

Guide to Thesis Development

The development of a strong thesis is one of the most critical steps in your History Day project. A thesis statement is the **central argument or key point of your project** and can make or break an entry. Therefore, you should spend a considerable amount of time working on your thesis and revising it until your thesis is **strong, clear, and concise**.

A thesis statement should:

- Address a narrow topic
- Be the roadmap for the rest of your project
- Explain the significance of your topic
- Makes a claim or takes a stand that you will argue in the rest of your project
- Be supported by your sources
- Connect the topic to the NHD theme
- Be clear and concisely written and easily found by the audience

Development of a Thesis

Let's look at the process of going from topic to thesis. In this example our theme will be Rights and Responsibilities.

Roscoe Dunjee and the *Black Dispatch*.

This is a good, narrow topic, but it is not a thesis statement. It neither expresses an opinion about nor explains the significance of Dunjee and the *Black Dispatch*. Additionally, this does not express any relationship our topic has to the theme.

Roscoe Dunjee used his newspaper, the *Black Dispatch*, to advance civil rights causes in Oklahoma.

Now we are getting closer to a thesis statement. This sentence tells us that Dunjee was important because he helped advance civil rights causes in Oklahoma and that he did so using his newspaper. However, we have still yet to take a stand. A thesis cannot simply be a statement of fact, but we need to make an argument that our project will support.

Civil rights activist Roscoe Dunjee, through the use of his newspaper the *Black Dispatch*, led the charge for equality and justice for black Oklahomans, paving the way for later advocates of African American rights.

Here is an excellent thesis statement! This sentence focuses on a narrow topic, explains the significance of that topic, clearly relates to the theme, and makes a claim that we will support for the rest of the project.

Narrow topic: Roscoe Dunjee and the *Black Dispatch*

Significance: Civil rights activist; led the charge for equality and justice

Relation to theme: Civil rights; rights of African Americans

Claim: Dunjee paved the way for later civil rights advocates

Name _____

WORKSHEET: THESIS DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC: _____

WHO: Who was involved? Who was affected?

WHAT: What happened? What was/were the main event(s)?

WHERE: Where was/were the place(s) it took place?

WHEN: When did it happen? How long of a period of time was it?

WHY: Why did it happen? What caused it?

SIGNIFICANCE: Why is it important? What were the outcomes?

CONNECTION TO THEME: Conflict and Compromise: What meaningful connections have you found between your topic and the elements of this year's theme?

Put it all together into a thesis statement.

Make sure you have plenty of evidence to support your thesis statement! Check out our online resources at www.okhistory.org/historycenter/oknhdresources?full to help with the research process!