

## **Problem Statement Template**

If you're having trouble writing a problem statement, try brainstorm ways to fill in the blanks. These are only guidelines; you don't need to use them, and you probably shouldn't use exactly this wording in your final essay.

### **Stable Context**

Describe unchanging facts about the topic/problem.

For many years, people have debated about \_\_\_\_\_.

Or  
\_\_\_\_\_ has been controversial because \_\_\_\_\_.

Or  
\_\_\_\_\_ has dominated discussions of \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Status Quo**

State common but incorrect or incomplete assumptions.

Many people think \_\_\_\_\_.

Or

At first glance, it may seem like \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Destabilizing Moment**

Describe something that reveals the status quo assumptions to be incomplete or inaccurate.

This initial perception fails to take into account \_\_\_\_\_.

Or

This theory can't explain \_\_\_\_\_.

Or

People have failed to notice, however, \_\_\_\_\_.

## Consequences

Show readers why they should care: what bad things will happen if people continue to believe the status quo? what good things will happen once they stop believing it?

If we continue to believe \_\_\_\_\_, we'll never understand the larger question of \_\_\_\_\_.

Or

Unless we change \_\_\_\_\_, we will continue to have trouble with \_\_\_\_\_.

Or

Once we understand \_\_\_\_\_, we'll begin to see the answer to the problem \_\_\_\_\_.

Or

By rethinking our approach to \_\_\_\_\_, we can fix \_\_\_\_\_.

## Resolution

Provide a better theory/explanation to replace the status quo. State your claim.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## **Brainstorming Problem Statements**

If the template isn't working for you, try starting with these questions. Take your answers to these question and put them into fairy-tale order (Status Quo, Destabilizing Moment, Consequences, Resolution). Then, try turning those answers into a form that will match the problem statement template.

### **Resolution**

State your claim. Name something interesting that you've learned about the topic from reading/discussion/research.

### **Consequences**

Why do you think the claim is interesting or important? What bigger questions has it helped you answer? What problems has it helped you to understand or solve?

### **Destabilizing Moment**

What specific fact/concept/reading/etc. helped you to discover the claim?

### **Status Quo**

Before you discovered the claim, what incorrect or incomplete opinion did you hold about the topic?