

## Organization Choices

1. Time: Organize chronologically, moving through the events in the novel or poem. (Note that I have only given examples of two topic sentences; these thesis statements often will require more.)

Thesis The conch in *Lord of the Flies* represents the decay of order and civilization.  
 TS1 In **chapter one**, the conch is discovered and revered for its power to call the children to an ordered meeting.  
 TS2 In **chapter three**, the conch shows signs of losing its civilizing power.

2. Place: Organize according to locations in the text.

Thesis The marriages in *Great Expectations* depict the variety of virtues and vices present in this British community.  
 TS1 Near the story's beginning, the reader encounters the **home of Joe and Mrs. Joe**, a home where truth and innocence are preys upon.  
 TS2 Later, the reader visits the **Pockets' home**, a place of idleness and self-centeredness.

Thesis In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester models the emotional strength uncharacteristic of a stereotypical seventeenth century woman.

TS1 Exiting the **prison door**, Hester's demeanor shows the reader her assertiveness.  
 TS2 At the **governor's house**, Hester forcefully displays her confidence.

**TS ≠ plot detail only**  
 A topic sentence that contains only a plot detail does not communicate an organization choice or an aspect of the thesis. For example, *Piggy discovers the conch near the lagoon in chapter one* is a plot detail and not a topic sentence.

3. Idea: This approach includes papers organized by a definition, a classification, an analogy/ comparison, a comparison-contrast, or a cause-effect. The topic sentences, then, articulate separate parts of the thesis statement. For example, topic sentences might define the aspects of a definition, classify the evidence into categories, identify one cause, etc.

Thesis In *The Tempest* Prospero possesses the qualities of leadership all communities hope to produce.  
 TS1 Prospero demonstrates an ability to restrain his emotions.  
 TS2 Prospero recognizes that those who commit crimes must receive consequences.

Thesis In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer uses his characters to explore three moral categories.  
 TS1 The **lowest level** Chaucer describes is one of complete depravity.

## CHECK THE DICTION OF THE TOPIC SENTENCES

### • Word glue

Does the writer use word glue to connect the topic sentences with the statement? The writer may use synonyms or exact words from the thesis statement. The writer or reader should be able to draw circles around words in the thesis and topic sentences. If the writer can't, the reader understand how the writer plans to prove the argument. *As in the pre examples that demonstrate organization choices, pp. 114–115, the underline words here are the glue tying the topic sentence to the thesis.*

Thesis In *Great Expectations* the use of the hands motif indicates location in the **journey toward maturity**.

### • Original First topic sentence

Pip lives in a household of violence and poor relationships. (*This is a plot detail.*)

### Revised

Pip first encounters the impressionable stage of childhood, where not yet able to evaluate situations critically; consequently, Pip sur association between hands and acrimonious relationships.

### • Original Second topic sentence

Pip begins to hate his life at the forge after he visits Miss Havisham a (*This is merely a fact from the chapter.*)

### Revised

Shortly after early childhood, Pip begins to grow into the more

Thesis In *Great Expectations* Pip finds himself in a situation paralleling the parable of the prodigal son.  
 TS1 The **Bible's parable begins** with the prodigal son who dissatisfied with his present situation in life, asks his inheritance.  
 TS2 After he leaves his home and father, Pip, the prodigal **squanders** his inheritance on a life of dissipation.

Thesis In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the battle between the human inhuman is resolved, with Stryver fleeing as a hypocrite the unlikely Carton rising as a phoenix to save him.  
 TS1 The reader first meets Stryver, the **self-important opportunist**, contrasted to Carton, a **self-deprecating servant**, at the trial of Charles Darnay in the Old Bailey.  
 TS2 Next, in Stryver's office, the reader glimpses the night business interactions between **an underestimated** a roaring lion.