

They Say I Say - Chapter 1 Summary

"They Say"

Starting with What Others are Saying

The Writers Motivation

To Give a point: "a writer needs to indicate clearly not only what his or her thesis is, but also what larger conversation that thesis is responding to"

Providing the proper context to an argument allows the audience to better understand and contextualize it. This is called reminding the audience of what "They Say"

Order: "a writer needs to explain what he or she is responding to--either before offering that response or, at least, very early in the discussion." This better mimics that natural order of which information is synthesized. You always learn about something first before developing an idea about it.

When writing: "remember that you are entering a conversation and therefore need to start with "what others are saying," ... then introduce your own ideas as a response. Specifically ... summarize what "they say" as soon as you can ... and remind readers of it at strategic points as your text unfolds."

Use what "they say" as a jumping off point for your writing. Since you need to introduce the reader to the source of your argument anyway, there's no reason not to use that same information later in your work to advance or prove your point.

To avoid listing everything: "as soon as possible [state] your own position and the one it's responding to i-together, and that you think of the two as a unit.

Avoid going to extremes when mentioning your argument or what it is based off of, one provides the foundation for the other so it's best to avoid building too big a foundation.

Most important to show your reader's your motivation. The introduction serves to provide an example or meaning for what you are about to say.

Templates for Introductions of Ideas

"They say"

It has become common today to dismiss ____.

In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of ____ for ____.

"Standard Views"

Allows writers to introduce and potentially challenge common views/beliefs.

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"

Introduce a view by presenting it as your own.

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 ____.

Something Implied or Assumed

Introduce analysis or critical thinking about an idea.

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 ____.

An Ongoing Debate

Paints the writer as reliable and allows them to "find" their view as they write.

In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been _____. On the one hand, _____ argues _____.

On the other hand, _____ contends _____. Others even maintain _____. My own view is _____.

Alternatively introducing an idea most agree with in an attempt to highlight what they ultimately disagree

with.

When it comes to the topic of ____, most of us will readily agree that _____. Where this agreement usually end, however, is on the question of _____. Whereas some are convinced that ____, others maintain that _____.

Review

After introducing what "They Say" don't forget to continue to refer back to it, in order to keep the reader reminded of what you are framing your argument around and what you are responding to. Keep showing the reader your motivation in order to better frame your argument.

Return Sentences

Reminds the reader what you are arguing for/against maintaining the sense of motivation and reasoning.

In conclusion, then, as I suggested earlier, defenders of ____ can't have it both ways. Their assertion that ____ is contradicted by their claim that _____.

They Say I Say - Chapter 2 Summary

"Her Point Is"

The Art of Summarizing

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

"[When summarizing play the] "believing home," in which you try to inhabit the worldview of those whose conversation you are joining ... and try to see ... their perspective"

It's important to properly summarize what "They Say" and the most effective summaries only paint the original authors view. The reader should only be able to distinguish the original authors ideas from your summary.

"If [you cannot suspend your own views] you are likely to produce summaries that are so obviously biased that they undermine your credibility with readers"

It's important to allow your reader to develop their own view of what you are summarizing before being exposed to yours.

Know Where You are Going

"A good summary ... has a focus or spin that allows the summary to fit with your own agenda while still being true to the text you are summarizing."

While it's important to not let your own ideas influence how you summarize, it is effective to let your ideas frame what your summarize.

"Writing a good summary means not just representing an author's view accurately, but doing to in a way that fits your own compositions larger agenda."

Summarizing Satirically

"[When] a writer deliberately gives his or her own spin to someone else's argument in order to reveal a glaring shortcoming in it."

Allows the writers to use a summary of what their original author wrote to find contradictions or discrepancies without providing their own analysis. Like on "The Daily Show".

Signal Verbs

"To do just to the authors you cite ... use vivid and precise signal verbs as often as possible."

Bland introductions of summaries can undermine the tone of what the author originally said and take away from the action that you are trying to introduce.

Templates for Introducing Summaries and Quotations

She advocates _____.
They celebrate the fact that _____.
_____, he admits.

Verbs

for Making Claims

Argue	Insist
Assert	Observe
Believe	Remind us
Claim	Report
Emphasize	Suggest

for Expressing Agreement

Acknowledge	Endorse
Admire	Extol
Agree	Praise
Celebrate	Reaffirm
Corroborate	Support
Do Not Deny	Verify

for Questioning or Disagreeing

Complain	Qualify
Complicate	Question
Contend	Refute

Contradict	Reject
Deny	Renounce
Deplore	Repudiate

for Making Recommendations

Advocate	Implore
Call For	Plead
Demand	Recommend
Encourage	Urge
Exhort	Warn

They Say I Say - Chapter 3 Summary

"As He Himself Puts It"

The Art of Quoting

Quoting with Purpose

"Quoting someone else's words gives a tremendous amount of credibility to your summary and helps ensure that it is fair and accurate. In a [sense quotations] function as a kind of proof of evidence.

Providing context to your argument by giving a summary can be very effective, but is strengthened if you provide evidence that you truly understand what you are summarizing by providing a quote.

"Quoting what "They Say" must always be connected to with what "You Say".

Quote Relevant Passages

"Be careful not to select quotations just for the sake of demonstrating that you've read the author's work; you need to make sure they support your own argument."

Quotes aren't meant to just provide some extra bits to top off an essay. They can either be an integral part of your argument, providing you with effective support, or they will cause your writing to appear sloppy if placed introduced at the wrong times.

Frame Every Quotation

"Quotations do not speak for themselves, you need to build a frame around them in which you [speak] for them."

Introducing and not addressing a quote not only wastes your time as a writer, but it also wastes your readers time, making it far more difficult for them to fully comprehend your argument. "Dangling" quotations are introduced with no explanation for why they are presented. Such quotations aren't viewed with any importance and contribute very little to the piece they are in.

Templates for 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 *Commentary*, X complains that "_____."

In X's view, "_____."

X agrees when she writes, "_____".

X disagrees when he writes, "_____."

X complicates matters further when she writes, "_____."

Templates for Explaining Quotations

Basically X is warning _____.

In other words, X believes _____.

In making this comment, X urges us to _____.

X is corroborating the age-old adage that _____.

X's point is that _____.

The essence of X's argument is that _____.

Tailor the language used to introduce the quotation, to the contents and tone of the quotations itself.

Can You Overanalyze a Quotation?

"When in doubt, go for it. It is better to risk being overly explicit about what you take a quotation to mean than to leave the quotation dangling and your readers in doubt."

Sometimes excellent life advice, but in the case of analysis, also very important. It's better to provide lots of explanation than too little. You never want to risk leaving the reader confused as to what significance a quotation provides to your argument.

They Say I Say - Chapter 4 Summary

"Yes/ No/ Okay, But"

Three Ways to Respond

Quoting with Purpose

"the 'I say' stage, in which you offer your own argument as a response to what 'they' have said."

Most common ways to respond to others ideas:

1. Agreeing
2. Disagreeing
3. Some Combination of 1 and 2

Only Three Ways to Respond?

It can be important to avoid overly complex writing in order to prevent departing from conventional ways of thinking and making it more difficult for the reader to fully comprehend your argument.

Start simplistically so that the reader can easily understand what you mean with things like:

I agree that ____, but I cannot agree that ____.

"the best interpretations take strong stands relative to other interpretations"

Disagree - And Explain Why

It's not enough to just disagree with something. You have to take it a step further and contribute something new to your disagreement.

"To turn [a disagreement] into an argument, you need to give reasons to support what you say"

If something presented is overly obvious, then you can use the *"duh"* approach:

"You can even disagree by making [the "duh"] move, in which you disagree not with the position itself but with the assumption that it is a new or stunning revelation."

More directly put, if you find yourself thinking "No Shit" then say it:

"X presents Y, but of course we all know X."

Templates for Disagreeing, with reasons

X is mistaken because she overlooks ____.

X's claim that ____ rests upon the questionable assumption that ____.

I disagree with X's view that ____ because, as recent research has shown, ____.

X contradicts herself/can't have it both ways. On the one hand, she argues ____.

On the other hand, she also says ____.

By focusing on ____, X overlooks the deeper problem of ____.

It's better to state your disagreements in "frank and considerate ways", rather than avoiding making them at all.

Agree - But with a Difference

"Even as you're agreeing, it's important to bring something new and fresh to the table, adding something that makes you a valuable participant in the conversation."

Even if you agree with something, there are lots of ways for you to contribute to the conversation.

Templates for Agreeing

I agree that ____ because my experience ____ confirms it.

X is surely right about ____ because, as she may not be aware, recent studies have shown that ____.

X's theory of ____ is extremely useful because it sheds light on the difficult problem of ____.

Those unfamiliar with this school of thought may be interested to know that it basically boils down to ____.

I agree that ____, a point that needs emphasizing since so many people still believe ____.

If group X is right that ____, as I think they are, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that ____.

Agree and Disagree Simultaneously

"agreeing and disagreeing simultaneously [helps] us get beyond the kind of 'is too' / 'is not' exchanges that characterize the disputes of young children and the more polarized shouting matches of talk radio and TV."

Templates for Agree and Disagree Simultaneously

The first one stresses your agreement, while the second stresses your disagreement.

Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overriding assumption that ____.

Although I disagree with much that X says, I fully endorse his final conclusion that ____.

Though I concede that ____, I still insist that ____.

X is right that ____, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that ____.

While X is probably wrong when she claims that ____, she is right that ____.

Whereas X provides ample evidence that ____, Y and Z's research on ____ and ____ convinces me that ____ instead.

I'm of two minds about X's claim that ____.

On the one hand, I agree that ____.

On the other hand, I'm not sure if _____.
My feelings on the issue are mixed. I do support X's position that _____. but I
find Y's argument about _____ and Z's research on _____ to be equally persuasive.

They Say I Say - Chapter 5 Summary

"And Yet"

Distinguishing What You Say from What They Say

Templates for Signaling Who is Saying What in Your Own Writing

Although X makes the best possible case for _____, I _____.
My view, however, contrary to what X has argued, is that _____.
Adding to X's argument, I would point out that _____.
According to both X and Y, _____.
Politicians, X argues, should _____.
Most athletes will tell you that _____.