

## Term: “Defensible”

---

**Definition:** A thesis statement is defensible if a) an opposing argument / alternative view can reasonably be argued (even if it’s the weaker argument) and b) it is not an obvious truth about the content / text.

**NOTE:** For “Seminar Thinkers” History PBAs (level 0 - first three history PBAs in 9th grade), we are expanding our definition of defensible. In many ways, the scholar’s job is to clarify the interpretation and argument of the author. The scholar’s argument is defensible because the scholar must use a strong position and evidence to prove what they think the author is saying; however, if the scholar’s thesis is strong, it most likely will be a “correct” interpretation of the text. This type of position will be considered defensible for the “Seminar Thinkers” history PBAs (level 0 - first three history PBAs in 9th grade). *(It is true that at a high level, one can criticize the historical narrative of seminar thinkers - this type of thinking is truly graduate school work and will not be touched upon in 11th grade historiography.)*

### Example

---

“Jean Valjean is a sympathetic character.”

**Analysis:** This thesis for *Les Misérables* is defensible-- even complex-- although not nuanced.

“In the “Arab Spring” of 2011, the unprecedented role of online social media provided a blueprint of what will be a new era of governmental change-- a successful revolution with no leader other than the voice of the masses.”

**Analysis:** There are several aspects of this thesis statement that make it defensible: 1) It qualifies the revolution as “successful”, 2) It argues that this revolution will be a blueprint for future revolutions, rather than a fluke, 3) It makes the claim that there was no real leader in the revolution; while it’s a universal truth that there is no singular, highly publicized leader in the revolution, a different writer could find a few key leaders and argue that their work was more behind the scenes.

### Non-Example

---

“Jean Valjean suffers in his life”

**Analysis:** This thesis statement for *Les Misérables* is NOT a defensible thesis statement (although it is certainly a position, in a way that “Jean Valjean is the main protagonist of *Les Misérables*” is not). The fact that Jean Valjean suffers is an obvious truth about the text that no one could reasonably contradict, although as a stand-alone, esoteric argument, it might appear defensible.

“In the “Arab Spring” of 2011, online social media played a major role in communication about the revolution.”

**Analysis:** this is a FACT about the revolution that is not defensible on any level; no one can dispute this statement.