**The Main Points of What We Read**

1. **All arguments spring from other arguments**; therefore, every argument you make should be written with the larger “conversation” in mind, and should incorporate what **“They Say”** into what **you say** (3).
2. **Incorporating what “they say” helps answer the “so what? Who cares?”** question in your reader’s mind.
3. **Playing it safe with your writing leads to “flat, lifeless” pointless writing** (5). So don’t just say what anyone would agree with. What’s the point?
4. **Avoid the “Closest Cliché” syndrome:** If you aren’t very careful in your reading, you can misrepresent other writers’ views, substituting a commonplace idea for what they are actually saying, which is likely to be more complex and unusual (153, 33).
5. **Use the “believing” game of Peter Elbow** to be able to *fairly* and *fully* summarize your opponent’s views: “temporarily suspend one’s own convictions” and “inhabit the worldview of those whose conversation you’re joining”(31, 86).
6. **It is crucial to “connect the parts”—strive for coherence in your argument—**to give your argument momentum, direction, flow, and to ensure that you have an argument, not just an unconnected pile of observations (107-111). One achieves this with **transitions** (108), **“pointing words”** (112), **repetition of key terms and phrases** (114), **repetition with variation** (116).
7. **It is critical to be able to clearly distinguish the “they say” part from the “I say”** part, both when reading and when writing (68-70).
8. **You can completely agree with what “they say” or completely disagree, but it’s often best to *both* agree *and* disagree, with reasons** (64).
9. **“Quotes are orphans”** wrenched out of context, so you have to give your audience that missing context with a **“sandwich”: whose words they are (ID tag) + the quote +explanation** (43-5).
10. **Bring in the “naysayer” to disarm your critics, show respect for your readers, show you aren’t ignorant or arrogant, add interest (and length) to your argument** (79-80).
11. If you find you can’t convincingly refute a point made by your naysayers, **offer a concession. If you can’t refute them at all, *join them*** (89).
12. **Help your readers get your point by using “metacommentary”--comment on your own text—to do any or all of these:** answer possible objections, distinguish your arguments from similar ones, connect your points, explain the implications, frame quotations, say why it matters and who should care (130-134)**.**

**What We’ve Read**

Entering the Conversation Text pp. 1-14

 “Your So-Called Education,” replies to “Your So-Called Education” (online)

“College Pays Off ” replies to “College Pays Off” (online)

 “Kenyon Commencement Speech” 198-210

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