5 Quick Tips Writing a Thesis for a critical analysis paper
The Thesis

The Thesis is:
• A conclusive statement of an argument.
• A response to a debatable question.
• A proposition that asserts and claims what your paper will support.

The Thesis also:
• Uncovers the author’s intentions
• Focuses on larger issues- wider themes that speak to the ideas behind the text
• Interrogates the author’s text and ideas.
• Builds into its content a summary of the direction in which the argument is going.
• Presumes that the author has shaped characters, made decisions about plot and is trying to carry through some ideas.

The Thesis is not:
• Exploratory, it is a conclusive statement made after assessing the meaning of the work.
• A debate with the characters in the work.
• Merely an observation of the text.
The Critical Analysis Paper

Read some Literary Criticism papers before you begin, identify the ‘question’ the ‘thesis’ and the writer’s analysis of the AUTHOR’s
1 Begin With a Conclusion

- Write your paper based on an idea or question (derived from the text) that you find interesting and want to explore.
- Make some closing conclusive remark that will justify the journey you have taken.
- Take this statement from the end of the essay and place it at the beginning of the essay as your thesis.
- Begin to re-write the essay with the intention of trying to prove (with evidence from the text), that your assertions are accurate.

Remember you are discussing the AUTHOR’s ideas and how the AUTHOR conveys these ideas.
EXAMPLE
Select the symbol in the text that interests you

‘Bright clear blue sky on the day of the funeral’
Write a paper on why you think this occurred, what the AUTHOR may have been thinking, what the author was trying to say. Maybe the author used a ‘bright blue sky’ to act as a counter point to the sorrow of the funeral. Maybe the author uses other ‘happy’ things in contrast with painful experiences to make a certain point.

Your Conclusion

You conclude that the AUTHOR shows that the world is callous and unfeeling, and goes on regardless of what is happening to individuals at a particular time and place.

Your ‘working’ thesis.

“'The AUTHOR uses nature to present an existential view of the world--to argue that the world is callous and unfeeling and that people have to survive in such a horrid place."

You can now rewrite your essay, using your ‘working’ thesis. Your paper should provide evidence from the text proving that your thesis is accurate. Re-read your paper, and REVISE your thesis as needed.
2 Begin With a Question

Construct a good question.

- Ask a question that is debatable.*
- Ask about how and why the AUTHOR makes certain decisions in character, text and symbols.
- Ask about the AUTHOR’S attitudes and beliefs.

State your response to the AUTHOR’S views and writing.

- Do you agree or disagree with the author or other critics?
- Do you have an answer to the question?
- Justify your response or explain your answer.

Summarize some evidence from the text that supports your response.
Your Question
Richard Wright shows a certain level of chauvinism and misogyny in his work. Do you agree with this accusation?

Your Answer
Yes. Richard Wright diminishes women to promote the black male.

Justify Your Answer- How does he do this?
In his unfair portrayal of Sara and other female characters in “Long Black Song”.

Working Thesis
In ‘Long Black Song’, Richard Wright’s unfair portrayal of Sara reveals a tendency towards misogyny and chauvinism. His female characters are constantly disruptive, sexually promiscuous and always destroying the lives of the men they care about. Wright offers very few positive traits in his work. Ultimately, he diminishes women to promote the black male.
Is the Question Debatable or Not?

These shoes are black.” (Observation)
“I like black shoes.” (Opinion/Observation)
“Black shoes are the best shoes.” (Debatable-potential thesis)

A thesis does not state the obvious. The obvious is proven by mere observation. If your thesis is an observation, your essay will be simply a retelling of the work.
4 Revise Your Thesis

Is your Thesis:
• A conclusive statement of an argument.
• A response to a debatable question.
• A proposition that asserts and claims what your paper will support.

Does your Thesis also:
• Uncover the AUTHOR’S intentions.
• Focus on larger issues- wider themes that speak to the ideas behind the text.
• Interrogate the AUTHOR’S text and ideas.
• Build into it’s content a summary of the direction in which the argument is going.
• Presume that the AUTHOR has shaped characters, made decisions about plot and is trying to carry through some ideas.
Have you edited your Thesis?
The thesis is not finalized until you have finished writing the paper.

What should you do now?
• Rework your thesis after you have discovered new information or changed your opinion,
• Re-write your thesis to address more specific issues presented in your essay.
• Ask a friend to read your thesis for clarity, and to see if they understand what your paper is about.
The only way to strengthen your thesis writing is to practice thesis writing.

- Write a list of questions.
- Write a thesis for each question.

You don’t have to know the text to create a thesis about it. It is a matter of reading the question, digging out the point of contention and then giving it shape in the form of a thesis.

The skill of knowing how to write a good thesis will be valuable to you in any field that you might be in. It’s all about making a case.