

Student says:

I have learned in class that I should generally present my thesis statement near the beginning of my essay. However, I have also learned that not all writers, especially those writing outside of a college class, will present their thesis statements in the same way. Some authors present their thesis statements at the end; some may have an implied thesis; but all arguments should have a clear purpose, and the thesis statement is a great way to present that purpose.

In this article, the author, Louis Menand, writes about the many purposes of higher education. He uses story after story to make points, but the audience might be a little confused about what the main purpose of Menand's essay is until near the end.

The author really presents what I consider to be his thesis in paragraph forty-seven. He writes, "Assuming that these new books are right (not a fully warranted assumption), and that many students are increasingly disengaged from the academic part of the college experience, it may be because the system has become too big and too heterogeneous to work equally well for all who are in it."

There is a lot going on in this thesis. First, I see that he is making a qualified claim that the college experience may not be working for many students. He makes it clear that he is basing this claim on the many books he has explored throughout his essay, and then writes, "Assuming that these new books are right." He makes it clear he cannot say for sure.

However, putting this qualifier on his claim only helps to establish his credibility because he sounds like a reasonable person as he makes his claim. Moreover, because he has spent forty-six paragraphs supporting this claim he qualifies, the audience is, most likely, going to "buy into" this claim, even with the qualifier.

But, there is another part to his claim that he does not qualify. In the second half of his thesis statement, Menand explains what he thinks are the reasons students are disengaged: it is because the system is too big and trying too hard to be all things to all people.

Menand makes his thesis very clear at this point, which gives a greater purpose to his whole essay. I think the article would have been an easier read if this thesis statement had been presented at the beginning of the essay, but I understand that this style of writing, the kind published in *The New Yorker*, is not going to follow the same structure as an academic essay.