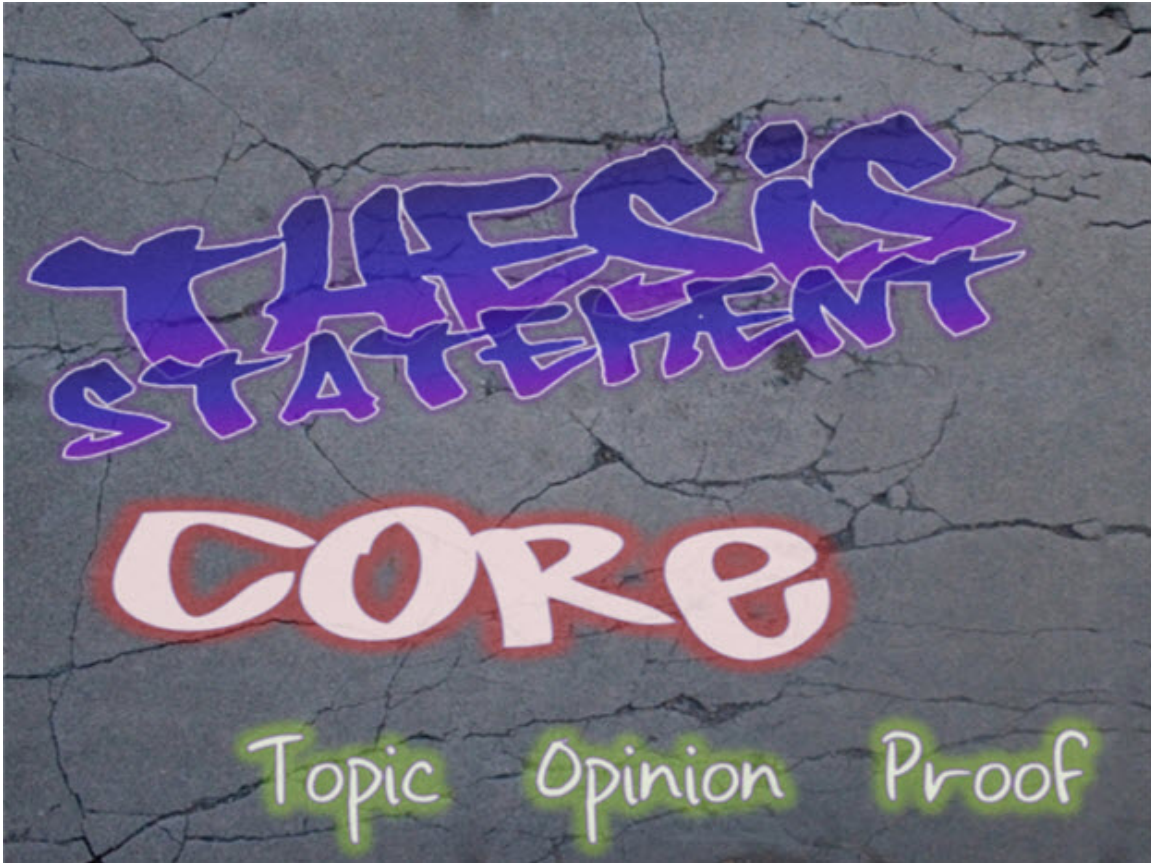


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Topic 5 Content: Creating a Thesis Statement and Outlining

Thesis Statement

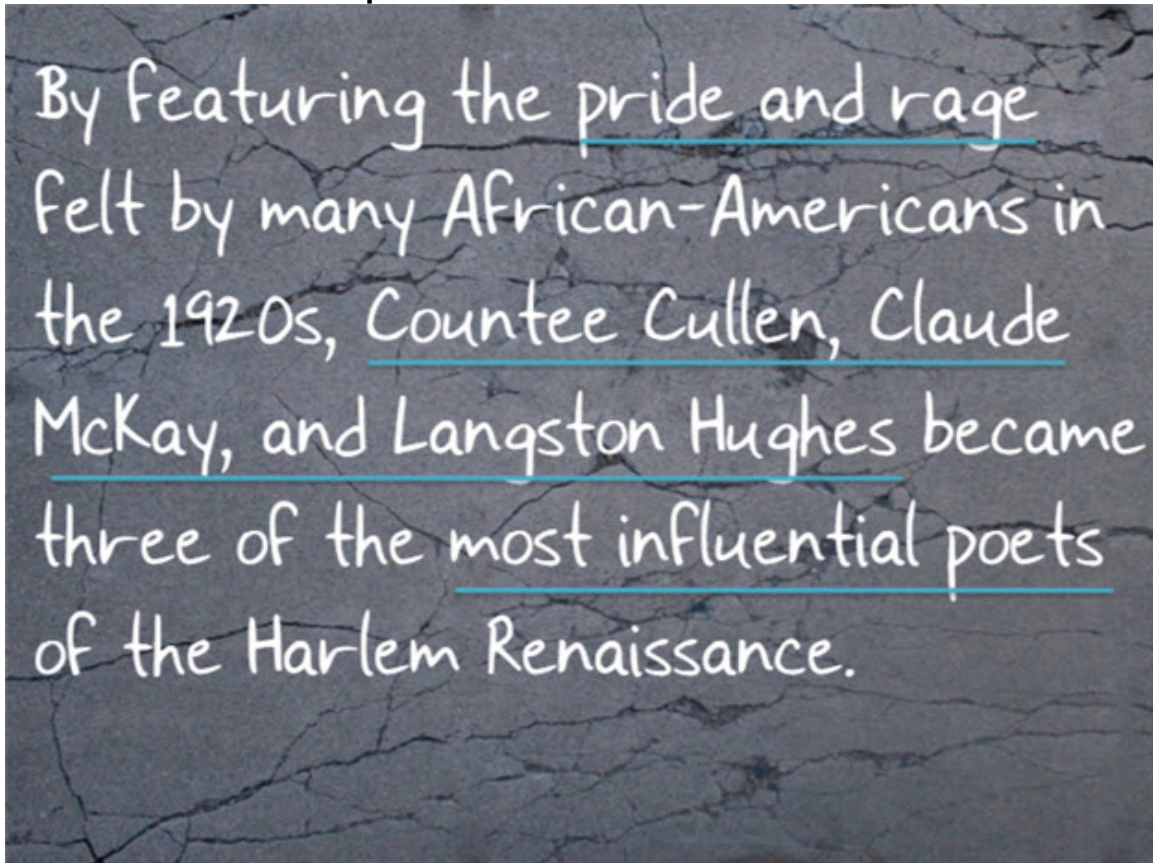


As you may know, the thesis statement is a sentence that sums up the central point of your essay, and it is usually the last sentence of the introduction. A thesis statement for an MLA paper is the same as one for any other paper. Think of the thesis statement as the core of your paper. It tells your audience the topic that will be discussed in your paper and states your opinion of the topic. A good thesis is specific, takes a stand, and gives the reader a preview of the points you will use to prove your stance.

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Thesis Statement Example



Take a moment to look at this effective thesis statement.

By featuring the pride and rage felt by many African-Americans in the 1920s, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes became three of the most influential poets of the Harlem Renaissance.

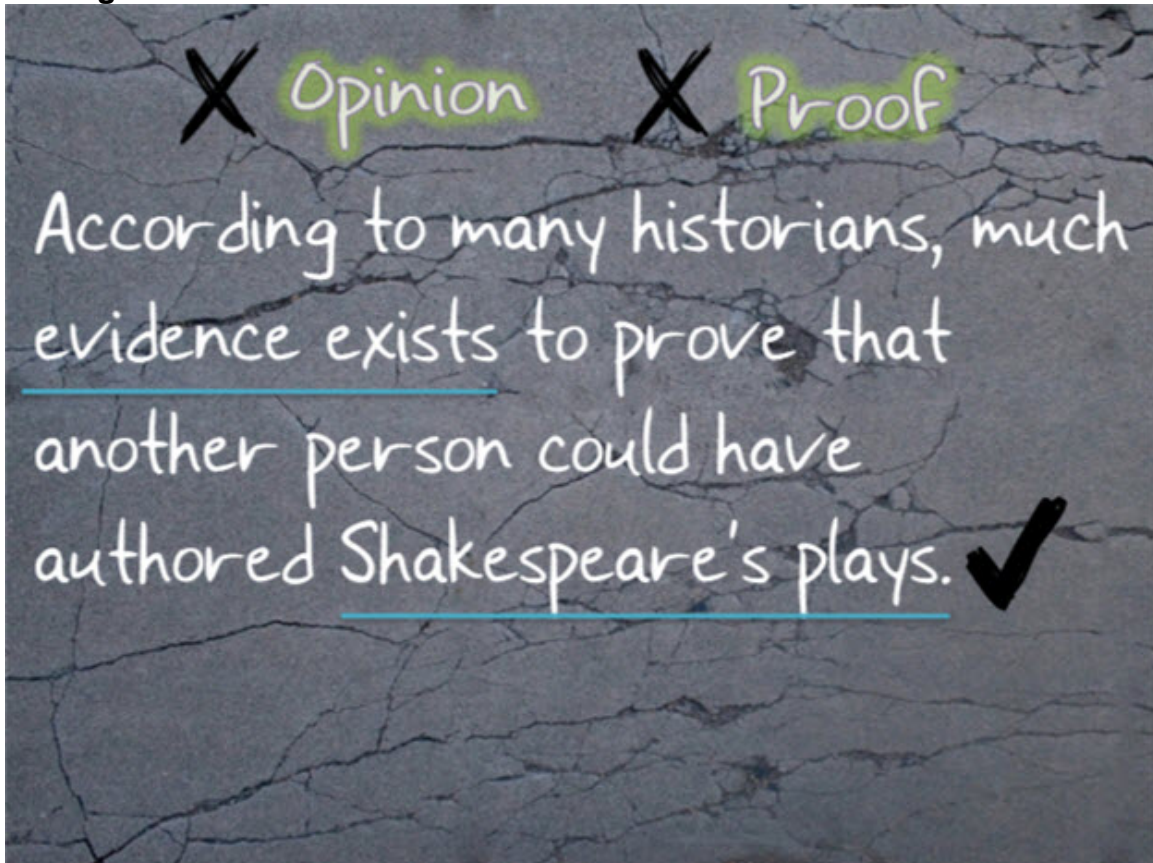
This statement meets all three criteria for a good thesis statement:

- It names the subjects, which are the poets of the Harlem Renaissance, including Cullen, McKay, and Hughes;
- It states an opinion or argument (that these poets were three of the most influential); and
- It provides a measure to prove the point, which is that their poems feature the pride and rage in the African-American culture during the 1920s.

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Making a Thesis Statement Better



Now, take a moment to examine this thesis statement.

According to many historians, much evidence exists to prove that another person could have authored Shakespeare's plays.

How can you improve this thesis statement? To improve this statement, you need to examine the three criteria:

- Name the subject or topic, which is the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. This information is in the original statement, so no change needs to be made here.
- State a defensible opinion or argument about the topic. The writer of this thesis statement needs to take a stand and pick a side, which is that Shakespeare wrote his own plays or that someone else wrote Shakespeare's plays.
- Suggest how the opinion or argument will be proven. The writer states that evidence exists, but it needs to be more specific. What is the specific evidence?

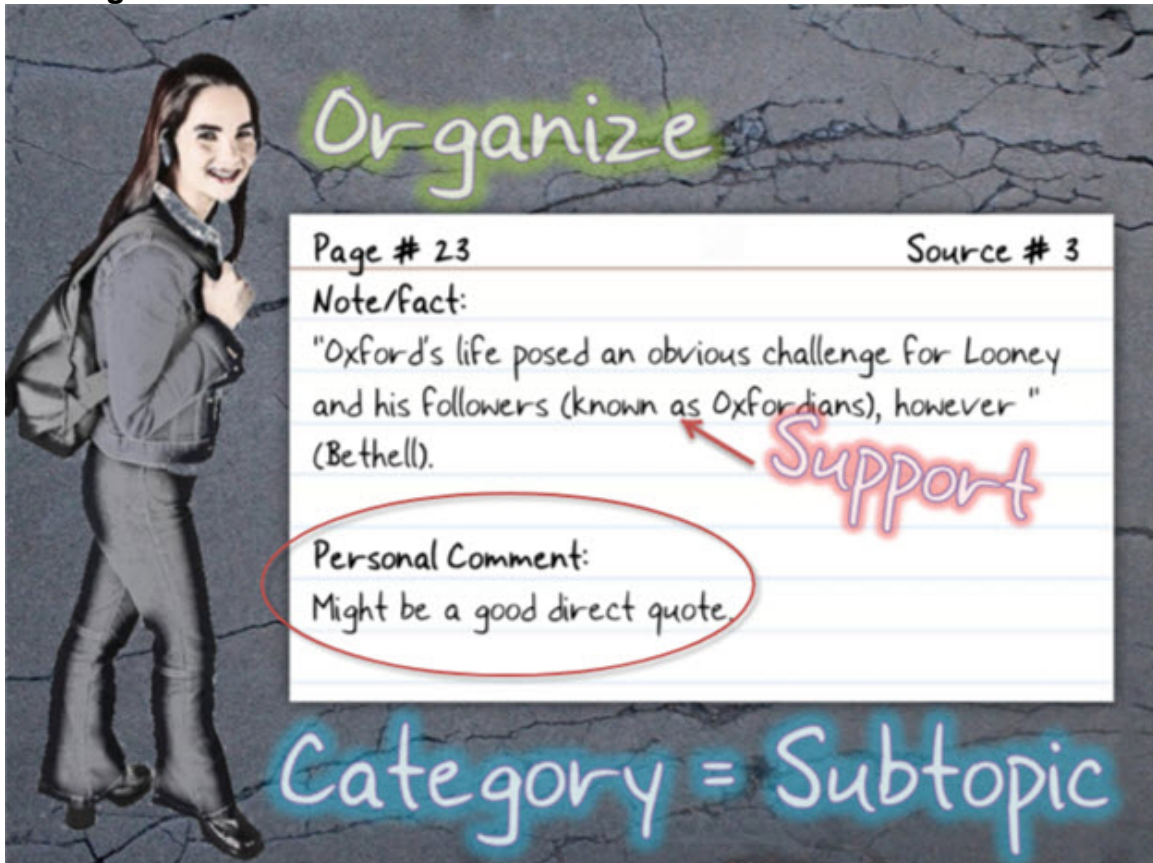
Now, look at this revised thesis statement.

The lack of documentation regarding formal education and work history supports the claim that William Shakespeare of Stratford is not the true author of the works attributed to him.

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Get Organized



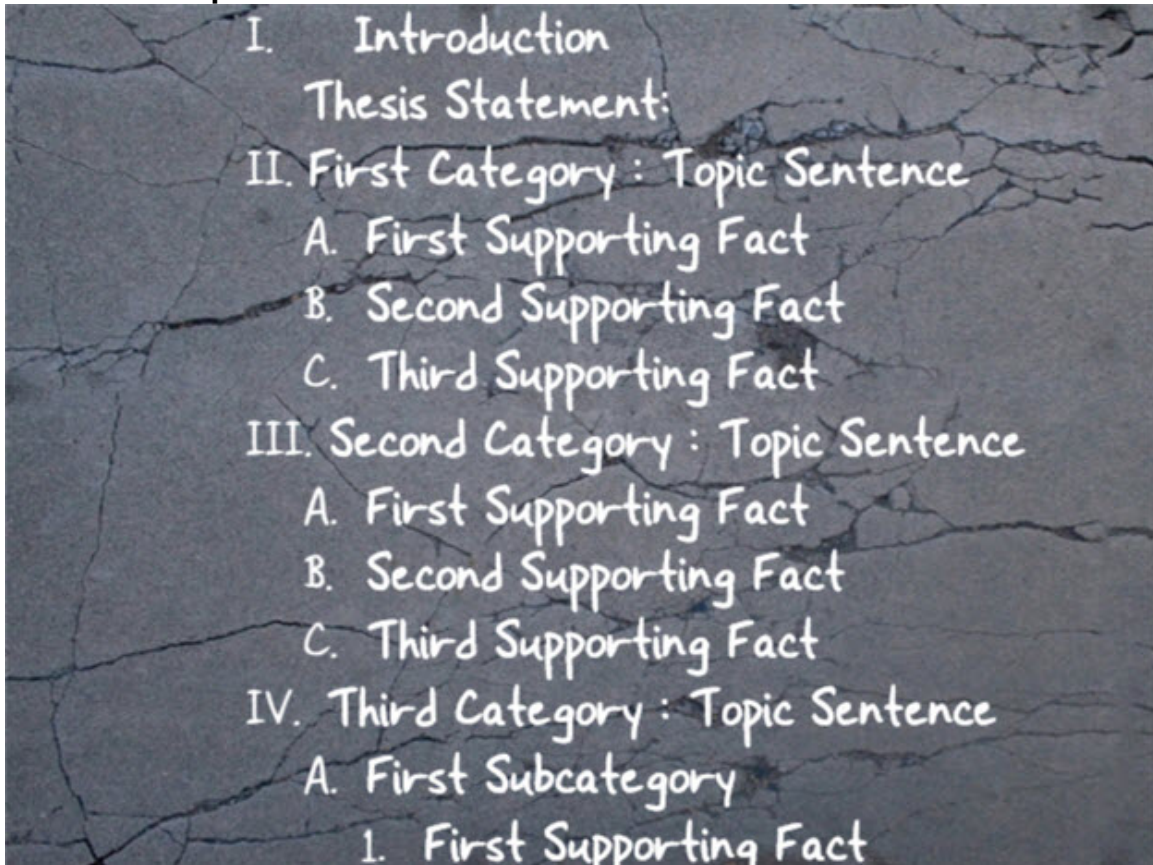
Once you have your thesis statement, you have a direction for the rest of your paper. Now you have an opinion you will need to prove using the facts you have gathered. It is time to create the map, or outline, you will follow when writing your paper.

To start, you need to organize your facts. Take your note cards and sort them into categories. These categories represent the sections, or subtopics, of your paper. The facts on the note cards become the details to support the topic sentence of each section. As you take notes, it may help to put comments about where to place information on the bottom of your note card. If you do, then sorting the facts should be easy. Remember this rule: Each category you create can have only one main idea.

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Outline Example



Now you can begin your outline. Each category will become a section of the outline, and later each will be a paragraph in the paper. The facts on the note cards become items under the categories. Start at the margin. You will need to begin using Roman numerals for each section of the paper. Roman numeral one is the introduction, and your thesis statement will go there. Roman numerals two, three, and so on become the categories you use to sort your facts. The facts that you enter will be indented and use the capital letters A, B, C, and so on. If you have a category that can be broken down into more subcategories, then those facts will have regular numbers like one, two, three, and so on. This is illustrated in the "Third Category." Remember, you may need to manipulate the format shown here to fit your specific outline. For instance, you may have only two categories, or five categories, and would need to alter the structure to reflect that need. Your conclusion will use the last Roman numeral.