



Formulating a Thesis

NEC students are immersed in music, so it is inevitable that you will have good ideas about it! The thesis is where you get to bring your own voice into the ongoing conversation about the music that interests you most. If you've read the work of other writers—encyclopedia entries, articles, excerpts from recent books—on the composer or work or phenomenon at the center of your paper, you know what's "out there." Now it's time to ask yourself:

"What is the ONE thing I want my reader to learn from my essay?"

If your paper has a thesis, you will be able to summarize it as a one- or two-sentence answer to that question. If you can't answer that question in a sentence or two, you don't yet have a thesis.

There are also certain trigger words that you can use to make yourself articulate a thesis. These are strong, active words that help you bring your own voice and ideas clearly into focus. For example,

- In this paper I suggest that...
- In this paper I argue that...
- In this paper I demonstrate that...
- In this paper I propose that...

You should avoid words that just show you meandering around in a topic... Try not to use phrases like

- In this paper I explore...
- In this paper I examine...

...since these don't help trigger a statement of your own ideas.