**20th Century Authors Research Paper**

**Thesis Statement**

For this paper, you should present an insightful analysis about the work of a 20th-century American author. The first step of planning an effective research paper is deciding what your paper will concentrate on and formulating this into a focused thesis statement.

**What a Thesis Statement Should Be:** A complete sentence summarizing the insight you will present in your paper.

**What a Thesis Statement Should Not Be:**

A topic or subject by itself is not a thesis statement. That tells what the paper is generally about (which is necessary) but you should also include **what you have to say** about the topic.

A question cannot serve as a thesis statement. Instead, you should provide the answer to the question.

A general statement of background information or fact. You need to provide a focused point of view and insight.

**Building a Thesis Statement**

1. First, write down your author: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Brainstorm insights about the author:

What genre of writing does this author create?

What era does this author represent?

What influence or position did this author have on the genre and/or this era?

How is this author’s influence / position shown through the writing you have read?

3. Uses your insights to compose a working thesis statement. A thesis for a literary research paper can take many forms.

1. The thesis may focus on the significance of the content of the author’s writing (e.g., ideas, themes, characters, plot, symbols, etc.).

Examples

Huck’s departure at the end of Twain’s novel reflects the author’s own dissatisfaction with civilization.

In “A Worn Path,” Eudora Welty creates a fictional character in Phoenix Jackson whose determination, faith, and cunning illustrate the indomitable human spirit.

1. The thesis may focus on the impact of how the author uses literary forms (e.g. style, structure, figurative language, word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, rhyme scheme, etc.).

Examples

T.S. Eliot uses unconventional poetic form and detailed allusions to create a feeling of devastation in “The Wasteland.”

In “Youth,” Joseph Conrad uses foreshadowing to create suspense and a sense of unease.

1. The thesis may focus on illustrating how a particular work reflects the concerns and characteristics of a time period, movement, or philosophy.

Examples

“The Third and Final Continent” exhibits characteristics recurrent in writings by immigrants: tradition, adaptation, and identity.

In “Barn Burning,” William Faulkner deals with the modern problem of characters struggling for their identity.

1. The thesis may make connections between features of form and content or between either of these and the time period.

Example

Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* reflects characteristics of Theatre of the Absurd through its seemingly meaningless dialogue and its apocalyptic ideas.

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