

In *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Graff and Birkenstein refer to the authors of other works as “They.” You can think of “they” as any specific author, or as a group of experts writing about your topic. “They” may also be indicated using letters such as “X” or “Y” in place of an author’s name. As you write, use the sample language in the templates below to move back and forth between what “they” say and what *you* have to say in response.

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 ____.
- Many people assume that ____.

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 ____.

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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 _____.

Describing the Author's Viewpoint

- 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, "_____."
- According to X, "_____."
- X himself writes, "_____."
- In her book _____, X maintains that "_____."
- In X's view, "_____."
- X agrees/disagrees when she 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 _____.

Agreeing and Disagreeing Simultaneously

- Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that_____.
- Although I disagree with much that X says, I fully endorse his final conclusion that_____.
- Though I concede that_____, I still insist that_____.
- Whereas X provides ample evidence that _____, Y and Z's research on _____ and _____ convinces me that _____ instead.
- X is right that_____, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that_____.

Agreeing—With a Difference

- X is surely right about_____ because, as she may not be aware, recent studies have shown that_____.
- I agree that_____ because my experience with_____ confirms it.
- X's theory of_____ is extremely useful because it sheds insight 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 believe_____.

Disagreeing—With Reasons

- X is mistaken because she overlooks_____.
- X's claim that _____ rests on the questionable assumption that_____.
- X 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_____.
- I disagree with X's view that_____ because, as recent research has shown, _____.

Making Concessions but Standing Your Ground

- Although I grant that _____, I still maintain that_____.
- Proponents of X are right to argue that _____. But they exaggerate when they claim that_____.
- While it is true that_____, it does not necessarily follow that_____.

Why Your Claims Matter

- These conclusions/discoveries will have significant applications in _____ as well as in_____.
- These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of_____.
- Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.

Work Cited

Graff, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein and Russel Durst. *They Say/I Say: With Readings*. 3rd edition, W. W. Norton, 2015, pp. 765-779.