

Example Templates from *They Say/I Say* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

In their book, *They Say/ I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Graff and Birkenstein call authors of other works “They.” You can think of “they” as any specific author, or as the mass of experts writing on your topic. “They” may also be written as “X” to symbolize an author’s name. The following are examples of how to build sentences that help you move back and forth between what “they” say and what *you* have to say about it.

Introducing “What They Say”

- A number of ____ [experts] ____ have recently suggested that X’s work has several fundamental problems.
- It has become common today to dismiss X’s contribution to the field of ____.
- In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of Dr. X for ____.

Introducing “Standard Views”

- Americans today tend to believe that ____.
- Conventional wisdom has it that ____.
- Common sense seems to dictate that ____.
- The standard way of thinking about topic X has it that ____.
- It is often said that ____.
- My whole life I have heard it said that ____.
- You would think that ____.
- Many people assume that ____.

Making “What They Say” Something *You* Say

- I’ve always believed that ____.
- When I was a child, I used to think that ____.
- Although I should know better by now, I cannot help thinking that ____.
- At the same time that I believe ____, I also believe ____.

Introducing Something Implied or Assumed

- Although none of them have ever said so directly, my teachers have often given me the impression that _____.
- One implication of X's treatment of _____ is that _____.
- Although X does not say so directly, she apparently assumes that _____.
- While they rarely admit as much, _____ often take for granted that _____.

Introducing an Ongoing Debate

- In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been _____. On the other hand, _____ argues _____. On the other hand, _____ contends _____. Others even maintain _____. My own view is _____.
- When it comes to the topic of _____, most of us will readily agree that _____. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of _____. Whereas some are convinced that _____, others maintain that _____.

Capturing Authorial Action

- X acknowledges that_____.
- X agrees that _____.
- X argues that _____.
- X believes that_____.
- X denies / does not deny that _____.
- X claims that_____.
- X complains that _____.
- X conceded that _____.
- X demonstrates that_____.
- X deplores the tendency to _____.
- X celebrates the fact that _____.
- X emphasizes that _____.
- X insists that_____.
- X observes that_____.
- X questions whether _____.
- X refutes the claim that_____.
- X reminds us that_____.
- X suggests that _____.
- X urges us to _____.

Introducing Quotations

- X states, “_____.”
- As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “_____.”
- According to X, “_____.”
- X himself writes, “_____.”
- In her book _____, X maintains that “_____.”
- Writing in the journal ____ [Journal Title] __, X complains that “_____.”
- In X's view, “_____.”
- X agrees/disagrees when she writes, “_____.”
- X complicates matters further when he writes, “_____.”

Explaining Quotations

- Basically, X is saying _____.
- In other words, X believes _____.
- In making this comment, X argues that _____.
- X is insisting that _____.
- X's point is that _____.
- The essence of X's argument is that _____.

Works Cited

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 3rd edition, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 293-297.