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LEARNING LITERATURE



Penny Puts the Pieces Together

*(Writing your thesis —
your topic, your charge, and your answer)*

Enjoy the companion song:
"Three Pieces to a Thesis"

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MANUSCRIPT (≈660 WORDS) · A STORY WITH RHYME + THE SONG'S CHORUS
WOVEN IN

PAGE 1

Penny loved a lot of things: recess, her dog Champ, and the smell of a brand-new book. There was one thing, though, that Penny did *not* love: the blinking little line at the top of a blank writing page. Today, her teacher Mrs. Ray had written a prompt on the board, "**Explain why recess is important,**" and asked the class to write a thesis about it. Penny's tummy did a flip.

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All around her, pencils were scratching away. Penny just stared. "A *whole* thesis?" she whispered. "I don't have anything to say." She slid down in her chair, feeling smaller and smaller and smaller.

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Mrs. Ray knelt beside her with a smile. "A thesis feels big," she said, "but here's a secret, Penny: a thesis is really just **three little pieces**. Find them one at a time, and you've got the whole thing." Penny sat up a little. Just three? She could count to three.

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"Piece number ONE is your **TOPIC**," said Mrs. Ray. "It's what the prompt is *about*. Hunt for the most important noun in the prompt, a person, place, or thing, and circle it." Penny read the prompt again, *Explain why recess is important*, and spotted it: *recess*. She drew a circle around it, round and round. "Topic, circle the noun!" One piece down.

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"Piece number TWO is your **CHARGE**," said Mrs. Ray. "It's what the prompt asks you to *do* with your topic. Now be careful, Penny. Lots of prompts *start* with a word like *explain*, but the real charge is what you have to **SHOW**. This one wants you to tell why recess *is important*, so the words that truly matter are *is important*." Penny found that verb phrase and boxed it: *is important*. "Charge, box what I have to prove!" One, two.

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"Wait," said Mrs. Ray, leaning in close. "The prompt hides one more clue, a little **clue word** that tells you *how* to answer. Look again: *Explain **why** recess is important*. That word, **why**, is your clue. Put a triangle around it." Penny triangled the word *why*. "Why means my answer has to give a reason!" she said.

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"Here's piece number three, your **ANSWER**," said Mrs. Ray. "The prompt can't give you this one; only you can. The clue word *why* is asking for a reason, so what do **you** think? Why *is* recess important?" Penny thought really, really hard. Slowly, a warm idea rose up like a sunrise: "*Recess helps kids learn better.*" That was her **why**, her very own answer. She drew a triangle around it too, just like the clue word. One, two, **three**.

Penny looked at her three pieces, the circle, the box, and the triangle, and something clicked. She put them together, right out loud: my **topic** is recess... my **charge** is to show why recess *is important*... and my **answer** is that recess helps kids learn better. "That's... that's my **THESIS**!" she gasped.

Just like that, the blank page wasn't scary anymore. Penny felt her shoulders drop. Her tummy unflipped. She wasn't stuck; she was *ready*. She grinned so wide her freckles nearly bumped together. "I had something to say the whole time," she said softly. "I just needed my three little pieces."

The whole class started to chant the words Penny would never, ever forget:

One, two, three, three pieces to a thesis!

Topic! Charge! Answer! That's a thesis, one, two, three!

**Circle the noun, box the verb, triangle the answer in your own words,
topic plus charge plus answer makes a thesis, one, two, three!**

From that day on, whenever Penny met a blank page, she didn't shrink. She *smiled*. She grabbed her pencil and went hunting: a circle for her topic, a box for her charge, and a triangle for the answer that belonged to nobody but her.

Now Penny knew the secret, and so do **you**. A thesis isn't one giant, scary thing. It's just three little pieces, waiting for you to put them together. Two of them come from the prompt. The very best one comes from your own bright mind.

So the next time someone says, "Write a thesis," take a breath, sit up tall, and smile just like Penny. Find your **topic**. Find your **charge**. Add **your answer**. One... two... three, and that once-scary blank page becomes yours to fill.

THE END

♪ *Now sing it together: "Three Pieces to a Thesis"*

REVISED SAMPLE — Book 1 of Penny's Learning Literature. Penny is a real girl; a warm prose story with light rhyme + the song's chorus woven in (Page 10); it teaches the exact skill (a thesis = TOPIC + CHARGE + ANSWER; circle the noun, box the verb, triangle your own answer) and carries a clear confusion → realization → calm & confident arc. If this hits the mark, I'll write the remaining twelve in this same shape.