

able to spend less time correcting grammar in my students' writing assignments and more time helping students develop and shape the content of their essays.

Brian P. Hall (New Voice)
Cuyahoga Community College
Cleveland, Ohio

Using an NPR Story to Demonstrate Integrating Sources in a Research Paper

One of the tough things for many students to grasp is how to weave sources into their own texts smoothly. Many simply drop a quotation into the text without any transitions or introduction. More importantly, many struggle with seeing how to put sources into conversation with each other. This little exercise helps students see—and hear—how a professional journalist introduces sources and uses them to develop an argument. What is especially beneficial about using National Public Radio (NPR) as a model is that both an audio version of the story (the one we are likely to hear on *All Things Considered* or *Morning Edition*) and a written transcript are available on NPR's website (<http://www.npr.org>). Both listening to and reading the story, students have said, quickly and effectively clarify a simple but until then elusive practice.

I have students listen to a story on NPR, for example, "Using Trees to Curb Climate Change Not So Simple" by Christopher Joyce, which first aired 23 October 2009.¹ I ask students to look closely at how Joyce seamlessly introduces his sources, experts in the field. The first time he mentions them, he gives their name, their affiliation, and perhaps something about their work.

Here's an example:

Gregory Latta is a forest economist at Oregon State University who studied how Northwestern forests might be affected by warming. In some places, warming could slow growth, and that means less carbon in the bank.

Mr. GREGORY LATTA (Forest Economist): At the lower elevations, they have moisture. And as you crank up the temperature in the growing season, that moisture evaporates. And so it's kind of taking away from them a little bit.

I ask students to notice how Joyce introduces the idea with a paraphrase—"warming could slow growth and that means less carbon in the bank"—that the Latta quotation clarifies or develops (in this case, explains). I also ask them to notice how Joyce uses his sources to develop his story, bringing in one expert to offer a new idea or a counter-idea to what has come before. Finally, I have students answer a few questions in an online discussion forum and to respond to the posts of others:

1. Now that you've listened to (and/or read) the story by Christopher Joyce, what do you know about using sources that maybe you didn't know quite as well before?
2. How does the different medium (radio versus writing) and different context (public news versus academic writing in this class) impact the use of sources?
3. What do you know about the expectations for using sources in your future major field of study?

I've been very pleased by the number of "ah-hah" moments many students claim to have had. And even for those students who said that the

NPR story didn't really show them anything new, all have said it was both a good reminder and an effective way of reinforcing the concepts they were already putting into practice.

Note

1. The Christopher Joyce story "Using Trees to Curb Climate Change Not So Simple" can be heard at this link (it's the second story down; click on the speaker icon): <http://www.npr.org/templates/rundowns/rundown.php?prgId=3&prgDate=10-23-2009>. The transcript of the story can be found here: <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=114062725>.

Jeffrey Klausman
Whatcom Community College
Bellingham, Washington

A Writing Session on Network Television

I have been looking for movies or television episodes that dramatize the writing process for a long time. Now that I've found one, I use it every semester.

Before I show this twenty-five-minute clip to my students, I explain that the writing process is rarely portrayed because writing is often long and arduous, and those traits do not transfer easily to the screen. Then I provide the background information my students will need to enjoy the clip and to benefit from it.

The show is *Friday Night Lights*, and the episode is entitled "Underdogs" (season 3, episode 12), with five short scenes that offer a realistic portrayal of a

peer review session. The show revolves around a high school football team in Dillon, Texas, but the show is about much more than football.

Tyra is the student body president, but because she has had a difficult life, she is really struggling to write her college application essay. In an early scene, she shows her first draft to her boyfriend, Landry, a junior on the football team. The scene is humorous because Landry is brutally honest: "Okay, Tyra, I really do hate this paper. . . . It reads like a five-page needlepoint pillow, and it's painful."

To her credit, Tyra, though angry, is not intimidated. Instead, she is determined to succeed, and in their next scene, she refuses to make the overnight trip to watch Landry play because she knows that a major revision will take time, and she doesn't want to be distracted.

Rather than have Tyra revise alone, however, the show's writers add a complication, and in their third scene, Landry insists that Tyra accompany him. Since Tyra is still unwilling to give up her writing plans, however, she agrees to help Landry only if he is willing to help her with her essay. Naturally, he agrees, and Landry shines in the fourth scene.

Initially, Tyra has written primarily about her part-time job, but in her revision, she focuses on being student body president. Again, Landry is a bit too harsh. He pretends to fall asleep while reading the essay aloud and adds, "You obviously don't believe any of what you're saying."

At that point, Tyra erupts: "Fine, Landry, why don't you tell me what to write? . . . Shall I write about my trashy family? . . . Or about the fact that I lost

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