



Hero?

WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

or Jerk?

Now you need to decide: Is Odysseus a hero? Or a jerk? Then, everyone gets to write a defense of their opinion. We are all working on the same understanding, though. I want to make sure you understand that opinions about literature can and must be supported by evidence from the text.

But, not everyone is ready for the same kind of evidence. Some folks are concrete thinkers—they need to use a specific event from the book to prove their opinion. Other folks are really abstract thinkers—they need room to use ideas from the book to prove their opinion.

Each of these different approaches is described below. As you explore your options, let me offer some boundaries for you:

1. **There is no shame here. We're all learning. The goal is growth.** Pick the approach that is the best fit for you, and you'll have a good shot at actually improving your writing skills during this process!
2. No one may choose *Concrete 1* without my approval. If it looks like the thesis you would choose, check in with me first.
3. If you choose an approach that is not a good match for what I know about you after two trimesters, I will have a conversation with you.
4. If you are going to take English 10 Honors, I strongly suggest that you choose *Abstract 1* or *Abstract 2*. Your first papers in English 10 Honors will likely ask you to do this type of thinking—without as much support.

CONCRETE 1: USING ONE PLOT EVENT

Check the thesis statement you would like to use (only one). Then fill in the blank with something Odysseus does. For example you might write “sleeps with Circe” or “encourages his men when they are scared.”

- Because Odysseus _____, he's a true hero.
- Because Odysseus _____, he's not a true hero.

CONCRETE 2: USING THREE PLOT EVENTS

Check the thesis statement you would like to use (only one). Then fill in the blanks with three things Odysseus does. For example, you might write he “sleeps with Circe,” he “boasts to the Cyclops” and he “hides the truth from his men.”

- Because Odysseus _____, _____ and _____, he's a true hero.
- Because Odysseus _____, _____ and _____, he's not a true hero.

INTERMEDIATE: USING CHARACTERISTICS

Choose a thesis and fill in the blanks with descriptive words that you think are the most important. By descriptive words, I mean things like “arrogant” or “encouraging.”

Because Odysseus is _____, _____ and _____, he’s a true hero.

Because Odysseus is _____, _____, and _____, he’s a not a true hero.

ABSTRACT 1: USING AUTHORIAL INTENTION & AN ABSTRACT SO-WHAT

Choose one of the thesis statements below. These contain slightly more sophisticated “what” arguments that focus on what the author (Homer) is accomplishing in the text. The “so what” is also more complex, and requires some outside thinking based on the cultural values we’ve discussed in class or your own understanding of literature.

- By creating a hero like Odysseus, Homer suggests that even admirable characters have flaws.
- By creating a hero like Odysseus, Homer demonstrates the values of ancient Greek society.

ABSTRACT 2: USING AUTHORIAL INTENTION & AN ABSTRACT SO-WHAT

Write a thesis statement of your own. Like the best thesis statements, your statement needs to have a *what* and a *so what*.

A *what* identifies **WHAT** you’re arguing.

A *so what* explains **HOW** or **WHY** your *what* is important.

- ➔ Think of your **WHAT** as describing WHAT you notice about a character or text.
- ➔ Think of your **SO WHAT** as describing WHY that observation MATTERS in how we understand the character or book. Often this relates to literature in general, to themes or thematic values in a text or to background/complementary knowledge about a text.

The “so what” can be difficult to nail down, especially in the academic register. Take a peek at the examples under *Advanced 1* above. Or, try looking at the sample below:

WHAT	Penelope is a brave woman who uses her brain to stand up to the suitors.
SO WHAT	Homer suggests that even the women in Odysseus’s life are heroic individuals worthy of admiration.
THESIS	The way Penelope bravely defies the suitors mirrors and further glorifies Odysseus by suggesting that even the women in his life are worth admiring.

For this essay, your *what* is pretty easy. You need to choose a side. Is Odysseus a jerk? Or a hero? The question is, what is your *so what*?