THE THESIS STATEMENT

In an essay which is a response to a prompt about literature, the **thesis** must create an assertion about the text or reading which has the following characteristics:

a) A main idea about the topic to be developed in essay (e.g. "Valerie Martin's **Property** demonstrates how gender oppression devalues the worth of a Black woman in the institution of slavery in the 1800s.")
b) This main idea takes a stand or offers an interesting conclusion, judgment, or interpretation that deserves discussion in the essay. In a literary essay the main idea answers the question, "what is Valerie Martin's novel about?" **not** "What happens in Valerie Martin's novel?"
c) The main idea is therefore
   i) restricted
   ii) specific
   iii) unified, and
   iv) can be supported by analysis of specific *relevant* and *sufficient evidence* from the text or reading discussed.

Remember the thesis in a literary essay is **not a statement of fact about the text or reading you are discussing (Sarah goes to work as a housemaid for the Gaudet family.")****

** A thesis should not be a report, summary, or survey of the text or reading**

Thesis should alert readers of essay what to expect. Thesis gives essay focus. If you are writing an essay about the death penalty, you cannot write the thesis statement without determining which side of the issue you are going to take or whether you are going to provide a balanced look at the argument.

Thesis provides the basic skeleton for organization of essay.

Thesis: "The death penalty is wrong." This is an incomplete thesis statement. Why? Statement is too general. A better revision should read like this: "The death penalty should be abolished because innocent people are sometimes executed, because costs are higher than for life imprisonment and because murder is never justifiable." The *main idea* in this thesis is....death

penalty. The *attitude* in this thesis is…it should be abolished. And other points listed at the end of the statement.

Avoid asserting ideas without giving directions as to where the discussion of the idea will go. Your readers should know from your discussion why its analysis is needed; it may show us results, provide us with a new view, promote a novel idea, raise a previously unnoticed idea, dilemma, or question. Words such as *because*, *since*, *so*, *although*, *unless*, *however*, *nonetheless*, *as a result*, *contrary*, *in spite of*, which show relationships between parts may help in the formulation of your thesis.

Thesis / **forecast** give the *scope*, *purpose*, and *direction* of discussion and identifies the relationships between the pieces of evidence you will examine.