferences. They *show* an answer instead of just telling it:

Showing: Cap rescues his bus driver and classmates. (Brave)

Telling: Cap was brave. (Brave)

- A strong quote should be relevant to the essay question; in essence, it will appear custom-made for your essay.
- A strong quote often borrows the authority or expertise of the author, the narrator, or a key character from the text to express the same idea you'd like to communicate in your essay.

(over)

*A strong quote is often the most powerful piece of evidence you can present in an essay, but, when a strong quote isn't available, you can use convincing text details, instead. To do this, you should try to find at least **3 specific details, examples, or events**.

3. Work backward from the evidence to a thesis: Using your evidence, work backwards to write your thesis. Ask yourself, What does my evidence lead me to believe about the essay question? The answer is your thesis! Remember that your thesis must be an ***opinion***; your thesis should not be an undeniable fact. Instead, it should represent your point of view about the evidence. Basically, it should state your position on a topic, giving your reader a sense of where you stand on an issue that is somehow up for debate. If your thesis only states a fact, then you haven't given your reader a reason to continue reading.

Essay question: Which character trait best describes a main character in *Schooled*?

Opinion thesis: Through his relationship with Sophie Donnelly, Capricorn Anderson demonstrates that he is a selfless character.

Factual thesis: During his time at C-Average Middle School, Capricorn Anderson helps Sophie learn to drive.

Guidelines for a good thesis:

A good thesis should...

1. relate to the hook.
2. answer the essay question. **(The question determines the answer.)**
3. be more general than the topic sentence(s).
4. be an opinion, not a fact.
5. "flow" from the line. Use an introductory expression to "tie" your line to your sinker.
6. be the main idea of your entire essay.
7. relate logically to the evidence; be the point that the evidence makes.
8. provide readers with a thoughtful, insightful, and accurate response to the essay question.
9. be one sentence in length.
10. be written in objective tone (as a fact, without *I, you, in this essay, my quotes prove that...*), unless the question/assignment calls for a subjective response.

(next)

Sample thesis: from a theme essay on the memoir *Red Scarf Girl*.

Loyalty. It's more than a blind commitment to something. In *Red Scarf Girl*, twelve-year-old Ji-li Jiang, the author and main character of this memoir, has a strong sense of dedication both to her family and to her country, China. However, in 1966, when the story is set, Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution sweeps through Ji-li's city, Shanghai, and challenges Ji-Li to reevaluate her loyalties. **Through this challenging circumstance, the author examines the theme of loyalty.**

Things to consider:

1. **Specific vs. General:** Your body paragraphs need to be more specific than your thesis. If your thesis is very specific, your body paragraphs might be hard to write. How specific can you really get?
2. **Focus or not?** You don't need to "*focus*" on your evidence in your thesis; basically, this is what the topic sentences of your body paragraphs do. You may simply state your opinion in your thesis and then "*focus*" it on the evidence in your topic sentence(s).
3. **Affirming the question:** Sometimes, you can use a trick in your thesis: You can simply make the essay question a statement. And then, in your topic sentence(s), you can support your thesis, often by answering the question ***how*** or ***why*** for your thesis. For example:

Question: How does Tom change throughout the novel?

Thesis: Tom changes throughout the course of the novel.

Topic Sentence #1: At first, peer pressure makes Tom insecure.

Topic Sentence #2: Eventually, however, Tom responds to peer pressure in a mature fashion.

