

## WID Teaching Portfolio – Ben Lander, History

### What It Does, What It Says

This exercise is meant to help you understand how academic writing works. It is useful to remember that most academic writing is written in a standardized way and follows a number of conventions related to form, use of sources, use of language and many other things. Remember too that academic essays are usually built in a similar way, or at least they contain many of the same sections. The Research Report you worked on in groups and handed in before the break is a good example. If you remember, each report had the following:

An introduction that explained the scope of the project and presented a hypotheses/thesis statement.

A section that contextualized the study within a larger body of research, (like your Lit. Review).

A description of the study including detailed explanation of the methods that were used.

A section where the results were presented.

A discussion of the results in relation to a larger body of research.

A conclusion that explained the relevance of the findings, the short-comings of the research and possible future research.

In this exercise we will go through the article I handed out and break it down by figuring out what different paragraphs do and what those paragraphs says.

A "what it says" statement is a summary of the paragraph's content - the paragraph's stated or implied topic sentence. A "what it does" statement describes the paragraph's purpose of function within the essay: for example, "Provides evidence for the author's first main point," "Summarizes an opposing view," "Provides statistical data to support a point," or "Uses an analogy to clarify the idea in the previous paragraph."

To determine what a paragraph does you need to think about what the writer is trying to do in the paragraph, what is its purpose in relation to the whole article. Refer to the above list.

To determine what it says you need to summarize the main points of the paragraph. Think about what the main argument of the paragraph is and determine what the main pieces of that argument are.

Work in pairs and write "What it does, What it says" sentences for the first two paragraphs of each section. You will find that paragraphs within a section will often do similar things, but read over each paragraph and discuss whether it is doing exactly the same thing or something slightly different. Make sure you read all the paragraphs in a section before moving on or you will not understand how the article works.