

The Thematic Statement Checklist

Already written a thematic statement? Run it through these five checks, in order, before you build an essay on it. Every **Not yet** points to one thing to fix.

MY THEMATIC STATEMENT

Write or copy your sentence here, then work down the checks.

-
- 1 More than a topic?** ☐ YES ☐ NOT YET

Does the sentence make a claim *about* the idea, not just name it?

If not yet — you've named a topic. Say something the text suggests about it.

 - 2 Interpretation, not just plot?** ☐ YES ☐ NOT YET

Does it say what the text *means*, not only what happens or what's true of it?

If not yet — you've reported a text fact. Turn it into what that fact suggests.

 - 3 Specific enough to belong to this text?** ☐ YES ☐ NOT YET

Could you paste the same sentence onto unrelated stories, unchanged?

If not yet — it's a broad generalisation. Tie it to what *this* text actually does.

 - 4 Arguable?** ☐ YES ☐ NOT YET

Could a thoughtful reader reasonably read the text differently?

If not yet — no one would disagree. Take a position worth defending.

 - 5 Supported by the text?** ☐ YES ☐ NOT YET

Can you point to details, moments, or patterns in the text that support it?

If not yet — if it rests on one isolated moment, check that it reflects what the text develops more broadly.

ONE LAST LOOK

Once every check reads **Yes**, tighten any vague or overly absolute wording. good, bad, things, always, everyone.

MY REVISED THEMATIC STATEMENT

REVISED

Rewrite so every check reads Yes.

See It in Action

One statement, tested and revised — watch the checklist do its work on a sentence that looks fine at first glance.

THE PASSAGE

When Priya was chosen to lead the school science showcase, she stayed late every evening to make her stand perfect. She stopped asking her friends for help, certain she could do more alone than they could together. On the night, her display was the largest in the hall — and she stood beside it by herself, while the others gathered around each other's smaller stands.

A FIRST ATTEMPT

"Ambition makes people work hard."

RUNNING THE CHECKS

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|---|
| 1 · More than a topic? | YES | It makes a claim, not just the word <i>ambition</i> . |
| 2 · Interpretation? | YES | It's about meaning, not a single event. |
| 3 · Specific to this text? | NOT YET | It would fit almost any story about effort. |
| 4 · Arguable? | NOT YET | Few readers would disagree that ambition drives hard work. |
| 5 · Supported by the text? | YES | Priya's repeated late work supports the idea — though the statement misses the more interesting pattern in the passage. |

WHAT THE NOT YET ANSWERS REVEAL

The statement isn't wrong, and the text does support it. But it stalls at checks 3 and 4: it's too broad to belong to this passage, and too safe for anyone to argue with. The passage develops something more interesting than effort alone — the isolation that grows alongside Priya's ambition.

A REVISED STATEMENT

REVISED STATEMENT

SHARPENED

Ambition can become isolating when success comes to matter more than accepting the help of others.

WHY IT'S STRONGER

Now it reads as an interpretation rather than a retelling. It takes a position a reader could dispute, and it stays tied to what the passage develops — refusing help, working alone, standing apart at the end — without naming Priya or listing the events. That is what "specific enough to belong to this text" looks like.