Research Paper Thesis Creation

**Step 1:** Start simple with your thesis, you can always expand. Locate the **operative word**, and then find synonyms. Pick the synonym you think best expresses your ideas.

* **operative word—**the most [important](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us?q=important) word in a phrase, which [explains](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us?q=explains) the [truth](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us?q=truth) of a [situation](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us?q=situation):He *was* a [painter](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us?q=painter)— *'was'* being the operative word since he [died](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us?q=died) last [week](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us?q=week).

EX. If my choice poem was an adaptation of *The Odyssey*, and I researched other examples of the sirens in ancient times, my fledgling thesis, or “thesis starter” might look like this:

**N.B.** This “thesis starter” has parts A & B, but not C, of a thesis (a.k.a. it still needs a significance [ugh]).

Many ancient myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **use** thesirens.

Then I find all the synonyms for “**use**” that I can, and pick the one that I feel best describes the relationship between myths, the *Odyssey*, and the sirens:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Use** | **Utilize** | **Employ** |
| **Apply** | **Capitalize on** | **Abuse** |
| **Include** | **Incorporate** | **Embrace** |
| **Involve** | **Absorb** | **Wield** |
| **Integrate** | **Embrace** | **Unite**I choose “exercise.” |
| **Manipulate** | **Contain** | **Exercise**  |
|  |  |  |

**Step 2:** The synonym that I feel best describes the way the sirens are used in the *Odyssey* is “**exercise.”** Now I just have to find the definition of “exercise” that most accurately describes what I feel.

**According to a combination of Dictionary.com and the Oxford English Dictionary:**

**N.B.** Because I am using “exercise” as a verb in my thesis starter, I am using definitions of “exercise” as a verb, not a noun.

## ex·er·cise [**ek**-ser-sahyz]

***verb (used with object),*ex·er·cised, ex·er·cis·ing.**

**1.** to put through exercises, or forms of practice or exertion, designed to train, develop, condition, or the like*: to exercise a horse.*

**2.** to put (faculties, rights, etc.) into action, practice, or use: *to exercise freedom of speech.*

**3.** [with object] to cause (an animal) to take exercise: *she exercised her dogs before breakfast*

**4.** to make use of (one's privileges, powers, etc.): *to exercise one's constitutional rights.*

**Step 3:** Apply that definition to your thesis starter

Thesis Starter: Many ancient myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **exercise** thesirens.

Or, more specifically (according to my definition of exercise):

**1.** Many ancient myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **put through exercises, or forms of practice or exertion, designed to train, develop, or condition** thesirens.

**2.** … including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **put into (faculties, rights, etc.) into action, practice, or use** the sirens.

**3.** … myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey****,* [with object] to cause (an animal) to take exercise** thesirens.

**4.** … myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **make use of (one's privileges, powers, etc.)** thesirens.

**Step 4:** Begin finding examples that support each definition.

1. Many ancient myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **put through exercises, or forms of practice or exertion, designed to train, develop, or condition** thesirens.

-Their bodies were specifically designed to be unappealing, to emphasize how appealing their voices were

*🡪The sirens were created, rather than born (sources needed)*

**N.B.** In my notes I used *italics* to separate evidence that comes from research versus the poem (the *Odyssey*); you may organize however you wish.

*🡪always a specific goal/purpose*

*-Demeter turned them into birds because they weren’t* ***fast*** *enough*

*🡪physical failing (source needed)*

-Beeswax > magical song about knowledge = physical > mental

-Odysseus’ mind feels pleasure from their song, but it hurts his body

🡪his body must be stronger

*-The Sirens say they’re better singers than the Muses, they have a contest. Muses win/pluck out all their feathers*

*🡪physical mutilation worse than mental humiliation from losing source needed)*

1. …myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **put into (faculties, rights, etc.) into action, practice, or use** the sirens.

-The sirens only purpose is to test Odysseus’ willpower. They are merely a vehicle; no purpose on their own.

🡪*In some myths the sirens have their own purpose/goals (i.e. they asked Athena to give them wings so they could remain virgins forever (source needed)🡪physical change to accomplish mental mission*

-Siren’s tempt Odysseus with knowledge; *Orpheus only beats them because he can sing louder (source needed)*

🡪 Body v. mind; actually Odysseus’ mind loses, he only “wins” because of his body

🡪Odysseus’ mind finds their singing pleasurable🡪mental weakness

-Odysseus uses the sirens to train himself to resist women, enabling him to return home

 🡪Resists them mentally (“in his heart”), not physically (the body is not as weak/vulnerable)

1. Many ancient myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey****,* to cause (an animal [the sirens]) to take exercise**.

-Not only does Odysseus view himself as being superior to the sirens, but he also views the sirens more like dogs barking at the fence as he sails by, than real women

🡪 sirens have animal bodies; truly beneath him physically, but they are mental equals

-Odysseus pretends it’s something he “has to do” in front of his men (untrue), almost making it seem like he’s doing the sirens a favor by giving them their daily walk🡪mental weakness

*-Demeter gives them bird wings to go run after Persephone, much like playing catch with a dog (source needed)*

🡪*In some versions, she gives them wings to punish them like bad animals (source needed)*

*🡪given animal bodies being the ultimate punishment*

**4.** Many ancient myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **make use of (one's privileges, powers, etc.)** thesirens.

ETC.

**Step 5:** As you build your evidence, a general conclusion should start to emerge, giving you your final thesis:

Many ancient myths, including Homer’s *Odyssey,* **exercise** thesirens, as they represent not the war between the sexes, but between body and mind, or, according to the ancient world, body over mind.