"Working" means "practice" or "scratch." A working thesis gives you enough focus and enough direction to proceed with your essay, critical analysis, or research paper, but also freedom to change as you go.

The thesis is your argument, your opinion, and your point. IT'S WHAT YOU HAVE TO PROVE IN YOUR PAPER.

A thesis statement is the one-sentence expression of your argument. It is made up of two basic parts:

1. the topic of your paper - what your paper is about
2. your ideas/focus/opinion on that topic.

EXAMPLE: Greeting cards (paper's topic) reflect the changes in twentieth century American society (opinion).

A practice or working version of this might have read more like this: Greeting cards show how things have changed.

With this start, you would soon realize the need to narrow your focus either through research (for research papers) or through more prewriting for expository essays for Comp I and critical analyses for Comp II. Greeting cards have been around for a long time in many countries. The ones we are most familiar with, probably, are American and modern. The "things" that "have changed" are certain aspects of American society.

Some thesis statements, called supported thesis statements, also contain indications of the three major divisions of support, in your paper, a kind of essay map.

EXAMPLE: In their words, artwork, and reasons for being given (major directions of support in paper), greeting cards (topic) reflect major changes in twentieth century American society (opinion).
**Note:** the order in which the directions of support are listed in the thesis statement must be the order in which they will appear in the paper.