

21L000/21W734J Writing About Literature Revision Workshop Worksheet

Improving Your Thesis

—*Reconsider your thesis and argument. Even if they were clear and effective in the original, see what you can do to improve. Start by going over your essay and looking for the best statement of your thesis, wherever it appears. Notice if you said it best at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end. Use this space to write it out.*

—*Try to narrow and focus your thesis. Apply the “so what?” test. Ask yourself if anyone would argue against this thesis; if not, find a way to take a more controversial or specific position. Use this space to write a counter-thesis, the statement you imagine someone making in opposition to your own or departing from it some critical way.*

—*Ask yourself if your thesis is an observation or an argument and try to avoid committing yourself to an observation that other alert readers would be able to make for themselves. Even if you have a thesis that sets up an argument, see if you can narrow it to the issue that is of greatest concern in your essay. See if your thesis anticipates and addresses the counter-arguments raised above. Use this space to write a more focused thesis than the one you have.*

—*Now make sure that your refined thesis appears in your opening paragraph and that you have set it up succinctly and energetically. Avoid windy generalizations and digressions. Provide a useful context for your point, including the relevant information the reader needs. Start your new opening paragraph here.*

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21L.000J / 21W.734J Writing About Literature
Fall 2010

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