Questions for this assignment:

1. What is a thesis?
2. What are the 6 Q’s?
3. What is the best place to put a thesis?
4. What are the 4 Nots?
5. What is the thesis for “The Worst Day of my Life: Hurricane Day”?
6. What is the difference between telling vs showing?

The **thesis statement** is that sentence or two in your text that contains the focus of your essay and tells your reader what the essay is going to be about. Although it is certainly possible to write a good essay without a thesis statement, to will be hard to earn an “A”.

The lack of a thesis statement may make the paper feel like it is all over the place without a central thought that ties it altogether. Many writers think of a thesis statement as an umbrella: everything that you carry along in your essay has to fit under this umbrella, and if you try to take on packages that don't fit, you will either have to get a bigger umbrella or something's going to get wet.

Your thesis is the subject of your entire paper. Try to be as specific as possible with names and try to answer the 6 q’s (who, what, where, when, why, how).

The thesis statement usually appears near the beginning of a paper. It can be the first sentence of an essay, but that often feels like a simplistic, unexciting beginning. **It more frequently appears at or near the end of the first paragraph**. If you need to give background information before your actual intro, then it will appear at the end of paragraph two with the first paragraph being background information and paragraph two being your actual introduction.

Sample Thesis for a narrative: My daughter and I were in the Wal-Mart parking lot when she saw some people giving away puppies. My first reply was we did not need a puppy that would become a huge dog. Little did we know that this incident would change our lives because it would lead us to find a small dog after discussing the matter over dinner that night, which helped us in the recovery of a painful divorce.

Here is the first paragraph of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s essay *The Crisis of American Masculinity.* Notice how everything drives the reader toward the last sentence (like a funnel) and how that last sentence clearly signals what the rest of this essay is going to do.

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| What has happened to the American male? For a long time, he seemed utterly confident in his manhood, sure of his masculine role in society, easy and definite in his sense of sexual identity. The frontiersmen of James Fenimore Cooper, for example, never had any concern about masculinity; they were men, and it did not occur to them to think twice about it. Even well into the twentieth century, the heroes of Dreiser, of Fitzgerald, of Hemingway remain men. But one begins to detect a new theme emerging in some of these authors, especially in Hemingway: the theme of the male hero increasingly preoccupied with proving his virility to himself. And by mid-century, the male role had plainly lost its rugged clarity of outline. Today men are more and more conscious of maleness not as a fact but as a problem. The ways by which American men affirm their masculinity are uncertain and obscure. **There are multiplying signs, indeed, that something has gone badly wrong with the American male's conception of himself.** |

**The 4 Nots**

**Do not announce the thesis statement** as if it were a thesis statement. In other words, avoid using phrases such as "The purpose of this paper is . . . . " or "In this paper, I will attempt to . . ." Such phrases betray this paper to be the work of an amateur. If necessary, write the thesis statement that way the first time; it might help you determine, in fact, that this *is* your thesis statement. But when you rewrite your paper, eliminate the bald assertion and write the statement itself without that annoying, unnecessary preface.

**It should not be a fact**. Lincoln is the 16th President. This is a true statement and not much more to say on it.

**It should not be a quote or a question.** It is too hard to focus a paper around these. A quote, like a fact, is true because someone somewhere said it so what else is there to say? A question is passive and not strong unless in a hook (more on that later) or an argument essay.

**Do not be pointless! Make a point. Have a purpose. (Yes, even in a narrative story!)** Do not leave the reader wondering SO WHAT?

The illumination of an experience is the purpose of a narrative essay; however, the point you are making and the story you are telling should carry meaning by having supportive details (4 types of description) and as many active verbs as possible to make it more readable and for us to relate to it. What is the meaning of your story? That should be clear in your mind and in the thesis whether you are writing about a life-changing moment or an ordinary afternoon with a friend.

**The Worst Day of my Life: Hurricane Day**

**Intro (Where is the thesis in these two intro paragraphs?)**  
On an otherwise calm and uneventful day, I heard what sounded like an enormous train, derailed from the tracks and coming straight at me. As I put the mattress over my head, I suddenly remembered that my roommates had not made it home yet. I had to make a decision quickly.… Do I stay under the mattress and be a coward, or do I go and try to find my friends?

Without really thinking about it, I braved the storm to find my friends when a twister tore through downtown Ft. Worth. I could have stayed in my closet with Marie, my cat, a mattress over my head and a battery-operated radio, but I realized it is important to try to help your friends, even if it put me in harm’s way.

**Body Paragraphs**  
En route, I watched the bent anarchy of rebar, walls, glass and unidentifiable structures, gnarled and toothy, as they paraded in a watercolor swirl in the aluminum windows. Driving the route from our house to downtown that they would have traveled, the song “A Bridge Over Troubled Water” came on, which was fitting to the situation. By the time I approached downtown, the wind had ceased and an eerie stillness settled in. Puddles stretched out in front of me, threatening to engulf the whole town. What I noticed first about the water everywhere was the absence of artificial light reflecting back at me. Night had fallen and because of the tornado all of the streetlights were out. I thought to myself…

“This is what night is supposed to look like.”

I noticed that even the marquis lights were out. All of the buildings were dark and anonymous; none bared the logo of a corporate tenant. I witnessed natural night, just as people had before humans preferred artificial sunlight. For, as far as the eye could see there was not a working conduit for electricity to pass through, nor could I hear that distinct buzzing in the air. There was only me, Simon and Garfunkel on the radio, and the glimpses of scared people hiding under disjointed facades of the less-affected buildings. Stepping out the car, I saw the moon finding its face in the stillness of the oblong puddles below me. The power lines looked like the teeth of a boxer after a brutal fight; they were going every which way in a haphazard arrangement.

I found my friend’s car, in the aftermath, trapped in debris. I was terrified! What happened to them, I wondered. I looked across the street and among a crowd of astonished and frightened expressions; I finally located my friends. I saw from the ghost-white expression on my friend Leah’s face that she was in shock. My other roommate (and friend) was talking amongst others who were injured. He was helping the bartender pour shots of whiskey to calm the people down, since the refuge they had found happened to be a bar. Leah had a piece of glass embedded in her arm and bloody knees; my other roommate had deep cuts on the palms of his hands. Leah told me that she was caught running from her car to this building to seek shelter, and when she opened the heavy-metal door to the bar, the tornado picked her up like rag doll and slammed her knees into the asphalt. They did not need an ambulance, so I ushered them to my car. I was met with reluctance when I insisted that they go to the emergency room. Arguing the whole way, I drove them to the emergency room. They were admitted to triage, and the doctor said that Leah’s gash in her arm needed stitches, and she needed a tetanus shot. They disinfected their wounds, and a few hours later, we went home.

**Conclusion**  
Even though my friends might have fared okay without me, I am glad that I could help them out. Since, Leah was in shock, she was not aware of the seriousness of her injuries and probably would not have sought medical attention without my coaxing. If I am faced with a life-threatening situation again, I will come to the aid of my friends. Hopefully, this sentiment will not be challenged any time soon.

**How to come up with a thesis sentence for a narrative descriptive paper?**

You could first write your subject matter into the form of a question and then use the rest of the essay to answer it. For example, you want to tell a story about Fido:  
  
How is it possible to learn valuable life lessons from a creature who cannot speak or write?

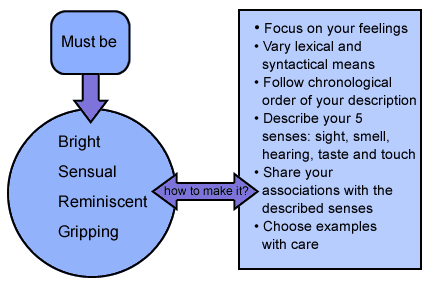
Then come up with some examples that show this in story form. Pick the example that is the strongest, most vivid, and does the best job answering the question you posed above.

Finally, this should lead you a statement that will be the subject of the entire paper:

It seems impossible to learn valuable life lessons from a hairy creature with no ability to read, speak, or write.

While good, how can the thesis sentence be kicked up a notch with a few more descriptive words? How can the thesis be turned into something great that adds to the “learning a valuable lesson” theme?

On the surface it seems impossible to learn valuable life lessons from a hairy creature with no ability to read, speak, or write, but beneath the dusty fur and tennis ball breath resides one of life's greatest teachers , my dog Max.  
  
...and then the rest of the essay naturally addresses the lessons you feel you learned/gained from the relationship.



**What the #$@% does this teacher mean by show not tell?**

Telling = When I was four, maybe less, my first memory is a moment when my mom and dad were fighting about pup u platters. I was watching and felt helpless.

Showing = “Karen, I’m home!” Dad said loudly.

“Good, I am starving! What did you bring home for supper?” Mom asked, walking to the gray foyer.

“Pu-pu platter,” Dad said with a smirk, taking off his coat. Mom looked inside the Chinese take-out bag. She frowned and scrunched her nose. “What is it?”

“How should I know?” Dad yelled.

“Well, you should know what you’re eating!” Mom screamed back in frustration. From then on, it was like tennis, with a scream being used as the ball. I emerged from my room with my Mickey Mouse doll and my blue blanket, sucking my thumb. I simply stood in the shadows doing nothing.