

HANDOUT: COMPARING THESIS STATEMENTS

Sharing thesis statements with students—both good and bad—can help them understand the characteristics they should strive for in their own work. Share the following thesis statements with your students on the chalkboard or overhead. Ask them to brainstorm possible problems or positive characteristics of each. Keep in mind that even the “Good” statements are a work in progress!

	Needs Improvement	Better	Good
Truckers' Strike	<p>The Minneapolis truckers' strike took place in the 1930s.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do more than state a fact.</i> • <i>What is the theme connection?</i> 	<p>The Minneapolis truckers' strike took place in the 1930s. The employees took fought for their right to unionize.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>So what? Needs to discuss the outcome and significance of his actions in history.</i> 	<p>In May 1934, Minnesota labor activism turned violent when a group of employers refused to recognize a newly formed Teamsters union. The strike that followed brought the leadership of the union, the governor, and the Citizens Alliance into conflict. Two days of violence marked a turning point in the labor movement and paved the way for legislation protecting workers' rights.</p>
Silent Spring	<p>Rachel Carson wrote <i>Silent Spring</i> in 1962 and forever changed the environmental movement in the United States.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Be more specific. Saying that the book “forever changed” history is too broad.</i> • <i>Needs a theme connection.</i> 	<p>Rachel Carson became a leader for the environmental movement in the early 1960s when she published <i>Silent Spring</i>. People were outraged about the harm being done to the environment and the book sold more than a million copies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public response and sales figures are short term reactions. Dig deeper for long-term significance and legacy.</i> 	<p>Rachel Carson became a leader for the environmental movement in the early 1960s when she published her controversial book, <i>Silent Spring</i>. The legacy of this book was increased public awareness to environmental concerns and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency as a government force for environmental protection.</p>
Mahatma Gandhi	<p>Gandhi marched to the Arabian Sea to collect salt in April 1930. Why do you think he would do that? Read more below!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Don't give instructions to your viewer. Explain your ideas</i> • <i>Don't include questions in your thesis. Provide answers.</i> 	<p>Satyagraha was Gandhi's belief in peaceful, non-violent resistance. Martin Luther King, Jr. used this during the Civil Rights movement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This thesis needs more detail connecting what Gandhi did and how it came to be used in other conflicts.</i> • <i>Needs a theme connection.</i> 	<p>In April 1930, Mahatma Gandhi led thousands of Indians on a march to the Arabian Sea to protest the British Salt Tax. British authorities responded to this civil disobedience and made more than 60,000 arrests. While it would take 17 more years for India to gain independence, the legacy of the Salt March and Gandhi's non-violent philosophy of Satyagraha was proving the effectiveness of non-violence as an instrument of political change.</p>
Abraham Lincoln	<p>If Abraham Lincoln hadn't given the Emancipation Proclamation, the South would have won the Civil War. There would still be slavery in the United States.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This is “what if” history, which cannot be supported by evidence.</i> • <i>Focus your thesis on what happened and how it actually changed history.</i> 	<p>Abraham Lincoln was a great leader because he was a born in 1809 to a poor family and eventually became president. He was honest and hardworking and more leaders today should be like him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Avoid too much biography, especially in your thesis.</i> • <i>Go beyond stating that he was a “good” or “bad” leader. Focus on how he showed leadership during a specific event/situation.</i> 	<p>On January 1, 1863, during heightened concerns about Union victory in the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln demonstrated bold leadership by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves in the Confederate States. The Proclamation made the ending of slavery an explicit war goal, inspired Union troops, and laid the foundation for the passage of the 13th amendment.</p>