Open Educational Resources   City College of New York

2018

Writing About Art - Thesis Statement

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Thesis statement

A thesis statement:
- Presents **your opinion** [claim] on a **subject** [a work of art] and lists your a**rguments** [developed in the body of your essay] to support your claim.
- Justifies **discussion**
- Is located at **the end of introductory** paragraph

A thesis statement **should never** contain the following: *in my opinion, I think, I believe*, etc. The entire thesis represents what you believe. In addition, it **should not** be in the form of a question.
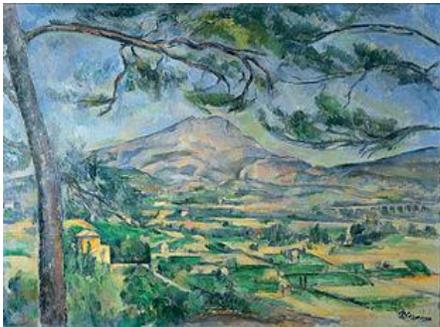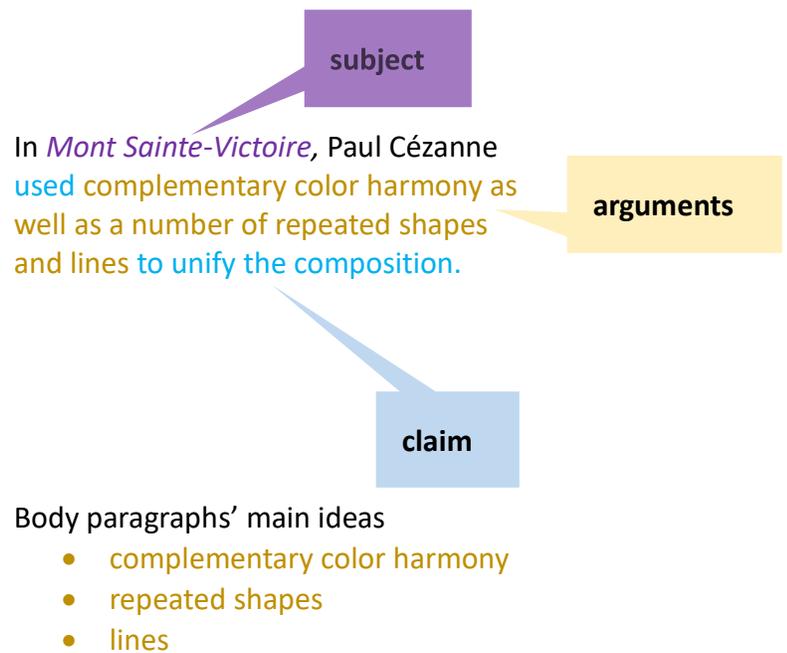
Example 1.

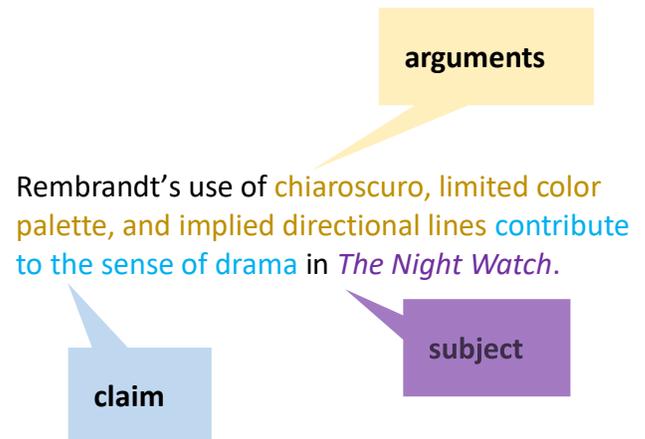Figure 1. Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire,* 1904. Oil on canvas, 22 1/2 x 38 1/4 in. (57.2 x 97.2 cm). Princeton University Art Museum

subject

In *Mont Sainte-Victoire,* Paul Cézanne used complementary color harmony as well as a number of repeated shapes and lines to unify the composition.

arguments

claim

Body paragraphs' main ideas
- complementary color harmony
- repeated shapes
- lines

Example 2.

Figure 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Night Watch,* 1642. Oil on canvas, 11' 11" x 14' 4". (57.2 x 97.2 cm). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

arguments

Rembrandt's use of chiaroscuro, limited color palette, and implied directional lines contribute to the sense of drama in *The Night Watch*.

subject

claim

Body paragraphs' main ideas
- chiaroscuro
- color
- implied directional lines

Exercise:
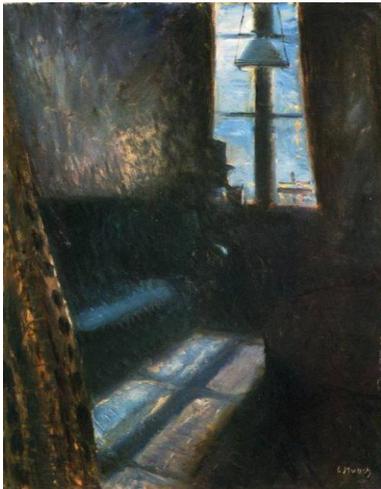Analyze the thesis below.

Figure 3. Edvard Munch, *Night in St. Cloud*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 64.5 x 54 cm. The National Gallery, Oslo.

In *Night in St. Cloud*, Munch transformed a view of a dark room into a melancholic portrayal of a lonely man, seemingly deep in reflection; Munch achieved this through his masterful use of directional lines, color, light, and texture.