

Body Paragraph—Claim & Strategy

Thompson employs water metaphors in order to illustrate and characterize the volume of writing he claims “[t]he internet has produced” (46). The first sentence of the second section describes the past few decades of online writing as “a foaming Niagara.” Thompson’s likening of internet writing to the famous waterfalls has several strategic effects. First and most obviously, the size and splendor of the Niagara Falls helps readers understand the enormity of writing Thompson references. Second, his selection of “foaming” Falls—or live, flowing water—characterizes the body of online writing as dynamic, responsive, and always changing. That Thompson did not choose a lake metaphor here is significant. Finally, the author’s selection of a nature metaphor works to support his main argument that this burst of online writing is not detrimental to human development, but beneficial to society. Water is ancient, natural, and life-sustaining, and so, Thompson implies through metaphor, is the human impulse to think publicly. Through his use of this strategy, Thompson effectively supports his first major claim by characterizing online writing as both voluminous and dynamic, while working to ease his readers’ anxieties about the effects of the digital on human cognition.

Scaffolding the Drafting Process

To be successful, your final draft must:

- 1. Help your readers understand what the text is about (assume they haven’t read it) and why the issues are significant or worthy of discussion.*
- 2. Contextualize the text by relating it to larger cultural conversations. Accurately describe the author’s project, argument, and the rhetorical situation (using outside sources if appropriate).*

Last week each student self-assigned to an extra-textual “research cluster” on Thompson, his text, its audience, or the rhetorical situation (Thompson’s online presence, online reviews of the book, podcast interviews of Thompson, or a crowdsourcing website Thompson would consider an example of public thinking). They were asked to spend about an hour on their research, write a blog post in which they discuss their findings and how those findings confirmed, expanded, or complicated their understanding of the main text. The students shared these findings verbally to the class in one minute “lightning presentations” on Friday. I provided each of them with a handout describing each of the research clusters so they could take notes on what their classmates found (an example, I pointed out, of collective, connected brain power). Ideally, these notes will be useful as they write to contextualize and demonstrate the significance of “Public Thinking.” I was pleasantly surprised by how much the students had to report. Nearly all of them

went significantly over a minute—even with only 21 students present, we easily filled the time. In the future, I'll be sure to spend more time on activities like this. Several reported never having done extra-textual research before and enjoying the assignment, and I was impressed by the ease and sophistication of their presentation skills.

3. *State its purpose clearly and provide a basic "road map" so readers can envision how your paper/argument is structured. Use "metadiscourse" (writing about writing) to help guide your readers by talking about the structure of your paper, not its contents.*

On Friday 9/23 I'll give a little lecture on the writing-related loose ends and essay expectations we haven't discussed in full, including metadiscourse and effectively using quotations.

4. *Identify the most important or interesting claims made by the author and how they relate to the overall argument. Spend the bulk of your time analyzing and evaluating how your author supports his claims. In particular, examine the evidence and/or strategies the author employs to structure the text and how and to what extent they work to persuade his audience.*

Monday 9/19 is our class's dedicated "Evaluating Evidence" day. The students have been asked to identify at least two claims or subclaims, and two pieces of evidence supporting each, that they'd like to analyze and evaluate in their paper. I've made a powerpoint that features a slide for each type of evidence outlined in the course reader with an example from "Public Thinking." As a class, we'll discuss relative strengths and weaknesses of types of evidence generally. I'll then show them an example of a pretty successful evidence paragraph to model the level of analysis I expect. Finally, I made a Drafting Thompson handout that includes an Evaluating Evidence section based on the Course Reader that the student will use to put their own selections through that evaluative process (Is it current? It is relevant? It is specific?) I want to emphasize in this class period also that it's not black and white. No single piece of evidence can be all things to all people. All kinds of evidence have strengths and limitations and work in conjunction with other evidence and strategies to sufficiently support (or not) a claim.

Wednesday 9/21 is our "Analyzing Strategies" day. The students will come having selected 2-3 strategies they'd like to analyze for their paper. We'll have a class discussion of the effects these strategies are meant to have on the reader and how effective they are. The students will then have time to work out their analysis and evaluation of their selected strategies on the Drafting Thompson handout independently.

5. *Focus on analyzing (discussion of how and why something works) examples, not describing (summary of what something is) them.*
6. *Use an effective organizational structure that carefully guides the reader from one idea to the next.*

On Friday 9/23, after my 20 minute mini-lecture on metadiscourse, using quotations, and some suggestions for structuring the text, students will have 15-20 minutes in class to develop outlines for their essays and run them by me if they wish.

7. *Be carefully edited and nearly free of typos and sentence-level errors (for clarification on grammatical rules and conventions, refer to Keys for Writers).*
8. *Integrate quotes effectively by contextualizing and explaining them gracefully in your own prose.*

I'll discuss quotation sandwiches on Friday, 9/23.

9. *Utilize proper MLA formatting both in-text and in your Works Cited (for help with MLA formatting, refer to Keys for Writers or Purdue's Online Writing Lab).*
10. *Be turned in as a **stapled hard copy, with your rough draft and peer review worksheet**, in class on Monday, October 3.*

The students will have a peer review workshop the day their rough draft is due, Monday 9/26. Wednesday 9/28 and Friday 9/30 will be mandatory, individual ten minute conferences.