Preface

Thirty-two readings, including one scholarly piece and one essay written by a student in each chapter, added in response to requests from many teachers who wanted more complex and documented writing.

They Say / I Blog. Updated monthly, this blog provides up-to-the-minute readings on the issues covered in the book, along with questions that prompt students to literally join the conversation. Check it out at theysayiblog.com.

A chapter on writing in the social sciences. Chapter 13, “Analyze This,” shows students that writing in the social sciences is fundamentally argumentative and provides templates to help them make the basic rhetorical moves that writers in those fields make.

A complete instructor’s guide, with teaching tips for all the chapters, syllabi, summaries of the readings, and suggested answers to the study questions. Go to the Instructor Resources page, wwnorton.com/instructors, to access these materials.

We hope that this new edition of “They Say / I Say” with Readings will spark students’ interest in some of the most pressing conversations of our day and provide them with some of the tools they need to engage in those conversations with dexterity and confidence.

Gerald Graff
Cathy Birkenstein
Russel Durst

Preface to “They Say / I Say”

Experienced writing instructors have long recognized that writing well means entering into conversation with others. Academic writing in particular calls upon writers not simply to express their own ideas, but to do so as a response to what others have said. The first-year writing program at our own university, according to its mission statement, asks “students to participate in ongoing conversations about vitally important academic and public issues.” A similar statement by another program holds that “intellectual writing is almost always composed in response to others’ texts.” These statements echo the ideas of rhetorical theorists like Kenneth Burke, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Wayne Booth as well as recent composition scholars like David Bartholomae, John Bean, Patricia Bizzell, Irene Clark, Greg Colomb, Lisa Ede, Peter Elbow, Joseph Harris, Andrea Lunsford, Elaine Maimon, Gary Olson, Mike Rose, John Swales and Christine Feak, Tilly Warnock, and others who argue that writing well means engaging the voices of others and letting them in turn engage us.

Yet despite this growing consensus that writing is a social, conversational act, helping student writers actually participate in these conversations remains a formidable challenge. This book aims to meet that challenge. Its goal is to demystify academic writing by isolating its basic moves, explaining them
clearly, and representing them in the form of templates. In this way, we hope to help students become active participants in the important conversations of the academic world and the wider public sphere.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Shows students that writing well means entering a conversation, summarizing others (“they say”) to set up one’s own argument (“I say”).**
- **Demystifies academic writing,** showing students “the moves that matter” in language they can readily apply.
- **Provides user-friendly templates** to help writers make those moves in their own writing.

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE

The original idea for this book grew out of our shared interest in democratizing academic culture. First, it grew out of arguments that Gerald Graff has been making throughout his career that schools and colleges need to invite students into the conversations and debates that surround them. More specifically, it is a practical, hands-on companion to his recent book, *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind,* in which he looks at academic conversations from the perspective of those who find them mysterious and proposes ways in which such mystification can be overcome. Second, this book grew out of writing templates that Cathy Birkenstein developed in the 1990s, for use in writing and literature courses she was teaching. Many students, she found, could readily grasp what it meant to support a thesis with evidence, to entertain a counterargument, to identify a textual contradiction, and ultimately to summarize and respond to challenging arguments, but they often had trouble putting these concepts into practice in their own writing. When Cathy sketched out templates on the board, however, giving her students some of the language and patterns that these sophisticated moves require, their writing—and even their quality of thought—significantly improved.

This book began, then, when we put our ideas together and realized that these templates might have the potential to open up and clarify academic conversation. We proceeded from the premise that all writers rely on certain stock formulas that they themselves didn’t invent—and that many of these formulas are so commonly used that they can be represented in model templates that students can use to structure and even generate what they want to say.

As we developed a working draft of this book, we began using it in first-year writing courses that we teach at UIUC. In classroom exercises and writing assignments, we found that students who otherwise struggled to organize their thoughts, or even to think of something to say, did much better when we provided them with templates like the following.

- **In discussions of ________, a controversial issue is whether ________. While some argue that ________ , others contend that ________.**
- **This is not to say that ________ .**

One virtue of such templates, we found, is that they focus writers’ attention not just on what is being said, but on the forms that structure what is being said. In other words, they make students more conscious of the rhetorical patterns that are key to academic success but often pass under the classroom radar.
THE CENTRALITY OF “THEY SAY / I SAY”

The central rhetorical move that we focus on in this book is the “they say / I say” template that gives our book its title. In our view, this template represents the deep, underlying structure, the internal DNA as it were, of all effective argument. Effective persuasive writers do more than make well-supported claims (“I say”); they also map those claims relative to the claims of others (“they say”).

Here, for example, the “they say / I say” pattern structures a passage from an essay by the media and technology critic Steven Johnson.

For decades, we’ve worked under the assumption that mass culture follows a path declining steadily toward lowest-common-denominator standards, presumably because the “masses” want dumb, simple pleasures and big media companies try to give the masses what they want. But ... the exact opposite is happening: the culture is getting more cognitively demanding, not less.

STEVEN JOHNSON, “Watching TV Makes You Smarter”

In generating his own argument from something “they say,” Johnson suggests why he needs to say what he is saying: to correct a popular misconception.

Even when writers do not explicitly identify the views they are responding to, as Johnson does, an implicit “they say” can often be discerned, as in the following passage by Zora Neale Hurston.

I remember the day I became colored.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON, “How It Feels to Be Colored Me”

In order to grasp Hurston’s point here, we need to be able to reconstruct the implicit view she is responding to and question-

ing: that racial identity is an innate quality we are simply born with. On the contrary, Hurston suggests, our race is imposed on us by society—something we “become” by virtue of how we are treated.

As these examples suggest, the “they say / I say” model can improve not just student writing, but student reading comprehension as well. Since reading and writing are deeply reciprocal activities, students who learn to make the rhetorical moves represented by the templates in this book figure to become more adept at identifying these same moves in the texts they read. And if we are right that effective arguments are always in dialogue with other arguments, then it follows that in order to understand the types of challenging texts assigned in college, students need to identify the views to which those texts are responding.

Working with the “they say / I say” model can also help with invention, finding something to say. In our experience, students best discover what they want to say not by thinking about a subject in an isolation booth, but by reading texts, listening closely to what other writers say, and looking for an opening through which they can enter the conversation. In other words, listening closely to others and summarizing what they have to say can help writers generate their own ideas.

THE USEFULNESS OF TEMPLATES

Our templates also have a generative quality, prompting students to make moves in their writing that they might not otherwise make or even know they should make. The templates in this book can be particularly helpful for students who are unsure about what to say, or who have trouble finding enough to say, often because they consider their own
beliefs so self-evident that they need not be argued for. Students like this are often helped, we’ve found, when we give them a simple template like the following one for entertaining a counterargument (or planting a naysayer, as we call it in Chapter 6).

- Of course some might object that __________. Although I concede that __________, I still maintain that __________.

What this particular template helps students do is make the seemingly counterintuitive move of questioning their own beliefs, of looking at them from the perspective of those who disagree. In so doing, templates can bring out aspects of students’ thoughts that, as they themselves sometimes remark, they didn’t even realize were there.

Other templates in this book help students make a host of sophisticated moves that they might not otherwise make: summarizing what someone else says, framing a quotation in one’s own words, indicating the view that the writer is responding to, marking the shift from a source’s view to the writer’s own view, offering evidence for that view, entertaining and answering counterarguments, and explaining what is at stake in the first place. In showing students how to make such moves, templates do more than organize students’ ideas; they help bring those ideas into existence.

OKAY, BUT TEMPLATES?

We are aware, of course, that some instructors may have reservations about templates. Some, for instance, may object that such formulaic devices represent a return to prescriptive forms of instruction that encourage passive learning or lead students to put their writing on automatic pilot.

This is an understandable reaction, we think, to kinds of rote instruction that have indeed encouraged passivity and drained writing of its creativity and dynamic relation to the social world. The trouble is that many students will never learn on their own to make the key intellectual moves that our templates represent. While seasoned writers pick up these moves unconsciously through their reading, many students do not. Consequently, we believe, students need to see these moves represented in the explicit ways that the templates provide.

The aim of the templates, then, is not to stifle critical thinking but to be direct with students about the key rhetorical moves that it comprises. Since we encourage students to modify and adapt the templates to the particularities of the arguments they are making, using such prefabricated formulas as learning tools need not result in writing and thinking that are themselves formulaic. Admittedly, no teaching tool can guarantee that students will engage in hard, rigorous thought. Our templates do, however, provide concrete prompts that can stimulate and shape such thought: What do “they say” about my topic? What would a naysayer say about my argument? What is my evidence? Do I need to qualify my point? Who cares?

In fact, templates have a long and rich history. Public orators from ancient Greece and Rome through the European Renaissance studied rhetorical topoi or “commonplaces,” model passages and formulas that represented the different strategies available to public speakers. In many respects, our templates echo this classical rhetorical tradition of imitating established models.

The journal Nature requires aspiring contributors to follow a guideline that is like a template on the opening page of their manuscript: “Two or three sentences explaining what the main
result [of their study] reveals in direct comparison with what was thought to be the case previously, or how the main result adds to previous knowledge.” In the field of education, a form designed by the education theorist Howard Gardner asks postdoctoral fellowship applicants to complete the following template: “Most scholars in the field believe ________. As a result of my study, ________. That these two examples are geared toward postdoctoral fellows and veteran researchers shows that it is not only struggling undergraduates who can use help making these key rhetorical moves, but experienced academics as well.

Templates have even been used in the teaching of personal narrative. The literary and educational theorist Jane Tompkins devised the following template to help student writers make the often difficult move from telling a story to explaining what it means: “X tells a story about _______ to make the point that _________. My own experience with _______ yields a point that is similar/different/both similar and different. What I take away from my own experience with _______ is ________. As a result, I conclude _______.” We especially like this template because it suggests that “they say / I say” argument need not be mechanical, impersonal, or dry, and that telling a story and making an argument are more compatible activities than many think.

WHY IT’S OKAY TO USE “I”

But wait—doesn’t the “I” part of “they say / I say” flagrantly encourage the use of the first-person pronoun? Aren’t we aware that some teachers prohibit students from using “I” or “we,” on the grounds that these pronouns encourage ill-considered, sub-

jective opinions rather than objective and reasoned arguments? Yes, we are aware of this first-person prohibition, but we think it has serious flaws. First, expressing ill-considered, subjective opinions is not necessarily the worst sin beginning writers can commit; it might be a starting point from which they can move on to more reasoned, less self-indulgent perspectives. Second, prohibiting students from using “I” is simply not an effective way of curbing students’ subjectivity, since one can offer poorly argued, ill-supported opinions just as easily without it. Third and most important, prohibiting the first person tends to hamper students’ ability not only to take strong positions but to differentiate their own positions from those of others, as we point out in Chapter 5. To be sure, writers can resort to various circumlocutions—“it will here be argued,” “the evidence suggests,” “the truth is”—and these may be useful for avoiding a monotonous series of “I believe” sentences. But except for avoiding such monotony, we see no good reason why “I” should be set aside in persuasive writing. Rather than prohibit “I,” then, we think a better tactic is to give students practice at using it well and learning its use, both by supporting their claims with evidence and by attending closely to alternative perspectives—to what “they” are saying.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

Because of its centrality, we have allowed the “they say / I say” format to dictate the structure of this book. So while Part 1 addresses the art of listening to others, Part 2 addresses how to offer one’s own response. Part 1 opens with a chapter on “Starting with What Others Are Saying” that explains why it is generally advisable to begin a text by citing others rather than
plunging directly into one’s own views. Subsequent chapters take up the arts of summarizing and quoting what these others have to say. Part 2 begins with a chapter on different ways of responding, followed by chapters on marking the shift between what “they say” and what “I say,” on introducing and answering objections, and on answering the all-important questions “so what?” and “who cares?” Part 3 offers strategies for “Tying It All Together,” beginning with a chapter on connection and coherence; followed by a chapter on formal and informal language, arguing that academic discourse is often perfectly compatible with the informal language that students use outside school; and concluding with a chapter on the art of metacommentary, showing students how to guide the way readers understand a text. Part 4 offers guidance for entering the conversation, with chapters on class discussions, reading, and writing in the social sciences.

WHAT THIS BOOK DOESN’T DO

There are some things that this book does not try to do. We do not, for instance, cover logical principles of argument such as syllogisms, warrants, logical fallacies, or the differences between inductive and deductive reasoning. Although such concepts can be useful, we believe most of us learn the ins and outs of argumentative writing not by studying logical principles in the abstract, but by plunging into actual discussions and debates, trying out different patterns of response, and in this way getting a sense of what works to persuade different audiences and what doesn’t. In our view, people learn more about arguing from hearing someone say, “You miss my point. What I’m saying is not ______, but ______ ,” or “I agree with you that ______, and would even add that ______,” than they

ENGAGING WITH THE IDEAS OF OTHERS

One central goal of this book is to demystify academic writing by returning it to its social and conversational roots. Although writing may require some degree of quiet and solitude, the “they say / I say” model shows students that they can best develop their arguments not just by looking inward but by doing what they often do in a good conversation with friends and family—by listening carefully to what others are saying and engaging with other views.

This approach to writing therefore has an ethical dimension, since it asks writers not simply to keep proving and reasserting what they already believe but to stretch what they believe by putting it up against beliefs that differ, sometimes radically, from their own. In an increasingly diverse, global society, this ability to engage with the ideas of others is especially crucial to democratic citizenship.

Gerald Graff
Cathy Birkenstein
"They Say / I Say"

The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing

WITH READINGS

Second Edition

INTRODUCTION

Entering the Conversation

Think about an activity that you do particularly well: cooking, playing the piano, shooting a basketball, even something as basic as driving a car. If you reflect on this activity, you’ll realize that once you mastered it you no longer had to give much conscious thought to the various moves that go into doing it. Performing this activity, in other words, depends on your having learned a series of complicated moves—moves that may seem mysterious or difficult to those who haven’t yet learned them.

The same applies to writing. Often without consciously realizing it, accomplished writers routinely rely on a stock of established moves that are crucial for communicating sophisticated ideas. What makes writers masters of their trade is not only their ability to express interesting thoughts but their mastery of an inventory of basic moves that they probably picked up by reading a wide range of other accomplished writers. Less experienced writers, by contrast, are often unfamiliar with these basic moves and unsure how to make them in their own writing. This book is intended as a short, user-friendly guide to the basic moves of academic writing.

One of our key premises is that these basic moves are so common that they can be represented in templates that you can use right away to structure and even generate your own
writing. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of this book is its presentation of many such templates, designed to help you successfully enter not only the world of academic thinking and writing, but also the wider worlds of civic discourse and work.

Instead of focusing solely on abstract principles of writing, then, this book offers model templates that help you put those principles directly into practice. Working with these templates can give you an immediate sense of how to engage in the kinds of critical thinking you are required to do at the college level and in the vocational and public spheres beyond.

Some of these templates represent simple but crucial moves like those used to summarize some widely held belief.

- Many Americans assume that __________.

Others are more complicated.

- On the one hand, __________. On the other hand, __________.
- Author X contradicts herself. At the same time that she argues __________, she also implies __________.
- I agree that __________.
- This is not to say that __________.

It is true, of course, that critical thinking and writing go deeper than any set of linguistic formulas, requiring that you question assumptions, develop strong claims, offer supporting reasons and evidence, consider opposing arguments, and so on. But these deeper habits of thought cannot be put into practice unless you have a language for expressing them in clear, organized ways.

Entering the Conversation

STATE YOUR OWN IDEAS AS A RESPONSE TO OTHERS

The single most important template that we focus on in this book is the “they say ______; I say ______” formula that gives our book its title. If there is any one point that we hope you will take away from this book, it is the importance not only of expressing your ideas (“I say”) but of presenting those ideas as a response to some other person or group (“they say”). For us, the underlying structure of effective academic writing—and of responsible public discourse—resides not just in stating our own ideas but in listening closely to others around us, summarizing their views in a way that they will recognize, and responding with our own ideas in kind. Broadly speaking, academic writing is argumentative writing, and we believe that to argue well you need to do more than assert your own position. You need to enter a conversation, using what others say (or might say) as a launching pad or sounding board for your own views. For this reason, one of the main pieces of advice in this book is to write the voices of others into your text.

In our view, then, the best academic writing has one underlying feature: it is deeply engaged in some way with other people’s views. Too often, however, academic writing is taught as a process of saying “true” or “smart” things in a vacuum, as if it were possible to argue effectively without being in conversation with someone else. If you have been taught to write a traditional five-paragraph essay, for example, you have learned how to develop a thesis and support it with evidence. This is good advice as far as it goes, but it leaves out the important fact that in the real world we don’t make arguments without being provoked. Instead, we make arguments because someone has said or done something (or perhaps not said or done something) and we need to respond: “I
can’t see why you like the Lakers so much”; “I agree: it was a great film”; “That argument is contradictory.” If it weren’t for other people and our need to challenge, agree with, or otherwise respond to them, there would be no reason to argue at all.

To make an impact as a writer, you need to do more than make statements that are logical, well supported, and consistent. You must also find a way of entering a conversation with others’ views—with something “they say.” If your own argument doesn’t identify the “they say” that you’re responding to, it probably won’t make sense. As Figure 1 suggests, what you are saying may be clear to your audience, but why you are saying it won’t be. For it is what others are saying and thinking that motivates our writing and gives it a reason for being. It follows, then, as Figure 2 suggests, that your own argument—the thesis or “I say” moment of your text—should always be a response to the arguments of others.

Many writers make explicit “they say / I say” moves in their writing. One famous example is Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” which consists almost entirely of King’s eloquent responses to a public statement by eight clergymen deploring the civil rights protests he was leading. The letter—which was written in 1963, while King was in prison for leading a demonstration against racial injustice in Birmingham—is structured almost entirely around a framework of summary and response, in which King summarizes and then answers their criticisms. In one typical passage, King writes as follows.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations.

Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

King goes on to agree with his critics that “It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham,” yet he
hastens to add that “it is even more unfortunate that the city’s white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.” King’s letter is so thoroughly conversational, in fact, that it could be rewritten in the form of a dialogue or play.

King’s critics:
King’s response:
Critics:
Response:

Clearly, King would not have written his famous letter were it not for his critics, whose views he treats not as objections to his already-formed arguments but as the motivating source of those arguments, their central reason for being. He quotes not only what his critics have said (“Some have asked: ‘Why didn’t you give the new city administration time to act?’”), but also things they might have said (“One may well ask: ‘How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?’”)—all to set the stage for what he himself wants to say.

A similar “they say / I say” exchange opens an essay about American patriotism by the social critic Katha Pollitt, who uses her own daughter’s comment to represent the national fervor of post-9/11 patriotism.

My daughter, who goes to Stuyvesant High School only blocks from the former World Trade Center, thinks we should fly the American flag out our window. Definitely not, I say. The flag stands for jingoism and vengeance and war. She tells me I’m wrong—the flag means standing together and honoring the dead and saying no to terrorism. In a way we’re both right. . . .

KATHA POLLITT, “Put Out No Flags”

Entering the Conversation

As Pollitt’s example shows, the “they” you respond to in crafting an argument need not be a famous author or someone known to your audience. It can be a family member like Pollitt’s daughter, or a friend or classmate who has made a provocative claim. It can even be something an individual or a group might say—or a side of yourself, something you once believed but no longer do, or something you partly believe but also doubt. The important thing is that the “they” (or “you” or “she”) represent some wider group with which readers might identify—in Pollitt’s case, those who patriotically believe in flying the flag. Pollitt’s example also shows that responding to the views of others need not always involve unqualified opposition. By agreeing and disagreeing with her daughter, Pollitt enacts what we call the “yes and no” response, reconciling apparently incompatible views.

While King and Pollitt both identify the views they are responding to, some authors do not explicitly state their views but instead allow the reader to infer them. See, for instance, if you can identify the implied or unnamed “they say” that the following claim is responding to.

I like to think I have a certain advantage as a teacher of literature because when I was growing up I disliked and feared books.

GERALD GRAFF, “Disliking Books at an Early Age”

In case you haven’t figured it out already, the phantom “they say” here is the common belief that in order to be a good teacher of literature, one must have grown up liking and enjoying books.
INTRODUCTION

As you can see from these examples, many writers use the “they say / I say” format to agree or disagree with others, to challenge standard ways of thinking, and thus to stir up controversy. This point may come as a shock to you if you have always had the impression that in order to succeed academically you need to play it safe and avoid controversy in your writing, making statements that nobody can possibly disagree with. Though this view of writing may appear logical, it is actually a recipe for flat, lifeless writing and for writing that fails to answer what we call the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions. “William Shakespeare wrote many famous plays and sonnets” may be a perfectly true statement, but precisely because nobody is likely to disagree with it, it goes without saying and thus would seem pointless if said.

WAYS OF RESPONDING

Just because much argumentative writing is driven by disagreement, it does not follow that agreement is ruled out. Although argumentation is often associated with conflict and opposition, the type of conversational “they say / I say” argument that we focus on in this book can be just as useful when you agree as when you disagree.

- She argues ________, and I agree because ________.
- Her argument that ________ is supported by new research showing that ________.

Nor do you always have to choose between either simply agreeing or disagreeing, since the “they say / I say” format also works to both agree and disagree at the same time, as Pollitt illustrates above.

Entering the Conversation

- He claims that ________, and I have mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, I agree that ________. On the other hand, I still insist that ________.

This last option—agreeing and disagreeing simultaneously—is one we especially recommend, since it allows you to avoid a simple yes or no response and present a more complicated argument, while containing that complication within a clear “on the one hand / on the other hand” framework.

While the templates we offer in this book can be used to structure your writing at the sentence level, they can also be expanded as needed to almost any length, as the following elaborated “they say / I say” template demonstrates.

In recent discussions of ________, a controversial issue has been whether ________. On the one hand, some argue that ________. From this perspective, ________. On the other hand, however, others argue that ________. In the words of ________, one of this view's main proponents, "______.

According to this view, ________. In sum, then, the issue is whether ________ or ________.

My own view is that ________. Though I concede that ________, I still maintain that ________. For example, ________. Although some might object that ________, I would reply that ________. The issue is important because ________.

If you go back over this template, you will see that it helps you make a host of challenging moves (each of which is taken up in forthcoming chapters in this book). First, the template helps you open your text by identifying an issue in some ongoing conversation or debate (“In recent discussions of ________, a
controversial issue has been ________”), and then to map some of the voices in this controversy (by using the “on the one hand / on the other hand” structure). The template also helps you introduce a quotation (“In the words of”), to explain the quotation in your own words (“According to this view”), and—in a new paragraph—to state your own argument (“My own view is that”), to qualify your argument (“Though I concede that”), and then to support your argument with evidence (“For example”). In addition, the template helps you make one of the most crucial moves in argumentative writing, what we call “planting a naysayer in your text,” in which you summarize and then answer a likely objection to your own central claim (“Although it might be objected that ________ , I reply ________”). Finally, this template helps you shift between general, over-arching claims (“In sum, then”) and smaller-scale, supporting claims (“For example”).

Again, none of us is born knowing these moves, especially when it comes to academic writing. Hence the need for this book.

**DO TEMPLATES STIFLE CREATIVITY?**

If you are like some of our students, your initial response to templates may be skepticism. At first, many of our students complain that using templates will take away their originality and creativity and make them all sound the same. “They’ll turn us into writing robots,” one of our students insisted. Another agreed, adding, “Hey, I’m a jazz musician. And we don’t play by set forms. We create our own.” “I’m in college now,” another student asserted; “this is third-grade-level stuff.”

In our view, however, the templates in this book, far from being “third-grade-level stuff,” represent the stock in trade of sophisticated thinking and writing, and they often require a great deal of practice and instruction to use successfully. As for the belief that pre-established forms undermine creativity, we think it rests on a very limited vision of what creativity is all about. In our view, the above template and the others in this book will actually help your writing become more original and creative, not less. After all, even the most creative forms of expression depend on established patterns and structures. Most songwriters, for instance, rely on a time-honored verse-chorus-verse pattern, and few people would call Shakespeare uncreative because he didn’t invent the sonnet or the dramatic forms that he used to such dazzling effect. Even the most avant-garde, cutting-edge artists (like improvisational jazz musicians) need to master the basic forms that their work improvises on, departs from, and goes beyond, or else their work will come across as uneducated child’s play. Ultimately, then, creativity and originality lie not in the avoidance of established forms but in the imaginative use of them.

Furthermore, these templates do not dictate the content of what you say, which can be as original as you can make it, but only suggest a way of formatting how you say it. In addition, once you begin to feel comfortable with the templates in this book, you will be able to improvise creatively on them to fit new situations and purposes and find others in your reading. In other words, the templates offered here are learning tools to get you started, not structures set in stone. Once you get used to using them, you can even dispense with them altogether, for the rhetorical moves they model will be at your fingertips in an unconscious, instinctive way.

But if you still need proof that writing templates do not stifle creativity, consider the following opening to an essay on the fast-food industry that we’ve included in this book.
INTRODUCTION

If ever there were a newspaper headline custom-made for Jay Leno's monologue, this was it. Kids taking on McDonald's this week, suing the company for making them fat. Isn't that like middle-aged men suing Porsche for making them get speeding tickets? Whatever happened to personal responsibility?

I tend to sympathize with these portly fast-food patrons, though. Maybe that's because I used to be one of them.

DAVID ZINCMENKO, "Don't Blame the Eater"

Although Zinczenko relies on a version of the "they say / I say" formula, his writing is anything but dry, robotic, or uncreative. While Zinczenko does not explicitly use the words "they say" and "I say," the template still gives the passage its underlying structure: "They say that kids suing fast-food companies for making them fat is a joke; but I say such lawsuits are justified."

BUT ISN'T THIS PLAGIARISM?

"But isn't this plagiarism?" at least one student each year will usually ask. "Well, is it?" we respond, turning the question around into one the entire class can profit from. "We are, after all, asking you to use language in your writing that isn't your own—language that you 'borrow' or, to put it less delicately, steal from other writers."

Often, a lively discussion ensues that raises important questions about authorial ownership and helps everyone better understand the frequently confusing line between plagiarism and the legitimate use of what others say and how they say it. Students are quick to see that no one person owns a conventional formula like "on the one hand . . . on the other hand . . ." Phrases like "a controversial issue" are so com-

Entering the Conversation

monly used and recycled that they are generic—community property that can be freely used without fear of committing plagiarism. It is plagiarism, however, if the words used to fill in the blanks of such formulas are borrowed from others without proper acknowledgment. In sum, then, while it is not plagiarism to recycle conventionally used formulas, it is a serious academic offense to take the substantive content from others' texts without citing the author and giving him or her proper credit.

PUTTING IN YOUR OAR

Though the immediate goal of this book is to help you become a better writer, at a deeper level it invites you to become a certain type of person: a critical, intellectual thinker who, instead of sitting passively on the sidelines, can participate in the debates and conversations of your world in an active and empowered way. Ultimately, this book invites you to become a critical thinker who can enter the types of conversations described eloquently by the philosopher Kenneth Burke in the following widely cited passage. Likening the world of intellectual exchange to a never-ending conversation at a party, Burke writes:

You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. . . . You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you. . . . The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

KENNETH BURKE, The Philosophy of Literary Form
INTRODUCTION

What we like about this passage is its suggestion that stating an argument and "putting in your oar" can only be done in conversation with others; that we all enter the dynamic world of ideas not as isolated individuals but as social beings deeply connected to others who have a stake in what we say.

This ability to enter complex, many-sided conversations has taken on a special urgency in today's diverse, post-9/11 world, where the future for all of us may depend on our ability to put ourselves in the shoes of those who think very differently from us. The central piece of advice in this book—that we listen carefully to others, including those who disagree with us, and then engage with them thoughtfully and respectfully—can help us see beyond our own pet beliefs, which may not be shared by everyone. The mere act of crafting a sentence that begins "Of course, someone might object that _______" may not seem like a way to change the world; but it does have the potential to jog us out of our comfort zones, to get us thinking critically about our own beliefs, and perhaps even to change our minds.

Exercises

1. Read the following paragraph from an essay by Emily Poe, a student at Furman University. Disregarding for the moment what Poe says, focus your attention on the phrases Poe uses to structure what she says (italicized here). Then write a new paragraph using Poe’s as a model but replacing her topic, vegetarianism, with one of your own.

The term "vegetarian" tends to be synonymous with "tree-hugger" in many people’s minds. They see vegetarianism as a cult that brainwashes its followers into eliminating an essential part of their daily diets for an abstract goal of "animal welfare." However, few vegetarians choose their lifestyle just to follow the crowd. On the contrary, many of these supposedly brainwashed people are actually independent thinkers, concerned citizens, and compassionate human beings. For the truth is that there are many very good reasons for giving up meat. Perhaps the best reasons are to improve the environment, to encourage humane treatment of livestock, or to enhance one’s own health. In this essay, then, closely examining a vegetarian diet as compared to a meat-eater's diet will show that vegetarianism is clearly the better option for sustaining the Earth and all its inhabitants.

2. Write a short essay in which you first summarize our rationale for the templates in this book and then articulate your own position in response. If you want, you can use the template below to organize your paragraphs, expanding and modifying it as necessary to fit what you want to say.

- In the Introduction to "They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein provide templates designed to _______. Specifically, Graff and Birkenstein argue that the types of writing templates they offer _______. As the authors themselves put it, "_______.

Although some people believe _______, Graff and Birkenstein insist that _______. In sum, then, their view is that _______.

I [agree/disagree/have mixed feelings], in my view, the types of templates that the authors recommend _______. For instance, _______. In addition, _______. Some might object, of course, on the grounds that _______. Yet I would argue that _______. Overall, then, I believe _______—an important point to make given _______.
Sports are not only big business but big news as well. Tens of millions of fans attend professional, college, and high school games around the country, while even more people follow sports on TV, on the Internet, in newspapers, and in magazines. When a team makes it to the top—be it the Super Bowl, World Series, NBA finals, World Cup, or NCAA finals, it's a major story nationally (even internationally) and a huge event locally. The comments and projections of players, coaches, and pundits are endlessly dissected in the media. Stories appear in major media venues about the frenzy of interest among hometown fans. When a college's football or basketball team is successful, applications to the school increase significantly.

The outcome of a major sporting event can affect the moods of serious and even not-so-serious fans: elation and celebration over a victory, depression and anger over a loss. Entire cities get caught up in the hoopla. In Pittsburgh, for example, the decline of the steel industry crippled the local economy for several decades, starting in the 1970s. As unemployment raged and
the population plummeted, the successes of the Steelers, winners of six Super Bowls, are credited by most analysts with helping maintain pride and hope among residents as the city worked, with considerable success, to reinvent itself as a high-tech corporate center. A team can thus come to represent the aspirations of an entire region or people.

The readings in this chapter offer a variety of perspectives exploring the appeal and significance of sports. Maya Angelou, in an excerpt from her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* depicts the intense identification of a group of poor African Americans in 1930s Arkansas with heavyweight boxer Joe Louis, a successful black man fighting his way to the top in a segregated country. Novelist and critic Wilfrid Sheed examines the wider importance of sports in society with examples from across the globe. Felisa Rogers writes about her utter lack of interest in football until she fell in love with a passionate fan, and now appreciates the bonds it can create across gender and class boundaries.

Other authors in the chapter write about the motivations that can lead ambitious athletes to use performance-enhancing drugs and the responses of passionate fans and the general public to this drug use. Blogger William Moller equates Yankee great Alex Rodriguez’s much-publicized steroid use with his own use of Ritalin to stay awake all night and study during school. Sportswriter Joe Posnanski argues against those who criticize today’s athletes for drug use while simultaneously celebrating the stars of the past, who themselves often took amphetamines and found other ways to cheat in order to gain a competitive advantage.

Three readings in this chapter focus on women and their increasing role in the sports world—both as athletes and as fans. Michael Kimmelman writes about the evolution of women’s tennis into a widely publicized international sport complete with star players from all over the world, television coverage, and substantial prize money. Jennie Yabroff takes up the cause of cheerleading, arguing that it is as demanding and competitive as any sport and therefore deserves to be considered a sport in its own right. Student writer Sara Maratta proclaims her interest in ice hockey but decries the treatment of women and sports in the media.

As you read this chapter’s discussions of the role of sports in our lives and in our imaginations, you will have the opportunity to look more deeply into these issues and to contribute your own perspective to the larger conversation.
of increasing male involvement. How, in your view, are gender issues related to arguments about the value of cheerleading?

5. What do you think? Respond to Yabroff’s argument. Start by summarizing her views, and then agree with them, disagree, or both. Remember: if you agree, you still need to add something new to the conversation; if you disagree, you need to explain why.

How I Learned to Love Football

Felisa Rogers

Rich likes to tell me about football. When we first got married, a picture of Brett Favre hung in his office. I learned about Favre’s battle with alcohol and Vicodin, his propensity for throwing interceptions, and his improvisational gusto, exemplified by his stumbling underhanded pass to tight end Donald Lee for a first down in the snowbound 2007 NFC division game against the Seattle Seahawks.

After a while (about 15 seconds) my eyes would glaze over, and I’d find myself thinking about Thursday’s dinner plans or perhaps Alexander Hamilton. “You're not listening to me, again,” Rich would say, sounding wounded. And then my inevitable reply: “You’re talking about football!”

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My family never cared much for sports. My dad was a nerd, and my mom was a beatnik. They raised me to believe that football and baseball were the province of Neanderthal types who didn't know the difference between Carl Jung and Carlos Castaneda. I don't think I can blame my parents for my complete athletic incompetence, but the game was never on at our house and maybe I missed some crucial early indoctrination that allows the average American to understand the parameters of an inning or the meaning of "second down."

I attended school in a small redneck town in Oregon called Mapleton, where sports were the ticket to popularity. My social status suffered: The mere mention of football or softball awakened a paralyzing dread in me. PE was akin to the Roman Coliseum: I was dumped onto a field and someone was chasing me and I had no idea what the rules were and people were watching me. My fearful lack of coordination was so obvious that even my parents became concerned and gave me a softball for my birthday one year. "How about we play catch?" my dad said awkwardly, looking at the ball like it was a severed head. We didn't get too far.

Eventually my incompetence hardened into an intense dislike for playing sports, watching sports, or even hearing about sports. In school, I kept this distaste to myself; I didn't want to be a complete pariah. I pretended to know what people were talking about when they brought up the Seahawks, and I engaged in sports-related activities that required minimal contact with the ball, such as being the scorekeeper for our middle school volleyball team.

Freshman year, I played second clarinet in the pep band, which meant I had to go to every home football game. I didn't mind that much. The games, with their bonfires and hot cider, had a certain appeal. I understood ritual, after all: Majestic in their blue and white jerseys, our boys tore across the frosted fields like fleeting gods; my cousin made out under the bleachers; and on the homecoming bonfire, we roasted effigies of our opponents. I felt a certain awe, but I still had no idea what was going on.

Sophomore year I moved to a bigger town and attended South Eugene High School, home of the Axemen. South was a large school, and there were hundreds of students who never seemed to know whether our team had won or lost. For the first time in my life, I didn't have to pretend to be interested in sports. It was liberating. My extracurricular activities were writing bad poetry and imitating Winona Ryder, and people still liked me. It was actually cool to hate football. From that point on, I ignored sports completely.

Sadly, I was not destined to live out the rest of my years in the contemplation of poetry. In my twenties I accidentally dated an Atlanta Falcons fan. And while I didn't exactly develop a magical love for football, four years with Josh taught me what the majority of Americans know instinctively: Watching sports, particularly football, is a good excuse to sit around with friends, drinking beer and eating nachos. (The key word being beer.) As soon as the TV clicked off and the bottles of Rainier disappeared, my focus vanished: I hadn't escaped from Mapleton only to revert to pretending to care about football just because some guy I liked was a fan. Josh would try to tell me about the Falcons, and I'd roll my eyes: "I'm sorry, but I don't get it. It doesn't matter how many times you try to explain it to me. I hate sports. It's, like, genetic."

Those four years in no way prepared me for the harsh reality of dating and then marrying a Green Bay Packers fan. When
I first met Rich, I told my friend Becky: "I can't believe it, it's like we have everything in common. He loves the Rolling Stones, and presidential history and vans. He even knows how to play John Prine songs on the guitar."

You think you know someone. Then you discover that he squanders 80 percent of his available brain power thinking about Brett Favre.

Rich's love for Brett Favre was real, and almost touching. When he talked about Favre, his eyes would sparkle and exuberance would infect his diction, his normal quiet mutter giving way to a braying crescendo. It drove me crazy, and it began to cause a serious rift in our relationship: I stopped listening when he opened his mouth.

"You're not listening to me," he'd say.
"You're talking about football," I'd say.
"No I wasn't," he'd say hotly.

And my weak reply: "Well I thought you might be going to talk about football."

Football wasn't our only problem. A few months after we got married, Rich got laid off from his job and my major contract dried up. Finances were tight, and garden-variety misfortune eclipsed our happiness: Our beloved cat got hit by a car, my grandmother died, our aged Honda broke down, Rich's mom and grandmother suffered from serious health problems, we kept getting closer to broke. Though I never expected him to take care of me, Rich felt an old-fashioned pressure to be the breadwinner, and when things were going bad, he didn't see it as our problem, so much as his. When he could get work he would take it, but those jobs always seemed to mean lower pay for longer hours and a long commute. He was stretched to the breaking point, constantly worried and frequently tense. Except when he talked about the Green Bay Packers.

Rich sounded happy when he talked about the Packers. Even when he was bemoaning the dark saga that culminated in Favre signing with the Minnesota Vikings, he had that light in his eyes. I began to notice that his monologues about the Packers could be tightly crafted and inspired. As a lit major and linguistic stickler, he latched onto the theme of Favre as a tragic hero, in the classical sense of the word. "A lot of people misuse the word magic, which technically implies someone undone by hubris. Like Hamlet, Favre is a perfect example," he'd say seriously.

And it wasn't just Favre: I was treated to the inspiring life stories of wide receiver Donald Driver (grew up in a U-Haul!) and (former) Packers cornerback Al Harris (recovered from a ruptured spleen in record time and returned to finish the season!). And I soaked in the mythology of Green Bay: the legacy of Vince Lombardi, and the Packers' unique status as the only NFL team that's owned by its town, not by a rich guy or a corporation.

I started listening to Rich when he talked about football, because it was a lifeline between who he had become and who he used to be. And the more I actually listened, the more I actually understood. Rich's love for the Packers made me realize that football was more than just a bunch of jocks bashing into each other to demonstrate their unfathomable understanding of an elaborate and mysterious code of rules. Though Rich's interpretation of the game and players might be a touch more academic than most, he mirrors millions of other Americans. Football fandom is a source of comfort, common ground where one can meet with friends and rivals alike, an equalizing arena where your opinion is just as valid as the next guy's, economics or expertise be damned. Simply watching the game gives you the right to believe, wholeheartedly and without reservation, that your team deserves to win.
I noticed football fandom gives Rich something to talk about with huge segments of the population, something he actually finds interesting. I began imagining what it would be like to live in a world where half the population had an avid and serious interest in American presidential history. I’d never be bored at a party again.

Philosophical revelations aside, I also began to get some understanding of the mechanics of the game: “So wait, the team has four chances to advance the ball 10 yards? And they’re heading toward the opponents’ end zone?” Light dawned in my eyes this time.

It sounds stupid, but things got better for us from there. We were still broke, but Rich seemed to spend fewer hours staring into the abyss. It was as though by listening I was affirming some part of him that was safe from the cold realities of survival.

Today, of course, we are an Aaron Rodgers house. (Never ever get Rich started on Packers fans who defected when Favre left the team.) Over coffee in the morning, I can expect to be enlightened on Rodgers’ latest quarterback ranking. Rich also periodically interrupts my work to remind me of small facial expressions and gestures that indicate that Rodgers is a stand-up guy.

“I’m glad we like Rodgers,” I found myself saying one day. “I mean it would be terrible if the Packers had replaced Favre with someone with a bad personality, like Roethlisberger.” I stopped in my tracks. Would it be terrible? Really? Did I actually have an opinion about this? Did I care?

I thought about it. Yep. The suspicion that I cared about a football team was confirmed when I learned that the Packers had beaten the Falcons and thus advanced to the NFC Championship Game. “I can’t believe they did it!” I exclaimed to my friend Mizu, who looked confused, probably remembering a dour poetry-writing teenager of yesteryear.

I still don’t really understand football. Some obscure rule pops just at the moment I think I’ve grasped a play. (The stereotype of the dumb football player amazes me. No one who could remember all this crap could possibly be dumb.) Compared with your average zealous Green Bay Packers fan (and yes, the average Packers fan is zealous), I’m an ignorant dilettante. But I’m learning. I’m sure there are a million Steelers fans who have also had a rough year and who also deserve happiness, but I won’t be thinking about them on Sunday. As an American football fan it’s my prerogative to believe in the worthiness of the Green Bay Packers and Packers fans everywhere. One in particular.

Joining the Conversation

1. Perhaps surprisingly, this essay focuses to a large extent on relationships—particularly Felisa Rogers’ relationship with her husband and the important role that a shared interest in the Green Bay Packers plays in it. How did her learning about football and developing an interest in the Packers help their marriage and their lives in general?
2. How does Rogers use humor to discuss the development of her attitude about football—and to let us see that following a football team is in some ways a serious matter?
3. In paragraph 19, Rogers says that “Football fandom is a source of comfort, common ground where one can meet with friends and rivals alike, an equalizing arena where your opinion is just as valid as the next guy’s, economics or
expertise be damned." What support does she offer for this view? Is her argument persuasive? Why or why not?

4. Compare Maya Angelou's depiction on pp. 484-88 of African American fans of boxer Joe Louis in the 1930s South with Felisa Rogers' description of how she came to appreciate football. What does each author say about the bonding powers of sports?

5. Write an essay about the benefits of being a fan—a team, a player, a singer, an author, anything. Be sure to answer the "so what" question and to make clear to your readers why your subject matters to you.

Move Over Boys,
Make Room in the Crease

SARA MARATTA

At the awkward age of 14, I caught a fever of an unknown origin. It hit me fast and has had a profound impact on my life to this day. It has helped me become fluent in a new lingo, cost me an enormous amount of money, exposed me to an eccentric circle of passionate people who enjoy sub-zero temperatures, and kept my evenings occupied from October until April.

Symptoms of this fever became noticeable on a blustery February night six years ago. On a quest for a dose of mind-

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