

Conclusions:

How People Know What to Do With Your Ideas

Conclusions are an opportunity to show how your argument matters to the reader, to the book/play/movie, to the discipline, or to the universe at large. It appeals to the question we all have when we're writing it.

SO WHAT?

Think of your thesis as an atomic bomb. The very center of the explosion is your idea, a concentrated, fully explored set of circumstances and analysis. The fallout from the explosion—the mushroom cloud—is your conclusion; in other words, how your thesis affects the outside world. Describe the landscape post-bomb. Let's try an example.

Thesis: Gingers have no souls because their freckles slowly leak it out of them in the womb.

Conclusion: Because gingers have no souls, people should keep their children away from them.

In the above example, the idea that gingers are soulless is seen as a problem that necessitates action from society, which will most likely take the form of a "challenge conclusion." Speaking of that, **conclusions do tons of things**. They can challenge a status quo, defend one, introduce completely new ideas, warn the audience, entertain, mock, and even qualify your argument. (Or a million other possibilities. Don't be limited. Conclusions can do anything, really, so long as it's relevant, new, and interesting.)

That pesky old rule from the standard five-paragraph format still lingers today, and I hate it. Your professors hate it. Scholarly journals hate it. Oprah hates it. Everyone hates it. What's the rule? Repeating or restating your thesis in the opening sentence of your conclusion. Why would you want to repeat what you've just spent your entire essay proving? **Never, ever, ever, ever repeat your thesis elsewhere in your essay.**

Answering the "So what?" question without sounding pretentious or clichéd is a challenge. It isn't very academic to say "Everyone in the world should hug each other and make passionate love instead of war." But it does sound scholarly to say: "From this, societies can learn that revenge is not successful, a common (and necessary) lesson which is still relevant today." If you've heard the words in your conclusion before, try it again and make it new. It will be engaging until the final sentence, fun to read, and academically sound.

This is literally it. Three steps.

Happy Writing!

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Spring 2012