Simplistic Thesis Statements:

In the novel Animal Farm, George Orwell demonstrates fascism.

In the short story “The Scarlet Ibis”, James Hurst makes a commentary about pride.

In the play The Tragedy of Julius Caesar, William Shakespeare uses Brutus to illustrate arrogance.

In the epic poem The Odyssey, Homer uses Odysseus to teach about cleverness.

Mark Twain uses Jim and Huck, two misfits fleeing from an abusive and ignorant society, to illustrate friendship in his novel, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Notice that the above thesis statements provide topics, but do not give the author’s opinions about those topics. They make no attempt at explaining why fascism, pride, arrogance, cleverness, and friendship are worthy topics for literature, nor do they go beyond the obvious. All of these observations are surface-level facts that anyone who reads the novels is expected to understand.

More Complex Thesis Statements:

In the novel Animal Farm, George Orwell uses the government of the farm to show that even governments with noble beginnings can become corrupt under the right circumstances.

In the short story, “The Scarlet Ibis”, James Hurst proves that pride can have both negative and positive consequences.

In the play The Tragedy of Julius Caesar, William Shakespeare uses Julius Caesar and Marcus Brutus to show that arrogance has terrible consequences.

In the epic poem The Odyssey, Homer uses Odysseus to teach his readers that intelligence is vital for survival.

In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain uses Jim and Huck to point out that strong friendships can transcend the boundaries of race and prejudice.

These statements go beyond the obvious and make judgments about the author’s opinions about the topics. There is still enough information missing so that the reader has something to learn from the rest of the essay, but the writer can now begin to explore the author’s purpose and express his or her own opinions.
Thesis Statements that attempt to analyze literary devices or styles:

In the novel *Animal Farm*, George Orwell uses symbolic elements in the government of the farm to show that even governments with noble beginnings can become corrupt under the right circumstances.

In the short story “The Scarlet Ibis”, James Hurst draws an analogy between Doodle, a young boy fighting for normalcy and survival, and a scarlet ibis, a tropical bird blown off course in a storm, to demonstrate the precious and fragile nature of life.

In the drama *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, William Shakespeare uses foreshadowing, dramatic irony, and the character of Brutus, to demonstrate the role of fate in downfall of the tragic hero.

In the epic poem *The Odyssey*, Homer uses allegory to illustrate that cleverness, intelligence, and wisdom have more value than physical strength.

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain uses internal conflict and satire to demonstrate that society and religion cannot determine true morality; instead, morality must come from an internal concept of absolute right and wrong.

Not only do these thesis statements explore a topic and give the author’s opinion about it, but they also explain to the reader why and how the author uses a particular literary device to further their point.