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