Using Thesis Statements

What is a thesis statement?
A thesis statement is a brief statement that:

- Makes a promise about the scope, purpose, and direction of the paper
- Provides a main idea or overall focus of the paper
- Is specific enough to be developed within the paper
- Suggests a structure for the paper

For the writer, the thesis...

⇒ Serves as a planning tool
⇒ Helps to determine and clarify the focus of the paper
⇒ Becomes a reference point for all topic sentences in support of the argument
⇒ Anticipates questions about the topic

Working Thesis vs. Final Thesis

⇒ Working Thesis
A working thesis guides the writer’s investigation into the subject and suggests questions, problems, and strategies. It is useful in early drafts.

⇒ Final Thesis
A final thesis should be present in the final draft. It generally comes late in the writing process, and it is the result of revisions made to the working thesis.

For the reader, the thesis...

⇒ Serves as a map
⇒ Keeps the reader focused on the argument
⇒ Engages the reader in the argument
⇒ Offers enough detail for the reader to grasp the argument

Topic vs. Thesis

⇒ Topic
A topic introduces the subject of an essay.

⇒ Argument
An argument takes the topic further by taking a stand and giving reasons for the stance.

For example...

- A key issue in America today is wealth and poverty.
- Through hard work, millions of Americans who were born poor have achieved prosperity for themselves and their families; today, America is an economically mobile country.