

\*\*\*Remember the three parts of a thesis statement.\*\*\*

HOW?	WHAT?	WHY?
How will I make my case?	What am I arguing about the text?	Why does it matter?
<p>This is the motif or pattern you traced.</p> <p>This is what you saw with your own eyes when reading the story.</p>	<p>This is the logical conclusion you can derive from what the pattern suggests.</p> <p>The argument will, for our purposes now, make a case about a character in the story.</p>	<p>This is the larger conclusion of the idea, the richer understanding of the work at hand.</p> <p>This larger idea will make a broader claim about some aspect of living.</p>
<p>The use of...      →      suggests....      →      As a result, I now see...</p>		

\*\*\*Once you have a thesis statement, your job is to ask yourself a single question that will help you know how to structure your essay:\*\*\*

## WHAT DOES MY THESIS DEMAND I DO LOGICALLY TO FULLY PROVE MY CASE?

**Let's take one of my sample thesis statements as an example. Look at the parts that need proving:**

**Thesis 1:** The real difference between Sonny and the narrator in "Sonny's Blues" is that, while the narrator follows a more traditional path in life, Sonny improvises an existence. In fact, it's the story's main motif of music that serves as a metaphor for the story's larger theme about living: While the narrator plays the right notes laid out for him by life's composer, Sonny relies on his own and finds more meaning in an ability to improvise, living life one note at a time just as he does when he plays jazz in Harlem's nightclubs.

**Topic sentence 1:** The narrator's encouragement of his brother to follow a more typical and practical path in life shows more about his own stubbornness and his inability to adapt and follow his own path.

**Topic sentence 2:** In contrast, the novel uses Sonny's love for music to suggest an alternative path in life, one focused on improvising and adapting to what life throws his way, playing life's notes he feels are right.

**Remember that topic sentences are still debatable claims—they're just smaller parts of the larger idea.**

### HERE'S ANOTHER:

**Thesis 2:** Whereas both characters in “Sonny’s Blues” remain in the darkness at the end of the story, Sonny is the only brother who manages to find comfort and happiness in that darkness. The narrator, as shown by his reliance on contrasting images of and references to darkness and light, struggles to be at peace with where he is in the world, always wishing he was somewhere else. James Baldwin’s short story shows, despite what we might hope, the grass is not always greener on the other side, and that real happiness lies where we are if only we allow ourselves to see it.

**Topic sentence 1:** While it may seem like the narrator finds comfort and happiness in seeing his brother prosper at the end of the story, the story’s references to light and dark actually show he remains just as unhappy as he was at the beginning, still unable to break free from the life he resents in Harlem.

**Topic sentence 2:** Likewise, while it appears Sonny finally finds his place in the light at the end of the story, he actually rejects the light and rather, unlike his brother, learns how to live a happy life in both the literal and metaphorical darkness.

### LET'S DO THIS ONE TOGETHER:

**Thesis 3:** The strangeness of “Sonny’s Blues” lies in the story’s suggestion that, despite the narrator taking the most common path in life—working hard, finding a steady job, building a stable home, having a family—he remains the unhappier brother. By putting into stark contrast the choices of the two main characters, Baldwin’s short story shows that true happiness begins with following your passions and learning to challenge the notion of the so-called right path.

**Topic sentence 1:**

**Topic sentence 2:**

## NOW YOU TRY THE EXAMPLES BELOW:

**Thesis 4:** Whereas at the beginning of the short story, the narrator, reminded of his brother's choices in life, grimaces each time he hears music, by the end, he gradually accepts music's inspiring influence, signifying his acceptance of his brother's choices. James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" argues that the most important relationships in our lives thrive if each person allows the other to grow in their own way and follow the desires they have in their heart.

**Topic sentence 1:**

**Topic sentence 2:**

**Thesis 5:** James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" uses images of entrapment and claustrophobia to show that in order to maintain a healthy relationship with others we must first break free from our own insecurities that bind us; the irony of the story is that in all the years of attempting to set his brother Sonny free, it was the narrator who needed Sonny to do the very same for him.

**Topic sentence 1:**

**Topic sentence 2:**

**NOW TAKE YOUR OWN THESIS AND TRY TO BREAK IT INTO TOPIC SENTENCES:**

**Thesis:**

**Topic sentence 1:**

**Topic sentence 2:**