A Non-Argumentative (and Therefore Bad) Thesis: "The characters in 'Young Goodman Brown' are Puritans." This thesis is not an opinion; it's a fact. Facts can't be argued, so the paper is finished before it's been started. The reader will ask, "so what?"

A Too-Vague (and Therefore Meaningless) Thesis: "'Young Goodman Brown' is about Puritanism." This statement is a little more argumentative than the one above (a story could give many different perspectives on Puritanism), but it's still primarily factual, and it gives no indication of the author's focus or opinion.

A Better Thesis: "In his story 'Young Goodman Brown,' Nathaniel Hawthorne examines the dangers of Puritan extremism about evil. Because Goodman Brown is oppressed by his belief in the power of the devil, he eventually allows this belief to overpower his faith in God."

Another Good Thesis: "In 'Young Goodman Brown,' Nathaniel Hawthorne uses light and dark imagery as a symbolic backdrop to his tale of a young man's discovery of evil in the world."