1. As the lesson begins, I will ask students to take out their previous notes on the Rwandan genocide.
2. “So now we’ve come to the good part: actually writing the paper.”

“You’ve watched *Hotel Rwanda*; you’ve read about Paul Rusesabagina. Now it’s time for us to hear what you think.”

1. “Today what we’re going to do is look at thesis statements.”
2. “Probably nothing is more important to writing as a skill than having a quality thesis statement. If you don’t have a good thesis statement, your writing isn’t going to work. No one will know what you’re talking about, and they won’t want to go further. With a good thesis statement, you’re powerful and you’ve got people in the palm of your hand.”
3. At this point we have moved into the lesson proper.
4. In order to bribe the students to be engaged in thesis statements, I will break out an old teacher trick called Leftover Halloween Candy.
5. For every question I ask, the student that answers gets free candy. I’m just stating that here so I don’t have to repeat it every time.
6. I will ask the class to identify characteristics of a good thesis statement.
7. Everyone who answers will be asked to write it on the board.
8. I will likely involve 3-5 students in this process.
9. Some of the characteristics we’re looking for: In the introductory paragraph(s); list the main argument of the paper and the support; should be both robust and direct; not monotonous.
10. I will then add to this any needed characteristics the students have not mentioned.
11. This whole process should take 8-10 minutes.
12. I will then pull up several thesis statements I have written onto the document camera and ask the students to critique them.
13. “Let’s look at these statements as writers. What sets up a great paper, and what doesn’t?”
14. For each one, I will ask students what they notice is done well, and what is weak and could be strengthened.
15. Discussion is woven into this.
16. This should take about 5 minutes.
17. “Now, the last thing I want to do before you all begin writing is I want to model writing a thesis statement. Because when I was in school, I could look at thesis statements and see what was wrong with them, but it didn’t always mean I could write one on my own. Maybe that’s your experience, and maybe it isn’t.”
18. I will write a thesis statement on why chocolate chip cookies are better than oatmeal raisin on the document camera, thinking out loud as a model as I do so.
19. I will ask the students for 3 reasons why chocolate chip is better, and then work them into a thesis statement.
20. I anticipate this part of the lesson taking 3-5 minutes.
21. “Now it’s your all’s turn. You have your Rwanda notes in front of you, you have a list on the board of what makes a good thesis statement. I want you to take out a sheet of lined paper.”
22. “I’m going to give you 8 minutes now to write your own thesis statement. Sit for a few minutes, look over your notes, decide your main arguments and evidence, and then when you’re ready, write the thesis on that paper. Go.”
23. During these 8 minutes I will walk throughout the classroom observing.
24. At the end of 8 minutes, I will announce the time.
25. I will then split the students into groups of 4 by numbering off throughout the classroom, and putting the groups at different parts of the room.
26. I will now put the attached Peer Review Thesis Questions sheet under the document camera.
27. “Now what we’re going to do is review each other’s thesis statements. No one is grading this, no one is going to see it other than the person who wrote the thesis.
28. “If Student A has a thesis that really is no good, but I’m uncomfortable and say, ‘Oh, everything’s fine,’ is that helping them?”
29. Students answer no.
30. “Good. So let’s help each other and be honest and reflective in our feedback. As you read, think about your own thesis. How can we write, and help each other write, good thesis statements?”
31. Pass the thesis statements around. In 3-minute intervals, students write guided feedback on the thesis.
32. There are 4 questions on the Peer Review sheet. They are:
33. Underline and make a note of every characteristic the thesis statement has that we listed on the board.
34. List any characteristics we listed that the thesis statement does **not** have.
35. Do you know what main argument the paper will make after reading this thesis statement? If so, briefly restate it. Make a note of anything you’re unsure of.
36. Keep the same paper. Does this thesis make you want to keep reading? Or is it boring? Answer why or why not in 1-2 sentences, and provide **one** way the writer could make the thesis more engaging.
37. This activity will take 12-15 minutes..
38. Students now have their own paper back.
39. In 2-minute intervals, students read their thesis aloud and the group provides oral feedback as a group in addition the individualized written feedback.
40. Students make their own notes on their theses for further revision.
41. This activity of oral feedback can be eliminated based on time if necessary, as can the next part.
42. If there is time, ask students to share their revisions: what did they have before, and what do they have now?
43. We now move into the winding down phase of the lesson.
44. Students will now fill out an exit slip on a half sheet of paper.
45. The question: “On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that you can write an effective thesis? What questions do you have?”
46. Students will hand in these exit slips as class is dismissed.

**Practice Thesis Statements**

1. Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups are absolutely better than M&M’s.
2. In this paper, I will argue Highland High School needs to design multiple exits to its parking lot in order to improve student safety and community traffic flow.
3. Due to its roots in European folk melodies translated through the early American wilderness experience, as well as its synthesis of blues, gospel, and Americana roots, country music is best described as the perfect American musical sound: endlessly appealing and simultaneously instantly adaptable to reflective trends and progressions.