

## What is a Thesis?

A thesis statement is a sentence or series of sentences you will

necessary for you to read the assigned readings thoroughly (see the Critical Reading and Annotation handout for guidance).

## Brainstorming

Once you are confident that you understand the assigned reading, it will be a good idea to brainstorm possible responses to the assignment question. These responses need to be specific enough to answer the question and give full details that help you back up your answer, effectively proving it to the reader. Below you will find a sample brainstorm in response to Ta-Nehisi Coates's article:

None of the above responses to the assignment question could be considered a strong thesis, but no writer gets everything right the first time around (**NOTE: For a fully developed thesis, see the following page**). Every writer goes through many stages of the writing process, and developing a thesis carefully will mean that you write down many different ideas, as the writer in the notes above has done. Some of those ideas will help you, while others won't. This is a necessary step in writing a thesis.

paragraphs. See if you can determine why the last two responses above are not sufficient in themselves.

After considering each of the above responses, a student might come up with the following thesis:

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**Ta-Nehisi Coates claims that for a variety of reasons the American government should pay reparations to black families. I agree that the American government should pay reparations to black Americans because these Americans were prohibited from building wealth through buying homes. The black families being kicked out of their homes as a result of bad loans and the racist civic groups banning these families from their middle-class neighborhoods are two of the reasons why I agree with Coates. I also think that reparations could help my city thrive.**

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The above thesis shows that the writer has chosen two of the reasons from the brainstormed list above and elaborated on them. By using the specific points that came out of this elaboration, the writer has also given two examples that help prove the claim that the government should pay reparations. Most importantly, the writer has answered the question directly. The two examples (families kicked out of their homes, and the discriminatory civic groups) will be expanded on in the body paragraphs that come after.