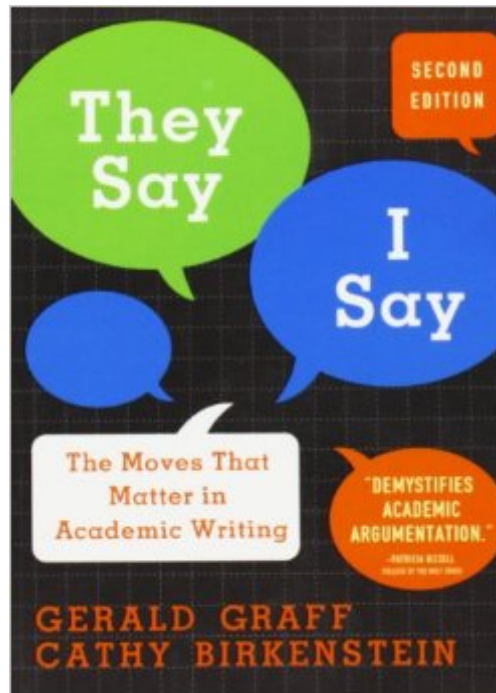


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# They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter In Academic Writing



## Synopsis

The book that demystifies academic writing, teaching students to frame their arguments in the larger context of what else has been said about their topic—and providing templates to help them make the key rhetorical moves. The best-selling new composition book published in this century, in use at more than 1,000 schools, *They Say / I Say* has essentially defined academic writing, identifying its key rhetorical moves, the most important of which is to summarize what others have said (they say) to set up one's own argument (I say). The book also provides templates to help students make these key moves in their own writing. The Second Edition includes a new chapter on reading that shows students how to read for the larger conversation and two new chapters on the moves that matter in the sciences and social sciences. line drawings

## Book Information

Series: *They Say / I Say: the Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*

Paperback: 245 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 2 edition (December 22, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 039393361X

ISBN-13: 978-0393933611

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.5 x 7.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1,044 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I teach composition/rhetoric at a two-year college and I have required the previous (second) edition of this book for a couple years. I chose this text initially because, unlike a lot of composition texts, the writing voice in *TS/IS* is very personable, easy to follow, and unpretentious. It occasionally shows a nerdy sense of humor which, surprisingly, my students don't seem to mind. The book addresses issues that I wish I had been taught as an undergrad, like "saying why it matters," or even the concept of "they say/I say" itself, which looks at how to take empty, boring writing, and put it in context so readers are interested in it. Instead of lecturing about the same tired old essay structure, the book approaches the task like a personal quest: make yourself clear, be interesting, and have

integrity as a writer. Anything it omits or only touches on, like MLA style or research tips, can easily be supplemented. The publisher's price on the second edition (without the readings, many of which can be found online anyway) remains an affordable \$25. And I was pleased to see this new third edition also at \$25 (on the Norton site, anyway). The price allows me to pair this required text with another inexpensive book on style to capture the more technical side of writing. My only disappointment is that while TS/IS is FINALLY available as an e-book in the new third edition, it is limited in platform, and comes with this disclaimer: "Our eBooks are Flash based and will not work on the iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, and some Android devices." So... my students can buy the cheaper e-book for only \$15, but they can't view them on the majority of personal devices, which chips away a little at the advantages of the e-book in the first place. Overall, though, the quality of the advice, content, and style in this book are still better than most texts I've worked with, so I will stick with it for the new year.

I received this book too late to use it for my persuasive writing class. While I had moderate success with my other book, *Everything's an Argument*, I would certainly use this book if I had to do it all over again. *They Say/I Say* is a short book with a simple premise -- it correctly states that no argument occurs in a vacuum, but must depend upon what others have to say about it. Moreover, the authors believe one of the principle difficulties which students have with persuasive writing is an inability to correctly utilize these necessary ingredients (introduce what others have to say on the subject, and then present their own voice on the matter). Though I am not a writing teacher, I have found this to be the case in my classes. *TSIS* summarizes the important aspects of this conversation in persuasive writing and provides templates for students to summarize what others say, introduce their own points, and perform various other techniques. While one may think the use of such templates leads to formulaic writing, the authors suggest the opposite is the case. By understanding how to shape their ideas, students can learn to better express their original thoughts, thus making their writing more individual. While I am inclined to agree, *TSIS* is not perfect. It certainly cannot be used as a thorough textbook on all persuasive writing, nor am I completely convinced that the exercises provided in the book are the most effective at using the templates in student writing. If teachers can get students to incorporate the ideas of *TSIS* into student's writing, however, they will accomplish much. Check it out for yourself.

I am in a Ph.D. program at Cornell University, but having already completed an undergrad and a Master's degree, I thought my writing was pretty good. However, after using the tips from this book,

my Ivy League professor told me my work had substantially improved. I absolutely recommend this book to anyone looking to improve their writing. I also recommend "Making Sense in the Life Sciences: A Student's Guide to Writing and Research" for anyone looking to help organize lots of information into a logical flow/argument.

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