

Writing with Style by John R. Trimble

Chapter 5: Closers

Prologue: In the third of three chapters on the structure and function of the academic essay, Trimble argues that the end of anything—a sentence, a paragraph, an essay—is the place of greatest emphasis. His “three imperatives” provide a strategy for making sure we take full advantage of that opportunity.

1. Review Trimble’s hypothetical example of the student writing a research paper on the death penalty (pages 32-35). The opening paragraphs in this chapter finish that story by considering the importance of the student’s conclusion. How does the student’s closer make his thesis more memorable?
2. Trimble says the strategy for a closer changes given the length of the paper. Sum up his advice for long papers (10 + pages) in contrast to that for short papers (3 – 5 pages).
3. Explain each of Trimble’s “three imperatives.” What is the logic behind each? What effect is he aiming at? What rhetorical goal will a conclusion reach if it contains all three of these imperatives? What will it lack if it falls short of them?
4. Examine the student examples Trimble provides on pages 46 and 47. Even though these look like the easy results of natural talent, Trimble claims they are actually the product of hard work—“repeated practice, careful revision, and considerable reader feedback.” Even though you haven’t read the essays they bring to a close, what evidence do you see in them that the reader has been taken to a deeper level of understanding regarding Shakespeare’s play, *King Lear*?
5. Take a look at the conclusion from a recent academic essay of yours. How does it stack up next to Trimble’s advice? How many of the imperatives do you see evidence of in your paper? How might your closer be improved by editing or tweaking it so that it hits Trimble’s target?

Epilogue: Consider Chapters 3, 4, and 5 a three-part mini-treatise on the academic essay. Taking in the wealth of practical advice on how to write a good paper in these chapters, what have you learned so far from John Trimble’s book? What theories and/or strategies were already familiar to you? What’s new? How will your writing be different (better?) as a result of studying this treatise?