

Writing with Style by John R. Trimble

Chapter 4: Middles

Prologue: In the second of three chapters on the structure and function of the academic essay, Trimble presents a five-item checklist to help produce the essential traits of development and continuity in the essay's long middle section, the body.

1. Carefully consider Trimble's analogy of the writer as prosecuting attorney in a court case. How might this approach help you in composing a good paper? What important attitudes and techniques are the analogy designed to instill in the writer as he/she develops a thesis?
2. After reminding us of the importance of audience and purpose, Trimble provides a five-point checklist for good papers. Take a close look at the sample student paper (pages 36-38) on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. To what extent does it illustrate Trimble's checklist?
3. Trimble asserts that "good writers are sticklers for continuity." What concrete, specific advice does he provide about *how* to achieve this important trait? Examine your most recent academic essay for continuity. Read it aloud. Put yourself in your reader's place. What changes can you make to insure that your reader gets hooked and stays with you sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph? How can you better create the illusion that your essay is a continuous discussion?
4. Read through the "Final Tips" section of the chapter. Which of these items are already a part of your writing practice? Which are new? How will your writing change after studying this chapter?
5. Look closely at Trimble's advice to achieve continuity between paragraphs (page 43) by changing the way we think about topic sentences. He claims the concept of the "bridge sentence" is the single best tip that his students carry away from his instruction. Try it out.

Epilogue: Hold John R. Trimble responsible for his own instruction: In what ways does his writing serve to exemplify his theories on writing and his advice to novice writers? Do you see him putting into practice the tips he advances? Find some examples where he takes his own advice. Can you find any places where he doesn't, and needs to?