Thematic Statements

Do Not	Poorly Written	Do	Well-Written
• Refer to specific characters, events, or settings	"Dally learned not to trust others around him." "The Greasers learned that they can't win in life even if they win a rumble."	• Express the theme as a general comment on a subject • or a general insight from a character's behavior	"Friends are not always trustworthy" "People with realistic goals then to be more successful than those who put little thought into their future."
• Express the theme as a subject or topic.	"The theme is leadership"	• Drop specific character names and use more general terms like "parents, we, leaders, society, young people" to show a general observation about the human experience.	"When faced with a problem, leaders tend to work harder to solve it."
• Express the theme as a familiar saying. Avoid clichés.	"Crime doesn't pay."	• Express the theme in your own words.	"People who commit crimes may be punished in unexpected ways."
• Express the theme as a moral, an order, or a judgment. Don't use the words "should, ought, must." Avoid sounding "preachy."	"It's wrong to gossip about people." "We should be nice to old people."	• Express the theme as an insight into life.	"Gossip can cause serious damage to a person's reputation."
• Make a thematic statement too general. Avoid broad generalizations with words such as: "everyone, always, never, all"	"Poverty always causes crime."	• Use qualifying words in a thematic statement, such as: "sometimes, can, may, and often."	"Poverty may transform honest people into criminals."

Literary Analysis Thesis Statements:

What strong verb Big Idea/Concept/Theme

"What" reveals a universal truth about the human condition?

In "Thank You, Ma'm" by Langston Hughes, Mrs. Jones's unexpected reactions demonstrate that random acts of kindness can have a lasting impact on someone's life.

Strong Verbs: conveys, represents, demonstrates, suggests, implies, insinuates, portrays, indicates, symbolizes, reveals