

WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

One of the main elements of any research paper is a strong thesis. It not only states the main idea of the writing, but also gives direction to the paper and informs the reader of what will be discussed. However, it is not just a topic. It also reflects the opinions, arguments or conclusions of the writer and should be reinforced with detailed supporting evidence.

How do you tell a strong thesis sentence from a weak one?

A strong thesis statement...

- Takes some sort of stand.
- Justifies discussion.
- Expresses one main idea.
- Is specific.

A weak thesis statement...

- Is vague or mundane.
- Presents an observation, not an argument.
- Is ambiguous or confusing.
- Is general.

GATHERING IDEAS



It can be very helpful to brainstorm before you create your thesis. Think about any new ideas, connections, categories or themes that were uncovered during your research.

Another method is to think of the topic as a problem or specific question, and then answer that question and prove it over the course of your paper. Use the steps below for this technique:

Think of the subject area.

Films of the 30's

Consider the topic or issue.

The advent of sound's effect on film stars of the silent era.

Write about the topic featuring a problem or question.

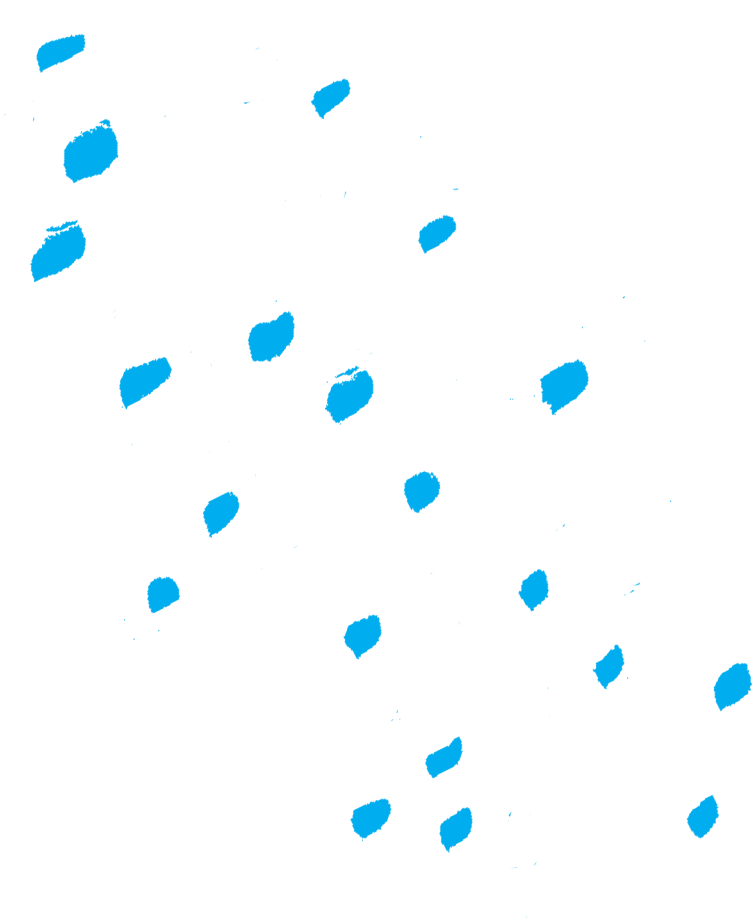
What were the common qualities of film stars from the silent era who were able to make a successful transition to the "talkies"?

Answer the question in the form of a thesis statement.

Most stars successful at crossing over from silent film to the "talkies" were trained in the theatre and vaudeville.

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

Subject Area	Topic/Issue	Topic as a Question	Thesis Statement
Dorthea Lange	The influence Dorthea Lange's FSA experience had on her later career.	How did Dorthea Lange's photography of the 40's and 50's reflect her experience with the FSA project of the 30's?	Dorthea Lange's photography of the 40's and 50's illustrated her growing interest in portraiture stemming from her experience with the FSA project in the 30's.
Lenny Bruce	Lenny Bruce's use of language considered obscene.	Why was Lenny Bruce's so-called obscene use of language such a vital component in his comedy act?	Lenny Bruce used obscenity as a means of subverting and therefore emphasizing the expectations of his audience.
Surrealism	The relationship between surrealist poets and painters.	How did the poet Andre Breton's ideas influence the paintings of Dali and di Chirico?	Andre Breton's ideas about the value of dream imagery and language influenced Dali's and di Chirico's use of those same themes.
Andy Warhol	Warhol's use of goods from the supermarket.	How did Warhol's use of common items from daily life stretch the world's perception of what constitutes art?	Warhol's use of items from daily life mocked the supposed distinction between high and low culture.



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