

Critical Overview Thesis Statements

English 254 / Ramsey

Thesis statements should include the author's last name and what you will prove in the essay. (What you will prove = how scholarly criticism of this author's work has changed and how it has stayed the same.)

Did critics look at . . .

- how "American" this author is or is not?
- how good or bad this author's work is?
- how this author's work reflects a movement or reacts against one?
- how repetitive or diverse this author's themes are?
- how influential this author's works are?
- how over-rated or under-rated this author's work is?
- how well or poorly this author uses the elements of fiction?
- how this author succeeds in or fails to do what s/he sets out to do?
- what influenced this author to write what s/he did?
- how this author challenged stereotypes or reinforced them?
- what this author's work implies about gender or sexuality?
- how "universal" or specific this author's themes are?
- how this author is like another one or is different from another one?
- how this author's works represent or fail to represent a period in time?

Sample Thesis Statements (Can be two sentences long!)

1) Critics of _____ originally examined her _____ and _____, but in the mid-1940s they began looking at her use of _____, and now critics are more likely to discuss her _____.

2) When _____ was originally published, critics responded to his _____. Then post-Civil-War scholarship focused on his _____ and _____, but contemporary critics are more likely to examine on his use of _____.

3) Initial assessments of _____'s work tended to comment on her _____, then critics began looking at _____, and now the scholarship has come full circle and once again focuses on _____.

4) At the time _____'s work was first published, it was generally evaluated based on _____ and _____, then, after World War I, critics began looking instead at _____. Now, current scholarship focuses on _____.