

STUDENT HANDOUT 10.3 (2 of 2)

Main Claim

Authors of expository texts may directly state their main or central claim in the form of a thesis statement or they might use guiding language (i.e., my argument is, I contend that, my position is clear, or other language that offers direction) to lead their readers to the central claim of the argument. Sometimes authors will make a central claim in the beginning of the text and other times they will wait until the end. When authors do not explicitly state their central claim, a reader must infer it from the sub-claims and evidence in the text. One way to approach this type of work is to ask, "What does it all add up to?" You might also ask, "What is the main point that the author is making?"

If the author provides his or her main claim in the text, paraphrase or directly quote the claim on the lines provided. If the main or central claim is not directly stated, you will need to refer to the sub-claims listed on the previous page, review the author's evidence in the text, and through inference, make a conclusion about the author's main claim.

Crafting an Argument Statement

- Step 1:** Introduce the text and the author, and provide comments about the author or the text.
- Step 2:** Paraphrase or directly quote the author's main claim. (Use a verb, such as argues, claims, contends, asserts, or another verb to set off the claim.)

Sample Argument Statement

In her essay "The Wreck of Time: Taking Our Century's Measure," Annie Dillard—a prolific writer and teacher of writing—suggests that the 20th Century is insignificant when one considers the hundreds of civilizations that have come and gone (122–123).¹

¹Dillard, A. (2006). The wreck of time: Taking our century's measure. In R. Miller (Ed.), *The New Humanities Reader* (pp. 120-129). New York, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin Co.