**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Step 3—Thesis**

**Thesis Writing…**

**What is a Thesis?**

* A thesis tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
* A thesis is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
* A thesis directly answers the question asked of you. It is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or Moby Dick; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel.
* A thesis makes a claim that others might dispute.
* A thesis is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

**Questions to Consider:**

* *Do I answer the question?* Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question
* *Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?* If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
* *Is my thesis statement specific enough?* These statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something good; what specifically makes something successful?
* *Does my thesis pass the "so what?" test?* If a reader's first response is, "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
* *Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test?* If a reader's first response is, "how?" or "why?" your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

**Sample 1:** Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn is a great American novel.

**Sample 2:** In Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore

**Sample 3:** Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.