Topic Sentences and Thesis Statements

Topic sentences:

- It tells what the paragraph will discuss/prove.
- It serves as an "umbrella" for all of the major ideas covered in the paragraph
- It reflects the organization of the ideas in the paragraph (what you'll discuss first, second, etc.)
- It can be specific (by listing the specific ideas you'll cover in the paragraph) or generic (by stating only generally the ideas that you will specify and develop later in the paragraph.)
- It is the first sentence of a body paragraph (for our writing—in practice it may sometimes be elsewhere). We will also end each body paragraph with a topic sentence restatement.

Thesis statements:

- It tells what the whole essay will discuss/prove. It ultimately begins to answer the "question" of the prompt.
- It serves as an "umbrella" for all of the major ideas covered in the body paragraphs of the entire essay.
- It reflects the organization of the ideas in the whole essay (what topics you'll discuss first, second, etc.)
- It can be specific (by listing the specific ideas you'll cover in the essay) or generic (by stating only generally the ideas that you will specify and develop later in the essay.)
- It is generally the last sentence of an introductory paragraph and the first sentence in a conclusion paragraph in an essay.

Overall Comparison of the two:

- Topic sentences and thesis statements do the exact same things *except* that one (topic sentences) is working on a paragraph level and the other (thesis statements) is working on a whole essay level.
- Because thesis statements cover the entire essay, they do **not** go in the body paragraphs—they only go in the intro and conclusion paragraphs. Topic sentences only go in the body paragraphs to further specify/answer/develop the thesis statements. Topic sentences do **not** go in the intro or conclusion paragraph.
- Neither a topic sentence nor a thesis statement need to "grab" the reader's attention. They are purely informing the reader about the main ideas within the essay/paragraph.